PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1993-94

COMPRISING PERIOD
6 December—17 December 1993

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6 December 1993

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 234**

SECOND VOLUME OF SESSION 1993-94

House of Commons

Monday 6 December 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Family Support

1. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures his Department has taken to maintain support for families.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): We have fulfilled our manifesto commitment to increase child benefit in line with prices. We have also already made extra help worth around £1 billion a year available to low-income families with children. From October 1994, we are introducing a £40 disregard of child care costs for claimants of family credit and housing benefit. This will remove one of the major stumbling blocks in enabling low-income parents to be better off in work and thus to reduce dependency on benefits.

Mr. Arnold: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the £40 disregard in respect of child care costs is very much less than many organisations were pressing for? Does that not show the Government's determination to assist parents to get back into work?

Mr. Lilley: I think that my hon. Friend meant to say "more" than many institutions were pressing for. The booklet, "Becoming a Breadwinner", issued by the Day Care trust, advocated a £35 a week disregard. We are going for slightly more than that—a £40 a week disregard, which will be worth £28 a week for lone parents and working married couples returning to work.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that future provision for families is part of the long-term series of reviews that his Department is conducting? Putting it neutrally, it is very difficult for people to conduct and engage him in sensible discussions about long-term future provision. In every speech that he makes and every television interview that he gives the Secretary of State is interpreted, rightly or wrongly, in different ways at different times. It is difficult to know whether the Secretary of State is coming or going. Would it not be better for him and for us if he were to make clear the remit of all the internal Government committees and what papers they are working to? We could then all engage in a proper public debate.

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his positive contribution to the debate. I advise him to listen to what I say and to regard what I do, and not to listen to second-hand commentaries. He will then see a consistent theme. We believe in supporting and sustaining the traditional family and, wherever possible, encouraging families to consist of two loving parents. We accept that that is not always the case, and where families break up we want to provide support with the interests of the child in mind. That lies behind the measures announced in the Budget to enable parents to work and improve their well-being while providing proper child care for their children. That is consistent with everything that I have said and the Government have done. We would welcome any positive contributions from the Liberal Democrats, unusual as that might be

Mr. Winnick: In view of the remarks made by the Secretary of State yesterday, is it not clear that child benefit will not be retained as a universal benefit if the Tories were to cling to office? In view of that, is there not every reason for people to be very concerned? The welfare state is being eroded and undermined at every stage. No one has any confidence that the Secretary of State or the Government believe in the welfare state, and there is every expectation that they will use their power to undermine it.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman is peculiarly ill informed. There have been two statements about child benefit in the past 24 hours. I have reaffirmed the Government's manifesto pledge to maintain child benefit as part of our provision for families with children. The Commission for Social Justice, established by the Labour party, suggested that it should be abandoned and replaced by national child care.

Child Support Agency

2. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the operation of the Child Support Agency.

6. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will suspend the operations of the Child Support Agency.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): The Child Support Agency was set up to secure more maintenance more reliably for more children, and that is what it is doing. I have, of course, been examining the criticisms that have been made of some aspects of the new scheme. The work of the Child Support Agency in securing maintenance for children will continue.

Mr. Burns: Does my hon. Friend accept that most people—including the authors of the Select Committee report that was published this afternoon—acknowledge the principle that fathers, including absent fathers, should pay for the upkeep of their children? Will he bear in mind, however, that in areas such as Chelmsford, and even St. Albans, a significant proportion of the working population commute down to London and that total commuting costs are in excess of £200 per month? Given that the average non-endowment mortgage repayment is now just over that amount, would my hon. Friend be prepared to look again at the formula in respect of travel-to-work costs to establish whether something could be done to alleviate the burden for fathers?

Mr. Burt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his opening remarks, and for picking up the fact that the Select Committee has today endorsed the basic principles and operation of the Child Support Agency.

My hon. Friend's point about provision in the formula for specific expenses was discussed extensively with the Select Committee. I believe that the Committee is coming to the same conclusion as the Government—that it is very difficult to make extra allowances for different kinds of expenses because what is essential to one is not essential to another. We have endorsed that principle and have therefore tried to ensure that the amount of income available to the absent parent is around 70 to 85 per cent. of net income in order to cover the costs.

The Select Committee made some recommendations, as well as making supportive comments. I shall examine those recommendations together with other aspects that have been raised with us in connection with our own review.

Mr. Spellar: Regrettably, the Minister's reply was very unsatisfactory. Although he welcomed the report, he did not specify the parts to which the Government would respond.

Mr. Miller: We are usually given a statement in that time.

Mr. Spellar: As my hon. Friend points out, we seem to be given statements very quickly. These problems have been going on for a long time. Some Conservative Members may not have noticed that thousands of families across the country are being thrown into chaos. We have already had the first suicide resulting from the operation of the Child Support Agency. Does the Minister recognise that the fundamental problem has been caused by an attempt to force all the individual circumstances of thousands of different families into a national straitjacket? Is it not time to suspend the agency's operations until proper guidelines can be incorporated and the matter returned to local determination?

Mr. Burt: I think that what has made the hon. Gentleman unhappy is the fact that his own campaign for the agency's suspension has not been endorsed by the Select Committee in any way. That is because the Committee understands that the agency is already working to produce maintenance for children and that the suspension of its operations would cause chaos for many families who are receiving the money.

With respect, I feel that we must all be extremely careful in dealing with press reports, particularly those concerned with such sensitive issues as suicide. There can be many reasons for such tragic events, and we are certainly not aware that the Child Support Agency has been deliberately and provenly linked to any of them.

It is, of course, much too early to respond to Select Committee recommendations published less than an hour ago. I have given the hon. Gentleman an undertaking—as I did in last Thursday's Adjournment debate—to examine all these matters carefully, and we shall continue to do that. It should be noted, however, that the basic principle of what we are doing—that is, moving away from a discretionary system to a national system based on a formula—has been endorsed.

Mr. Madel: May I endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) said about travel-to-work costs? Will my hon. Friend also note that people cannot appeal against their assessment until a review has taken place? The reviews need to be more thorough, as mistakes are being made. They also need to be carried out more quickly. Will my hon. Friend try to improve the efficiency of the Child Support Agency and speed up its operations?

Mr. Burt: I am sure that to ensure the acceptance of the principles of the Child Support Act it is essential that the agency should operate administratively as effectively as it can. To date, we have had only 174 appeals coming through the system. We shall keep a careful eye on the work of the independent tribunal service which considers those appeals. I understand my hon. Friend's point, which was well made.

Ms Rachel Squire: Does the Minister agree that, as other hon. Members have said, the Child Support Agency should take account not only of travel expenses but of items such as council tax, insurance costs and fuel bills? Does he further agree that it is totally unreasonable to expect one of my constituents—who is one of many—to be asked to live on a meagre £6·49 a week after he has paid his bills and met the increased maintenance costs, which he has always paid up to now? Does the Minister agree that response is considerably overdue on the points that I raised with him in October and early November about my general concerns about the operation of the CSA, especially the way in which responsible parents who have always paid maintenance are targets who are asked to pay more, while those who are irresponsible and have paid nothing continually get away with it?

Mr. Burt: I am not happy to accept the figures offered by the hon. Lady and I would welcome her clarification of them as they do not correspond with what should be the situation. The matter of targeting has been considerably distorted by media reports which do not give due credibility to the fact that some half of the work going on at the CSA at the moment is concerned with cases in which no maintenance has been in payment at all. In response to whether there are soft targets and people being unduly picked on, I will quote briefly from one paragraph of the Select Committee report because it considered the matter carefully——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: What paragraph?

Mr. Burt: Paragraph 18. It states:

> "A large part of the public debate about the Child Support Agency has centred on the accusation that it was picking unfairly on 'soft targets', that is, those absent parents who were already making maintenance payments. Behind this accusation has been an allegation that the Agency's work is governed by the requirement to make substantial savings in the social security budget. We believe this objective to be an important one—"

Madam Speaker: Order. I remind the Minister that it is Question Time.

Mr. Burt: Yes, Madam Speaker. It continues:

> "The Committee believes that taxpayers have for too long been asked, in effect, to pick up maintenance bills that should have been met by absent parents."

We strongly agree.

Mr. Barry Porter: I am pleased to have an opportunity to back the Government's policy of getting "back to basics", but does my hon. Friend accept that when we voted overwhelmingly in favour of the legislation we thought that it made sense that the evil absent father was to be the target. However, after all the letters that I and other hon. Members have had about the matter, surely the Government must now take into account all the objections, which I share with the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire), that there is something wrong and it ought to be put right.

Mr. Burt: The agency is indeed pursuing those who have not paid. Its take-on strategy was clearly declared before the Act came into force and the Select Committee considered that. We are looking at the matters of concern that have been raised, but I urge my hon. Friend to acknowledge that some parents have been traced by the agency who would never have been traced under the previous system. We are delivering what the public want through the agency.

Mr. Dewar: Does the Minister accept that it is essential to consider urgently the important recommendations made in the Select Committee report, especially those which add safeguards for second families, and deal with the protected income provisions? Will he also give an undertaking to look beyond the Select Committee report, especially at the experience in Australia, where it is possible to go to a review officer and depart from the usual rigid financial formula if special circumstances can be established? Will he consider the possibility of a disregard for income support to ensure that the children who are at most economic risk—those in families living on income support—gain support from a system which was introduced in their name and from which they often miss out?

Is not the Minister conscious of the very real danger that without urgent action there will be a breakdown of consent and that at the end of the day damage will be done to the very principle of parental responsibility?

Mr. Burt: I note what the hon. Gentleman says. The Select Committee report will be due a proper reply when its recommendations are looked at carefully. I undertake that the Government will give that reply. In relation to the principle behind the agency, it will help if it is recognised that the Select Committee has looked carefully at the fundamental objections put to it, but that it has essentially endorsed the existing principle and the work of the agency.

In the majority report, the Committee has recognised the importance of shifting the burden from taxpayers to those who should be most responsible for paying—the parents. That is the principle to which the whole House previously held, and it has now been further endorsed. If the work of the agency in dealing with parents who have not paid and in tracing parents who have been difficult to trace were recognised as it should be, there would be greater understanding and acceptance of the principles of the work of the agency.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my hon. Friend agree that priority is now being given to cases in which a court order can no longer be given? Does he further agree that it is vital that parents who are already paying successfully should not in any way be victimised?

Mr. Burt: First, my hon. Friend is right to say that we give priority to parents who must use the agency because they have no other mechanism to use. That involves people who have some dependence on benefit as well as those who do not. Secondly, it cannot be classed as any form of victimisation to ask people to pay sums towards their children which they are due to pay under the law. We recognised from the start that there would have to be an increase in the amount paid in many cases to provide a realistic sum of maintenance. That work is going on and is another principle endorsed by the Select Committee. Given time, the principles will be accepted and the work of the House in passing the Act, with immense good will on both sides, will be vindicated.

Invalidity Benefit

3. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he intends to take to safeguard the needs of those dependent on invalidity benefit; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement that my right hon. Friend made to the House last week. He said—and I repeat—that there will be no cash losers among existing beneficiaries of invalidity benefit at the point of change.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Minister aware that citizens advice bureaux in all parts of these islands are reporting cases of severely disabled people having their invalidity benefit withdrawn? They say that when the cases go to appeal, the independent tribunal service comes out against the Benefits Agency. Is he aware of the cases of disabled people being told that they should be looking for jobs such as swimming pool attendants, embalmers or artists' models? Surely that is not the road we should be going down. Will the Minister give an assurance that in any new regime severely disabled people will not be put in an invidious position?

Mr. Scott: The simple target set by the replacement of invalidity benefit with incapacity benefit will be to ensure that those who are rendered incapable of work by reason of their medical condition will receive benefit. Those who do not pass that test will not.

Mr. Waterson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the people who will most welcome a more rigorous medical check for cases of invalidity benefit are those of our constituents who are genuinely incapable of work due to disability of one sort or another?

Mr. Scott: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend. Another group who will widely welcome the reforms being introduced are general practitioners who have not found it an attractive duty to be gate-keepers for the existing benefit.

Mr. Bradley: Is not the truth about the new incapacity benefit best summed up by the Disability Alliance, which described it as

"penny pinching at its most callous"?

Will the Minister confirm that terminally ill people who are eligible for the new benefit will have to wait 12 months before they receive the full rate of entitlement? Will he explain today the objective difference in employment prospects for persons who, according to the new test, will receive 25 points if they "cannot remain standing unassisted" and for persons who will receive only 21 points because they cannot remain

"standing unassisted for more than a few minutes"?

Mr. Scott: On the medical tests, the hon. Gentleman knows that we have published a consultation document which is now being considered by a number of organisations and individuals. A panel of some 80 people is being recruited to analyse the tests and to make judgments on their effectiveness. We believe that that is the right way—it is based, after all, on the methodology used by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on which the disability living allowance was based. That is a sound way of judging entitlement to the new benefit. We shall consult widely, and we will listen in particular to medical opinion about the effectiveness of the tests.

The hon. Gentleman knows that special arrangements have been made under the DLA for all claims from terminally ill people to be put on to a special fast track. That target is now being met and exceeded for those benefits.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my right hon. Friend take no nonsense from the Opposition on this, as benefits paid to the sick and the disabled have trebled to £15 billion up to this year? Does that not show the Government's commitment? Will my hon. Friend confirm that existing beneficiaries will not have to pay tax on their benefits under the new arrangements? Will my right hon. Friend restate the Government's concern, and will he make sure that there is no misunderstanding or scaremongering by the Opposition?

Mr. Scott: I confirm what my hon. Friend says. Existing beneficiaries are not to be taxed. In general, we have taken the view that benefits paid as income replacement should be subject to tax; that is why the new benefit will be taxable.

Disability Living Allowance

7. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many disability claims are outstanding at the present time.

Mr. Scott: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to claims for disability living allowance. At 30 November, the latest date for which information is available, there were 25,372 such claims on hand.

Mr. Skinner: Are not the Government more interested in looking after themselves and their big business allies than in looking after the disabled? Is it not a scandal that they are now talking about imposing new tests on people who claim disability, invalidity and unemployment benefits? Why can Ministers who fall ill get money every week and every month without having to go through one of these ludicrous tests? The Secretary of State is sitting next to the Minister. How would the right hon. Gentleman like to have to push a wheelbarrow, hold a 5 lb bag of potatoes in either hand or wear a saucepan on his head? And is that not all that he is fit for?

Mr. Scott: If the hon. Gentleman will calm down slightly, he will learn that the Government have a record of helping the disabled unparalleled by any previous Administration. We have trebled the resources which go to the long-term sick and the disabled through the benefits system and a number of other improvements have been made to provisions for the disabled.

I find it objectionable that the hon. Gentleman makes mock, in essence, of the system that we are endeavouring to provide. That system was properly prepared to introduce DLA, which has had widespread support from organisations of and for disabled people. We intend to use that system for a new benefit and we are consulting widely —not least with those organisations.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my right hon. Friend tell the House how many people have benefited from DLA? Does my hon. Friend remember the speeches in Committee from the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) implying that few people would benefit? Does my hon. Friend agree that many have done so?

Mr. Scott: More than 1 million people have now benefited from the introduction of DLA, and their claims are being dealt with at an ever-increasing rate. We know that there were difficulties when DLA was introduced, due to a surge in claims which came because of the attractiveness of the benefit. The Benefits Agency now is exceeding by a considerable margin each target that it has been set for the delivery of benefit.

Mr. Sheerman: Whatever happened to basic values? In the good old days of basic values, when there was incompetence from a Secretary of State and a mix-up of the kind that happened with DLA, did not Ministers resign? Will not all the trouble, distress, heartache and ill-health which was brought on disabled people by the delays and the incompetence be repeated by the incapacity benefit? Is it not a fact that disabled people who are now on those benefits do not know what the criteria will be? Will the Minister start saying something about the criteria—in particular in relation to the sensitive subject of mental ill health and people suffering from stress-related diseases?

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman will recall that I apologised for the difficulties over the introduction of DLA both to the House and to those who suffered distress as a result. That is all behind us now and I do not believe that the new benefit will run into such difficulties. Let me make it clear, not so much to the House as to the audience outside, that the new benefit will not come in until 1995 and that there is ample time for proper provision to be made for its introduction and for all decisions about the nature and operation of the tests to be properly considered before that date.

Child Benefit

8. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many increases in child benefit have been announced in the past two years.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. William Hague): Child benefit has already been increased three times since October 1991 and my right hon. Friend announced on Tuesday a further increase to take effect in April 1994.

Sir Michael Neubert: Can my hon. Friend confirm that Government spending on families with children has increased by 50 per cent. since 1979—over and above price increases in that time—and that our child benefit scheme compared favourably with European equivalents? Does my hon. Friend accept, however, that it is wise not to exclude the possibility of any change in the scheme in the future, given the Government's strategy of targeting assistance on those most in need?

Mr. Hague: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the large increase on spending on families with children —a 50 per cent. increase since 1979, compared with an 8 per cent. reduction between 1974 and 1979, which Opposition Members should remember. On the question of future policy, I should say to my hon. Friend that the manifesto commitment remains absolutely clear: child benefit remains the cornerstone of our policies for families and children, helping mothers who remain at home as well as those who work.

Child Support Agency

10. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will conduct an urgent review into the operation of the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Lilley: I have always made it clear that we will be keeping the policy under review. We are looking at the comments and concerns raised and testing them against the basic principles of the new scheme, which were endorsed by members of all parties. If, after examination, we think that we can make the scheme better still, we will do so.

Mr. Williams: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the Child Support Agency is expected to raise £550 million in this financial year and that, of that total, only £50 million will go to help support children? Will he tell us what the agency is really for? Is it simply to help the Treasury, or does it have a role in supporting children?

Mr. Lilley: The purpose of the agency is twofold—first, to ensure that both parents accept responsibility for maintaining their children and, secondly, that the taxpayer should contribute only if parents do not have the resources to maintain their children. I was glad that that principle was endorsed by the Select Committee on Social Security in its report published earlier today.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Paragraph?

Mr. Lilley: Eighteen again. The report states:

> "The Committee believes that taxpayers have for too long been asked, in effect, to pick up maintenance bills that should have been met by absent parents."

Mr. Cash: Will my right hon. Friend note that half the questions asked today have been related to the Child Support Agency? We are delighted to hear that he is suggesting that the whole matter could be reviewed in the light of what the Select Committee said today and because of the common-sense practical approach that he takes to such matters. I have come across a number of serious problems in my constituency. I am absolutely convinced that the 60 or so people who came to see me the other day are not inventing the difficulties about which they told me and I urge my right hon. Friend to look carefully at the representations that he has received and, if necessary, to make the appropriate adjustments to the statutory formula, to ensure that the agency works as intended in line with the principles on which we all agree.

Mr. Lilley: I am glad that, like most hon. Members, my hon. Friend accepts the principles on which the agency is based. There have, of course, been widespread protests. My hon. Friend will remember that, before the agency began its work, I spoke to him and to many other colleagues in the House and warned them that although the expectation would be resistance from and difficulties for women when the agency was introduced, in fact the reaction would come from men who were reluctant to pay in full the costs of maintaining their children. We must recognise that there is inevitably some resistance to paying in full the costs of maintaining children if people have not been doing so until now.

Mr. Ingram: Does the Secretary of State accept that there is real anger—as evidenced in questions that have been raised by Conservative Members, and, not least, by hon. Members from other parts of the House—at the way in which the Act has been implemented in practice and that the patience of those who have been targeted by the agency is rapidly running out? When does he expect his Minister to report to the House on the Department's review of the agency? Will he give an assurance that the review will rest on the needs of the children, not the Treasury?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman talked about targeting and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State explained that the take-on schedule of the agency has not been changed. I remind the hon. Gentleman that, in 96 per cent. of the cases so far contacted by the agency, the mother and child are on benefit and the father usually has a reasonable income. That fact has not come over in many of the representations that have been made. It is rare for the fathers to mention that they have been content to leave their child, and the mother of their child, on benefit.

Two thirds of those whom we are taking on this year have been paying no benefit at all and we have been much more successful than many people suggest in tracking down absent fathers who had left without any trace—92 per cent. have now been traced. We will take those facts into account while keeping the agency under review, as well as the points that the hon. Gentleman made, which, of course, I recognise also have a significance.

11. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the extent to which Child Support Agency decisions have resulted in a second wife making a contribution to the maintenance of the first wife.

Mr. Burt: There are no circumstances in which a second wife of an absent parent will be required to contribute to the maintenance of the first. Details of the earnings of an absent parent's new partner are needed for just two reasons: first, to assess whether she can afford to contribute towards the upkeep of her own children in the new relationship; and, secondly, to determine whether the amount of maintenance that the absent parent has been assessed to pay can be reduced under the protected income provisions.

Mr. Tredinnick: Does my hon. Friend agree that, however laudable his aims, there are real problems faced by fathers when they receive a bill for 15 weeks' maintenance if they have not been quick enough off the mark in getting the form in? Does he further agree that that, for whatever reasons, is causing real hardship and that there is a danger that the second family will end up trying to support the first family through a circuitous route?

Mr. Burt: On my hon. Friend's point about arrears, it is not the case that those arrears need to be paid off immediately; the agency fully understands the impact that a sizeable amount of arrears might have on a family and it is possible to negotiate with the agency how the arrears should be paid off. It should also be remembered that there is another voice, which tends not to come out in press reports, and has not come out much here, although it has been commented on by the Select Committee. At the end of all this, there is a parent and a child who are entitled to receive the maintenance. That voice is all too rarely heard.

As to my hon. Friend's point about protection of the second family, they are protected through the formulae. Matters that my hon. Friend and others have raised will be taken into account.

Mr. Rooney: Does the Minister accept that the principle of the absent parent paying maintenance was accepted at the time before the formula was published? The formula was published some time after the Bill went through Committee and the House. Does he further accept that, if children are in a family situation where benefit is paid, the involvement of the Child Support Agency should be limited to the amount of benefit in payment for those children and that any additional maintenance recovered should go to the family?

Mr. Burt: The formula was part of the Act. It was debated and consulted on. As to social security,

> "it was always intended that, in cases where it was assessed that the absent parent could afford to do so, the financial responsibility for the care of children should move from the social security system to the absent parent. In some cases maintenance will be a substitute for Income Support; in others, the sums received by the children will certainly improve their circumstances."

That is a quote from paragraph 20 of today's Select Committee report.

Mr. Harris: Is not it clear to my hon. Friend that every hon. Member accepts that the agency is a good idea——

Mr. Skinner: No.

Mr. Harris: As usual, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is the odd man out. However, most of us feel that the agency has gone drastically wrong in the details and the implications of the scheme. Will he have a word with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and ask him whether he remembers the warning that I gave him, that all hell would break out if court settlements were retrospectively overturned by the agency rather than by the courts? That is what has happened, particularly where husbands have made over houses to their wives. Much of the resentment and many of the difficulties stem from that.

Mr. Burt: The principles have been broadly endorsed by the House on a number of occasions and again today by the Select Committee and I do not accept that the way in which the agency has worked has been contrary to the character envisaged. However, some adjustments have been suggested and we are conscious of the criticisms that have been made and are endeavouring to meet them. We have tried to address the central point and the central principles, including the difficulty with the so-called clean break principle. I spent a lot of time on that with the Select Committee, which recognises that there is no other way for the formula to deal with the situation than the way in which we are dealing with it now.

We tried to ensure that we were fair to both sides after the clean break has been made. We are pleased with the endorsement of principle. We shall look at the criticisms and difficulties raised—we do not minimise them. Today has been a good day for the Child Support Agency and for the House, which originally wanted that change. It is up to us to make sure that it happens in a manner that the House finds fully acceptable.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Market Testing

31. **Mr. Garnier:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received urging him to impose a moratorium on the market testing programme.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. David Davis): First, the Chancellor regrets that he cannot be here today. He is attending a conference in Brussels of the Council of Ministers, discussing the future of the framework for research programmes.

The Council of Civil Service Unions has asked me to impose a moratorium. I note also that early-day motion 2587, dated 3 November 1993, called on the Government to halt the market testing programme.

Mr. Garnier: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that a moratorium would be a grave setback to other welfare spending projects? Has not the present system enabled £100 million worth of savings to be made—savings that will continue to be made every year? Will he confirm that, in encouraging market testing, he is, contrary to the behaviour of the Labour party, which is backed by trade unions, putting the public first and not the providers?

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend is right. That sort of money would pay for a couple of hospitals, 50,000 primary school places or 10 secondary schools. All those items of expenditure would be in the public interest, as is low taxation, although the Labour party never seems to learn that.

Mr. Garrett: Why does not the Minister call for a moratorium on market testing until it can be shown to have led to any improvement in service to the customer? That is the one element missing from any statement that Ministers make on market testing. They cannot show that it leads to an improvement in service to the customer.

Mr. Davis: As ever, the hon. Gentleman is wrong. The market testing programme carried out this year was followed up by a review by my Department, with the managers of the individual services, asking what has happened to the quality of service provision. In every case, it was at least as good as that preceding it and, in 32 per cent. of cases, it was better.

32. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will indicate the size of his Department's 1993-94 market testing programme and what it was in 1991-92.

Mr. David Davis: The size of the market testing programme for the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's Department in 1993-94 is some £23·7 million, which is about the same as for the whole Government in 1991-92, and some 30 times higher than in their own earlier programme.

Mr. Jenkin: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the good example set by his Department in saving money and improving services to its customers. Does he agree that it is necessary to find service improvements and cash savings through the market testing programme, to enable the Government to achieve the public expenditure totals that they set themselves in the Budget? Is not it also important to realise that that can be done while improving quality for the customer?

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend is right. Our programme has identified savings of some £5 million, which is about 28 per cent. on the base cost of what has been addressed and roughly four times the cost of the analysis programme. We have heard a great deal of barracking from the Opposition about worse service or the absence of quality improvements. I will give them one example that centres solely on service improvement. I refer to the Strangeways prison market test, which was one by——

Mr. Garrett: Group 4?

Mr. Davis: No, by the in-house team. That programme made small cost savings but improved the service delivered. It provides prisoners with 35 hours work per week and 60 hours of structured activity. When I think about it, structured activity is the opposite of what was happening at Strangeways the last time that I saw it on television.

Ms Eagle: Will the Minister admit that many people's experience of market testing—for example, in the health service—is of managers giving themselves massive salary increases? Given the scandals involving the misuse of huge amounts of public money, particularly in places such as Wessex health authority, will the Minister acknowledge that the public are wary of the much-trumpeted advantages of market testing? They see it as just another way of making a quick buck for the Government's friends.

Mr. Davis: The hon. Lady has wandered off into the realm of health service reforms, but my answer to her is entirely in line with the remarks of members of the Opposition Front Bench. They ask, "Ask the customers." For every 100 people treated by the health service before the reforms, 115 are treated now. That is the acid test of any reform.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that the value for money is much more important than jobs for the boys and that where market testing and competitive tendering take place, the customer gets a better service at less cost to the taxpayer?

Mr. Davis: I agree with my hon. Friend and add to his point about jobs for the boys. Sometimes, the virtues of the market testing programme are lost in the propaganda that flies across from the Opposition. The last component of this year's market testing programme was the Inland Revenue's decision to award an information technology contract to EDS-Sicon. It is worth reading the four key objectives of the selection process:

> "Substantial improvements in cost-effectiveness of IT servicess. Improved speed of delivery in development and enhancement of systems. Rapid access to 1990s skills, tools and technologies."

The final objective—although this is jobs for the boys it also means benefits for the boys, and girls—is to "optimise career opportunities" for the 2,000 existing information technology staff. Market testing can be a programme by which everybody gains.

Mr. Meacher: The Minister confuses objectives with achievement. If the Government really believe in fair competition between the public and private sectors, why are they still trying to wriggle out of the TUPE regulations by claiming that this is a matter of subsidiarity? Does not that make it obvious that the Government know that the private sector can only win on the basis of lower pay and worse terms and conditions for employees, not on the basis of greater efficiency? When the private sector cannot win even on that basis, is not the whole exercise reduced to farce when the Minister refuses to accept an in-house bid that is £1 million lower—as at the driver and vehicle licensing centre in Swansea—or even refuses an in-house bid altogether, as with the Inland Revenue's information technology work? It is clear that that has nothing to do with efficiency but has everything to do with political dogma.

Mr. Davis: I shall answer the six or seven questions that I can remember. The first question was on the DVLA. The exercise to which the hon. Gentleman referred—the so-called £1 million lower exercise—was a benchmarking, theoretical exercise. In case he is worried about that, I inform him that the DVLA will be allowed to bid for the contract in the next year or so. I do not think that he was listening to what I said about the EDS exercise. One of the points that emerged was the great benefit to staff as a result of EDS being able to find more work and introduce better technology. That helped staff and kept them in their jobs with more and better prospects. Not everybody in the private sector views TUPE as difficult. Indeed, Mr. Cox of Hoskyns has said that TUPE is an advantage because it gives some security in dealing with staff.

Citizens Charter

33. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress is planned on implementing the citizens charter in next steps agencies.

Mr. David Davis: We expect all agencies that serve the public direct to publish a charter or charter standard statement and to report on performance against it over time. Many agencies, such as the Employment Service and the Benefits Agency, already have a charter. Those that do not are to consider publishing one when their framework document is reviewed. New agencies should have a charter on launch. In the near future, the Department will publish a White Paper—the 1993 review—on next steps agencies in Government.

Mr. Hain: At a time when the DVLA in Swansea is being market tested, is the Minister aware that its staff feel deeply insulted by their special chartermark award, especially as £3,970 was spent on public relations trinkets—money that would have been better donated to a local charity—one of which was a tax disc holder that was illegal according to the DVLA's specification? Is he further aware that they feel deeply insulted that more than £300,000 has been spent on fees to consultancies to oversee the market testing programme, when their jobs are at stake and their futures being destroyed?

Mr. Davis: I repeat to the hon. Gentleman the comments that have been made by Labour Front-Bench spokesmen: the first test of the market testing programme is in the eyes of the customer. The DVLA was awarded a chartermark for providing a good service to the customer, which will help it in winning the next contract. I should not underestimate that. The DVLA staff whom I met were certainly not as he described but were very much in favour of and pleased with winning the award.

Mr. Brandreth: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the point of these agencies is to make the service more responsive and sensitive to the customer and to enable Ministers to raise standards and to ensure that we go more for total quality? Will he let us know what he is doing to ensure that improvements are more widely recognised?

Mr. Skinner: Give him a chartermark pullover.

Mr. Davis: I think that my hon. Friend has enough pullovers of his own.

My hon. Friend is quite right. The aim of the programme is to raise standards year on year. Many processes exist to help to convey the improvements that are being achieved already and to enable best practice to be disseminated throughout the public service. A measure of that is the 10 charter forums that have been held throughout the country, at which public service providers have compared notes on how they have improved their service to the public and how they can continue the process of development and improvement.

34. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the Government intend to increase or reduce the number of citizens charters in the forthcoming year.

Mr. David Davis: The citizens charter covers all public services. Thirty eight charters and many statements of charter standards have been published by Government Departments, agencies and public services. I expect a further two charters to be published in 1994 and up to 10 to be reissued with improved standards.

In addition, a wide range of local services have issued local charters. They cover activities such as police and fire services, hospitals, GPs and local authorities.

Mr. Bayley: Does the hon. Gentleman see the need to protect the quality of service and the efficient use of public money spent by the Franchising Director in purchasing public service rail services by extending the passengers charter to the private sector companies which will be running rail services in the future, or is there to be a different quality threshold for private rail operators than there is for British Rail?

Mr. Davis: The whole point of the franchise exercise is to improve services, to ensure that better services are provided after they have been privatised.

Mrs. Lait: Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating Strathclyde university on becoming the first university to win a chartermark for the excellence of its career service? Does he agree that it is proof of improving standards in the higher education sector as a response to the market? Does he also agree that there is a great need for continuing improvement in the standards of service offered by the public services?

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend goes to the nub of the charter, market testing and, indeed, of all Government reform activities. They are aimed at improving the quality and value for money of services. The value-for-money component is by no means in opposition to quality. Often delivering better quality—getting things right first time—means that things do not have to be done twice and that it costs less to do so.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Has the Minister examined the way in which compensation schemes work under the charters, for example, in the public transport sector where lack of investment means more breakdowns, an increase in compensation payments and, therefore, even less money being available to tackle the causes of those breakdowns? In view of the lack of capital investment, which has been seen most starkly on London Transport in recent weeks, is not it obvious that those compensation packages could tackle the problem that the customer wants to see tackled, which is to get from A to B on time?

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman picked an extraordinary example because London Transport has four times the level of capital investment that it received under the Labour Greater London council. He is pinning down the wrong problem. One of the most important components of improving the reliability of delivery in public as in private service is management.Compensation does two things: the first is to give proper and appropriate recompense to those who have suffered from poor service and the second—the other side of the coin—is to give a strong signal to management that they must do something to deliver better service, which is what the charter is all about.

Market Testing

35. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much Government activity will be market tested in 1993-94; and what was the size of the 1991-92 programme.

Mr. David Davis: We plan to subject central Government activities costing more than £800 million to competition in the 12 months to 30 September 1994. This is a 30-fold increase over the 1991-92 outturn of just under £25 million.

Mr. Evans: I am extremely grateful for that reply. Will my hon. Friend encourage all Government Departments to examine further ways in which they could increase market testing and embrace it vigorously? As he has already mentioned the Inland Revenue, will he welcome its decision to enter negotiations with a private company to introduce market testing in its strategic information and technical services?

Mr. Davis: I welcome that company, as I have already said. The programme has delivered virtues and benefits throughout Government services and does so not only in terms of the direct public services that we have already mentioned—it delivers the capacity to give wider service, including perhaps more defence, which was discussed at the weekend.

One example of the improvement in efficiency that has arisen in Departments, even though it has not yet got as far as market testing, was the maintenance of the main battle tank. It used to take 34 weeks to maintain but now takes only 19. That means that there is a cost saving and a benefit to the people who use the main battle tank.

Dr. Howells: It is a pity that the Minister did not also quote the sums which, between 1991 and now, each of the Departments that had pushed out its charters and its market tests had spent on management consultants. Before he does any more of that, will he speak to the Secretary of State for Wales, who reportedly called in the heads of the quangos and the next steps agencies in Wales and warned them that they were to cut off the gravy train to the management consultants who had been doing very well out of that exercise?

Mr. Davis: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should address the latter part of his question to the Secretary of State for Wales. In my Department the costs that were incurred at the beginning of the market testing programme were matched 4·4 times over by the savings that arose. That has been the experience right across the board—four times or better.

Sir Giles Shaw: Does my hon. Friend believe that in setting priorities for market testing in Government activity he should use some type of scientific endeavour? Would he consider using technology foresight, for example, as a method of choosing the areas of Government activity in which he wants market testing to occur?

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend's suggestion is ingenious. In the process of market testing we discuss with the Departments the areas in which they think that they will obtain the most value for money and the best service provision improvement. That has turned out so far to be a very effective process.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Minister recall telling me on 25 October that the First Division Association of civil servants was supportive of market testing? Subsequently he received a letter from the secretary of the association, saying that she could not conceive how he could possibly have reached that conclusion because of the letters that she sent to him before and after his answer. Will he now honestly admit, without quoting selectively from those letters, that he has seriously inadvertently misled the House and will he now apologise, because the First Division Association of civil servants very much opposes the present system of market testing?

Mr. Davis: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to hear what I have already written to him and told him. I was speaking from memory last time, but I am now speaking from the text. This is Elizabeth Symons, writing to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 26 May:

> "Perhaps I should make it clear from the beginning that the FDA does not oppose the principle of market testing; indeed there is much in your recently published pamphlet devoted to the subject with which our members would agree. The public sector cannot be immune from reform, and should not hold itself aloof from new management methods, where such methods can be shown to be delivering better standards, and better value for money for service users and for all tax payers."

To put the matter absolutely in context, Elizabeth Symons went on to say that she thought that the Government were not taking sufficiently seriously some items, such as confidentiality and several other issues. We take all those issues absolutely seriously and will continue to do so when we make this programme work through the next several years.

Hong Kong

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I will, with permission, make a statement about Hong Kong.

We have an important job to do in the remaining years of British sovereignty in Hong Kong. We intend to carry out those responsibilities, with the support of the House. Part of our task will be to make arrangements for the elections to the district boards, the municipal councils and the Legislative Council in 1994 and 1995.

There is no argument between Britain and China over the principle that Hong Kong's democratic institutions should continue to develop. That is set out in the Sino-British Joint Declaration. It provides that, by 1 July 1997, Hong Kong's legislature will be "constituted by elections". China's Basic Law for Hong Kong after that date spells out more fully the process of political development.

The issue is how those principles should be turned into practical arrangements. The proposals which the Governor put forward in October 1992, with our full support, were carefully framed to be consistent with the Chinese Basic Law. We have all along wished to proceed in agreement with China, in order to assure continuity. That is why we have put so much effort since April into the talks with China.

The talks have been concerned with complex electoral issues, and I apologise for the complexity of this statement. But the underlying question is simple: will we bequeath to Hong Kong an open and democratic system offering the electorate a genuine choice, or will we settle for a system based on small electorates open to manipulation and corruption?

The answer to this question affects the character of Hong Kong. As many right hon. and hon. Members know, Hong Kong owes its success in large measure to the rule of law, supported by a clean and efficient administration. If that asset is to be preserved in modern circumstances, the territory needs an elected and credible legislature which can stand up for its way of life.

That is why we believe that elections held under British administration in Hong Kong need to be fair and open, and acceptable to the people of Hong Kong. On that basis, we have made a concerted effort through 17 rounds of talks to reach agreement with China. I have discussed matters twice with the Chinese Foreign Minister during this period. The Prime Minister sent a message to the Chinese Premier. We have offered to make important moves to accommodate Chinese views, without compromising our essential requirements, as part of an acceptable overall agreement.

We made it plain from the outset that the talks cannot continue indefinitely and that it must be for the Legislative Council to consider and pass the necessary legislation. This will take time. Some 48 constitutional and electoral instruments in Hong Kong are affected and may need amendment. All the primary legislation needs to be in place by July 1994. Some of the more important measures need to be on the statute book by February.

When time began to press, we therefore explored fully the possibility of an interim agreement, which would enable us to get on with legislation on the more urgent issues, and gain a little more time to resolve the remainder with the Chinese.

I explained to the Chinese Foreign Minister in New York on 1 October that this aim would not be achieved by an interim package limited only to the elections in 1994—the district board and municipal council elections. To deal with all the more urgent issues, an interim package needs to include the voting age and the voting method for all three sets of elections, and the abolition of appointed membership in the district boards and municipal councils.

The Chinese side evidently had no difficulty of principle with an interim package covering some of the 1995 LegCo issues. The Chinese accepted our proposal that the voting age should be lowered to 18 for all three elections. They also seem to have had no difficulty of principle with our proposal that the voting method should be single seat, single vote. They accepted that this should apply to the district board and municipal council elections. But they refused to accept as part of this possible interim package that the single seat, single vote method should apply to the Legislative Council.

We and the Governor believe that there are compelling reasons for including this proposal on the voting method in the interim package. In practical terms, it would otherwise be necessary to legislate twice on the voting system, using up legislative time which will be in short supply next year.

The single seat, single vote system enjoys widespread support in the Legislative Council. If we had accepted the Chinese position and introduced legislation to apply this voting method to the district boards and municipal councils only, the council might have extended the measure to apply to the elections to its own body, since we know that it is in favour of that. That would have led straight back to further difficulties with the Chinese Government. We would not have saved time: we would have wasted it.

Despite our best efforts, it has not been possible to reach agreement on this issue. The question of abolishing appointed members also remains unsolved. Time has now run out for pursuing these points. The Governor has therefore announced that he will publish draft legislation on the 10th of this month, for introduction on the 15th of this month. That will allow work to begin straight away in a Bills Committee of the Legislative Council.

The proposals on which the Governor intends to legislate this month are largely uncontroversial in Hong Kong. We had thought that they were uncontroversial with China. On a number of them, it was possible to reach a common view in the talks. In those cases, the legislation will reflect that. The Governor is not at this stage legislating on the main issues which remain in dispute—the functional constituencies, the composition of the election committee, and objective criteria for the through train.

We are not breaking off the talks: we have proposed a further round in December to pursue agreement on remaining issues. We are prepared to work seriously and constructively to that end. We strongly hope that the talks will continue in spite of what has been said, because Britain and China have to carry out what they agreed—I repeat, what they agreed—which is to preserve Hong Kong's way of life and success while transferring sovereignty. We all know that that is a unique task and one that we have not had to do in this form before. It is also difficult, and it is best carried out together.

The Joint Declaration makes clear the fundamental British responsibility up to the middle of 1997. We and the Governor are committed to working with China in the interests of Hong Kong, and we look for corresponding commitment from their side.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): The House will welcome the opportunity to question the Home Secretary on his important and rather serious statement about developments over Hong Kong. I reiterate that we have always supported these proposals. Modest though they are, we have given them a fair wind, because, I guess like most democrats, we wanted, albeit a little late in the day, a widening of the franchise and a broadening of the democratic process in Hong Kong.

Given that the Joint Declaration accepts the evolution of democracy and that it is enshrined in the Basic Law enacted by the People's Republic of China, the central question in response to the right hon. Gentleman's statement is, what on earth has gone wrong?

There is quite clearly a fundamental divide between the Government of the People's Republic of China and Her Majesty's Government. I accept what the right hon. Gentleman says, that the dispute is about the detailed implementation of procedures for elections. Everyone accepts that whatever proposals emerge must ensure fair and open elections that are acceptable to the people of Hong Kong; otherwise, there would be no point in going through the process.

Who was suggesting that any counter-proposals from China are not intended to be fair, open and acceptable? Is that the implication of the right hon. Gentleman's statement? Perhaps I had better reiterate something else. I do not have any particularly fond feelings for the perpetrators of the Tiananmen square massacre or other details of human and democratic rights in the People's Republic of China, but it is not conciliatory or constructive to imply, as the right hon. Gentleman apparently did in his statement, that the Chinese are suggesting alternatives that are open to abuse and corruption. If that is not the right hon. Gentleman's intention, he should make that clear to the House.

The statement has serious implications for relations between Her Majesty's Government and that of the People's Republic of China, but they are even more serious for the future of Hong Kong's people. If it is impossible to reach agreement on the simpler details, what real hope can there be for a deal on the more complex issues that have yet to be discussed and negotiated? It seems as though the through train of democratic reform has just come off the rails in these talks.

Why has not it been possible to persuade the Government of the People's Republic of China to accept even these simplest of proposals? There is a great lacuna in the right hon. Gentleman's statement, because nowhere does it say why there has been any disagreement. If it is simply intransigence and obstinacy on the part of the People's Republic, the Home Secretary should say so, especially in view of Mr. Deng Xiaoping's statement in the early 1980s:

> "We hope that the Chinese and British Governments will engage in friendly consultations on this question, and we shall be glad to listen to the suggestions put forward by the British Government."

If that remains the position of the Government of the People's Republic of China, we need to know more about why no progress has been made. Is it, as Sir Percy Cradock suggests, that these discussions got off on the wrong foot in October 1992, and that Her Majesty's Government have been unable to recover the situation since then?

For example, what will the right hon. Gentleman do if, as a result of unilateral action on legislation—I understand the time scale and accept that the Governor cannot wait indefinitely—the Chinese Government refuse to be involved in any further discussions? Can the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that pressing ahead with the proposals will not jeopardise developments such as the new Hong Kong airport and other joint projects?

Is it not clear that China intends to set these proposals aside in 1997 and introduce its own plans? Is it not also clear that, without a substantial recovery of trust and further serious negotiations which end in agreement, there is nothing that Her Majesty's Government would be able to do about that?

Mr. Hurd: The bulk of the right hon. Gentleman's questions should be addressed to the Government in Peking. My responsibility to the House is to explain and justify what the Government and the Governor are proposing. It is for the Chinese Government to explain why, if our proposals were not reasonable—as I believe they are—they have not so far been accepted. In the early autumn of last year, I informed the Chinese Foreign Minister of what the Governor of Hong Kong proposed to say. Weeks passed, with no Chinese reaction except a request that he should not say it. He said it, and then there was a Chinese protest. After several months, the Chinese began the discussions which took the course that I have described.

Issues of very substantial importance remain unresolved. We want the electorates for the functional constituencies to expand. We want the composition of the election committee to be in itself elected. We want an objective-criteria through train, so that the people elected in 1995 know what they have to do—for example, taking an oath to the new special administrative region—in order to stay on the council after the transfer of sovereignty.

Those are all outstanding issues, and on all of them we have put forward proposals that we think are modest and reasonable, as the right hon. Gentleman has said. What is immediately in question are not those matters but matters that, until recently, we thought were not controversial.

The right hon. Gentleman talked in very gloomy terms, but he will have noticed the very robust confidence of Hong Kong in recent days and weeks, which is a change from when I first began to deal with these matters some years ago. The people of Hong Kong know what is going on, because Hong Kong is not a place where matters are long or successfully concealed, but they have not allowed it to deter the colony from going ahead. That is a change from the days when the slightest rumblings of differences between Britain and China caused a great deal of gloom and despondency in Hong Kong. It is very much a change for the better.

The right hon. Gentleman's basic point is right. Some people—for example, Sir Percy Cradock in his article yesterday—talked as if we were running up against a Chinese reluctance to contemplate future democracy. The scheme is that, in 1999, two years after the transfer of sovereignty, the number of directly elected members should rise from 18 to 24 and then to 30 in the year 2003. The functional constituencies should rise to 30, and

[Mr. Hurd]

members of the LegCo appointed by the Governor should disappear altogether. Whose scheme is that? That is in the Basic Law.

We are not talking about a difference of principle; we are talking about the way in which to move towards implementing the principles in the Chinese Basic Law.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the erosion of the development of a trustworthy system of democracy in Hong Kong will also erode the whole basis of law—including law affecting commerce and business—on which Hong Kong's prosperity has been built, and will continue to be built? Will not that be greatly to the disadvantage of the business community, and, indeed, that of Beijing?

Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is no suggestion in any of the evidence that we have been able to muster in the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs—evidence from independent and expert witnesses—that any of Governor Patten's reform proposals have in any way violated the Joint Declaration, the Basic Law or the exchange of letters between himself and the Chinese Foreign Minister?

In the light of that, will my right hon. Friend accept that he has my full support in making every effort first to explain to Beijing—with the backing of many others in Asia—that it is vital in the long term for the reforms to proceed steadily, and secondly to ensure that everything possible is done to maintain friendly talks and arrangements with Beijing? It must be brought home to Beijing that its benefit, and that of Hong Kong, will be at stake if the talks break down completely, and obstruction replaces consultation and co-operation.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. His Committee is carrying out a thorough investigation, and we look forward very much to its report. I am also grateful for the issue today of what I suppose is in part an interim report.

My right hon. Friend has put it exactly right. It is in the interests of China, Britain and, above all, Hong Kong for Hong Kong to retain its character—which, as all who visit it will know, is capitalist. Recently—in the past decade or so—there has been an increasing and justified demand in Hong Kong for democratic institutions: that, too, is now part of its character. Mr. Deng Xiaoping—who has already been quoted—is, after all, the author of the concept of two systems in one country. It is in the interests of all concerned that that concept exists not as just a phrase, but as a reality.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Does the Foreign Secretary accept that the Governor and indeed Her Majesty's Government have been reasonable with the Government of China, almost to the point of being unreasonable with the people of Hong Kong? As one who knows China, does the right hon. Gentleman accept that it too has changed dramatically over the past decade? It is no longer a political or an economic monolith; the provinces have all developed in different ways.

What can the right hon. Gentleman do to reassure the Chinese that the same would be true of Hong Kong, and that the idea that it would be used as a base for undermining the system of government in Beijing is an entirely unreal fear?

Does the Foreign Secretary also accept that, if we compromise too much on elections to the legislature, we shall undermine the very foundation of the rule of law in Hong Kong?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with those points. I think it wise for the Governor to continue to operate and to make proposals to the Legislative Council—which will make decisions accordingly—within the scope of the Chinese Basic Law. As the right hon. Gentleman says, China is changing very fast. No one can say quite how far those changes will go between now and midnight on 30 June 1997, and it is therefore right to maintain the line that we have been taking—the principle of "two systems, one country".

That implies that, if the Chinese wish to intend to continue on a communist line inside the People's Republic, that is a matter for them and not for Hong Kong—and equally that, within Chinese sovereignty, Hong Kong should be free to retain its own character.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Is it not the case that, although the holding of the elections is contained in the Sino-British agreement, the form in which they should be held is not detailed? That being the case, surely doing nothing is not an option. It is incumbent on the Government of Hong Kong to introduce some measures to explain how the elections shall be held. The Governor can hardly be accused of being precipitate, after waiting 12 months and engaging in 17 rounds of talks. Will my right hon. Friend assure him that he will have the support of many hon. Members in proceeding with his very modest proposals?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I think that that is exactly right. We have not gone into some stampede, and certainly have not tried to bulldoze proposals through. The original proposals were modest and, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) said, were in line with the Basic Law, with the correspondence that I had with the Chinese in 1990 and with the Joint Declaration.

We have discussed them at great length with the Chinese Government, and hope to discuss them further concerning the main issues that are still in dispute. There comes a time when elections have to be held and, as the House knows, if they have to be held, electoral law must be passed.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Will the Foreign Secretary agree that, after the Tiananmen square incident and the response of the people of Hong Kong and the rest of the world to those events, it was necessary to rebuild the confidence of the Hong Kong people in their future in China?

Does he agree that the October 1992 proposals were consistent with that, and that the subsequent developments and the improved atmosphere in China in its attitude to Hong Kong in comparison with even a year ago is such that we can look forward to a continuing, smooth transition? Does he agree that the Governor should have the support of all hon. Members in making the wishes of the people of Hong Kong paramount in the context of the debate on the Joint Declaration?

Mr. Hurd: I think that, over the next months, we shall have some bumping and grinding on that issue, such as we have today. However, I am optimistic about the remaining period of British sovereignty over the following three and a half years.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): Would my right hon. Friend accept from me, as a recent visitor to Hong Kong, that the economy of the colony is thriving, not only internally but due to the great amount of direct investment in China? Will he therefore impress on the Government of China that it is contrary to their own interests to stifle the democratic and thus entrepreneurial spirit of the colony, as democratically expressed through the Legislative Council; and will he encourage the Governor to continue the work that he is doing?

Mr. Hurd: I will indeed do that. The Chinese Government, the Government of the People's Republic, will make up their own mind about their own interests, but the evidence pours in all the time that the relationship between Hong Kong and China, instead of weakening, is developing fast in the economic field. That development enriches both sides. Hong Kong is growing as an asset, but the growth of that asset depends on it being an effective channel, an outlet, for China to the outside world. That in turn depends on retaining, ensuring, the present characteristics of Hong Kong, which are unique in the world and make it, in my view, the most exciting place that I visit.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Is the Foreign Secretary aware that there will be widespread support for his declaration that the Government stand in defence of democratic principles, and that they wish those principles to be pressed through the ballot box, if necessary with the backing of international opinion, to ensure that the will of the greater number prevails?

Mr. Hurd: That is an admirable general principle, which the right hon. Gentleman and I had an opportunity yesterday to express in another context. I am glad that we agree as widely on that issue as we did yesterday morning.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Does my right hon. Friend realise that there is not only support in the House for his statement, but considerable rejoicing that the Government and the Governor are taking these steps, because there appears to be a degree of intransigence—not the most diplomatic term, but one that many of us may use—on the part of the Chinese Government?

There appear to be delaying tactics which could continue for a long time and which would work against the best interests of the people living in Hong Kong. If that intransigence continues, will my right hon. Friend ensure that it is given a great deal of publicity? The rest of the world needs to know exactly what we are doing, and what the Chinese are trying to do.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. There is always a difficulty, when one hopes to continue discussions with somebody, deciding how much one says about the discussions that have taken place already. We have to strike that balance. I believe that the reason why the Governor and his proposals continue to enjoy such wide support in Hong Kong is that he is no slouch in explaining them in terms that people in Hong Kong readily understand and accept.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that what worries the Chinese Government is not that there will be capitalism in Hong Kong, but that there could be democracy in Hong Kong? Does he accept that, although the House should accept and support the Patten package, it is a watered-down version of the consensus of the Office of the Members of the Legislative and Executive Councils? After 14 months of negotiations, we shall have a watered-down version of the watered-down version.

Will he therefore press ahead with what he has announced today? Will he press ahead as soon as possible with the rest of the Patten package? With only three and a half years to go, unless action is taken quickly, it will not be worth taking at all.

Mr. Hurd: Action has to be taken in time to provide for greater democracy in 1995. The Governor will work out —he has not yet decided it—exactly what package he will put in terms of the main proposals for the elections in 1995 to the Legislative Council. We obviously hope, as I said, that we shall be able to resume discussions with the Chinese Government on some of the outstanding issues. However, that is not sure at present.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Will the Foreign Secretary understand that the modest proposals he has made today will have wide support?

To return to the question of what has gone wrong, which was asked by the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), does the Foreign Secretary recall the report by the Foreign Affairs Committee four years ago? The Committee reported having discussions on that very issue in Beijing. The Chinese officials concerned emphasised that the timetable for the introduction of representative government was a matter for Hong Kong.

Will my right hon. Friend continue to press on the Chinese the fact that many people here cannot understand why it was right then to move more quickly towards democracy, with the support of the Chinese Administration, whereas now, for some reason, the position seems to have changed?

Mr. Hurd: That is a fair question. The agreement that I made with the Chinese in 1990 for the elections in 1991 was for 18 directly elected members out of 60. That is the position in LegCo today. However, the Basic Law proposes to move that figure up to 30 by 2003 and to 24 by 1999. The principle is there is Chinese law—in the Basic Law—which was passed after my right hon. Friend first went to Peking. The question why, in those circumstances, the Chinese Government are not willing to accept the Governor's modest proposals is one to put to them.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Does the Foreign Secretary accept my support for his modest proposals? I believe that the overwhelming majority of hon. Members of all parties support his proposals. Will he pass that support on to the Governor and to LegCo?

Can the Foreign Secretary give an unequivocal assurance to the House? If he is to hold his head up after 1997 as having done his duty for Hong Kong, and if all of us, as Members of Parliament, are to hold our heads up, he and the Governor must not settle for one iota less than a system for the election committee and for the functional constituencies which is democratic, open and incapable of manipulation.

Mr. Hurd: In the end, it will not be for me or for the Governor to decide; the arrangements and decisions on the

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points that the hon. Gentleman mentioned will be for the Legislative Council. That is a point that the Chinese find it hard to accept, but it is a fact that we constantly press on them.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, if the Chinese Government have the best interests of the people of Hong Kong at heart, the best thing they can do is give the go-ahead for the airport and other projects as soon as possible?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Governor of Hong Kong is pressing ahead with the airport, as anyone who flies over Hong Kong and over Lan Tao island can see. However, it is important that the remaining part of the project receives the Chinese consent which is needed. That is another practical example of an asset which is being created day by day, both on the ground and in the sea. It is powerfully in the interests of China that that should be successfully and rapidly completed.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): To sum it up, could it not be argued that there are all sorts of democracies, which come in all shapes and sizes? When the right hon. Gentleman is negotiating with the Chinese Government, will he perhaps consider that many Opposition Members would like to see a system evolve based on the House of Commons and direct elections? Do not the Chinese Government perhaps want a system based on the House of Lords? As the British Government support the House of Lords, might they not put themselves in a dodgy position?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman has a distinctive view of the House of Lords, which used to be shared widely in the country. However, his view is not shared any more, and the hon. Gentleman is being a little old-fashioned on the matter. I have not yet heard a proposal based on the House of Lords from the Chinese Foreign Minister or from the Chinese Premier. Were we to do so, we would be intrigued rather than persuaded.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best way to safeguard the human and constitutional rights of the people of Hong Kong under Chinese rule is to ensure that as many as possible of the democratic proposals agreed under the Joint Declaration of Basic Law are implemented beforehand? Given the somewhat questionable record of the Chinese Government in human rights, both in China and in Tibet, is not the Governor wise indeed to push ahead with democratic proposals to ensure that as many proposals as possible are implemented before the changeover takes place?

Mr. Hurd: The Hong Kong Bill of Rights gives effect in local to the provisions in the international covenant on civil and political rights as applied to Hong Kong. The Joint Declaration—that is to say, the declaration which we made with China—provides that the international covenant will continue to apply to Hong Kong after 1997. My hon. Friend is right about the importance of that.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): If we are serious about helping the development of democracy in Hong Kong, does the Foreign Secretary accept that it is not just a matter of electoral mechanics, important though those are, such as the age of voting or the number of elected members? Are not open government and the freedom of information from censorship key elements in underpinning democracy?

Will the Government encourage Governor Patten to look at censorship and self-censorship of the Hong Kong media, and will they give support to the freedom of information Bill which will come before LegCo next spring? If not, and if the Government are solely concerned with negotiating on the mechanics of democracy, will not their rhetorical support for the widening of democracy be somewhat hollow, as it is not just a matter of electoral mechanics?

Mr. Hurd: No, indeed it is not. I do not know the details of the Bill which the hon. Gentleman mentioned, but I will certainly pass on the message to the Governor. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that it is not a mechanical matter. We have seen relatively recently the growth of a democratic spirit. Until recently, the pressure for that spirit did not exist. However, there is that pressure now. We all have ideas about how that spirit arose and why it is now so strong, but it is there. Therefore, it is not a matter of mechanics. The mechanics are finding the machinery through which that spirit can find expression.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is not only in the interests of China to see the continuing success and prosperity of Hong Kong for the value which Hong Kong can bring to China, but also for the international community to see that an agreement can be reached, so that trade can be opened up with China and that future British investments in China will go ahead? That is something of great value. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is vital that we maintain a working dialogue throughout all the difficulties, small and large, which may occur in future negotiations?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend. The consensus may be broken immediately, but it is notable that every single right hon. and hon. Member on both sides of the House—even, I think, the idiosyncratic hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)—has supported what the Government are attempting to do and the way in which we are seeking to handle this matter. There may be criticisms of the way in which the matter has been handled in the past, but, as regards the path that we are now on, there has been unanimous support, and that is extremely helpful to Hong Kong.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Welcome though the Foreign Secretary's decision to introduce some form of limited democracy in Hong Kong may be, does the right hon. Gentleman not agree that we suffer from something of a credibility problem in that regard? I say that because we have had 100 or so years to sort out democracy: if it is such a good idea, we could presumably have done so some years ago. Now that we are to stand up to the Chinese on this issue, will we be adopting a less supine attitude to one or two other important human rights issues in China, particularly in relation to Tibet?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that our attitude to Tibet has been in the least bit supine. The way in which we have taken the matter up and our discussions with the Dalai Lama prove the reverse. I think that I answered the hon. Gentleman in one of my earlier answers. I first went to Hong Kong in 1954. No one who knew the colony then

—or for many years thereafter—would have sensed a pressure for democratic institutions. Everybody knew that Hong Kong was in a unique position.

That has changed, however. It has changed since 1989 in particular, but it had begun to change before that. We are therefore responding, as the colonial power, to a change in the feeling and wishes of people in Hong Kong. That feeling and those wishes are now part of the character of Hong Kong, which has to be respected, and is respected, under the Joint Declaration and, indeed, the Basic Law.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): May I revert to the question posed by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who spoke for the Opposition, about what has gone wrong? When members of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs visited Beijing a few weeks ago, we unfortunately found a mood of complete intransigence on these issues. I suggest that that is what has gone wrong.

Does my right hon. Friend share my view that it is important that the House should have an early opportunity to express in a formal way what I believe is our overwhelming support for the Governor of Hong Kong —particularly in the light of what I fear are considerable attempts among some business men to undermine his position in Hong Kong itself?

Mr. Hurd: I note my hon. Friend's point, and will draw it to the attention of the House authorities; it may be a matter for the usual channels.

May I also say in passing that I hope that the Select Committee will not include among its recommendations the use of the word "Beijing". I know that it is a matter of personal taste, but I do not talk about "Roma", Bruxelles" or "Moskva", and I do not see any reason to abandon a perfectly reputable English word for a very distinguished Chinese city.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Is not the beauty of democracy the fact that it is open-ended and can encompass moves to the left or the right in different circumstances? Does the Foreign Secretary agree that democracy in Hong Kong should not be regarded as a defence of capitalist arrangements, as those arrangements have often been defended by methods that are far from democratic?

Mr. Hurd: I think that even the hon. Gentleman would agree that, in most societies, there is a link—although not an absolute link—between the free market and free political institutions. What has happened is that, after many years of practising with unique success the principles of the free market, Hong Kong has in recent years developed an appetite—a pressure—for free political institutions.

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, during my recent visit to Hong Kong, I encountered precisely that growing confidence and self-assertiveness of which he spoke, and also a great groundswell of support for the Governor's general approach to all the affairs of the colony, and specifically to democracy for the colony? Does my right hon. Friend not think that one of the most effective ways in which Peking could demonstrate that it has the best interests of Hong Kong at heart is to enable more rapid progress to be made with the negotiations surrounding the work of the Joint Liaison Group?

Mr. Hurd: In addition to the constitutional talks that I have described to the House, there is, as my hon. Friend says, the work of the Joint Liaison Group and the airport committee. The JLG is trying to carry through a whole series of changes, many of them completely technical and legal—legalistic, even—to enable the law of Hong Kong to pass without difficulty into the period following the change of sovereignty. It is important for things such as air services out of Hong Kong that that technical legal work should continue, and, indeed, accelerate.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Although I have only contempt for the manner in which China treats its citizens—the complete denial of all democratic rights—is the Secretary of State aware that we should be careful not to adopt a "holier than thou" attitude, and that some sort of apology is due to the people of Hong Kong, because previous Governments, including this Government in the past 14 years, did not take steps to establish the form of democracy that we are now talking about, and are right to talk about? If those democratic steps had been taken in the past, China would have little to criticise.

Mr. Hurd: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. I have dealt with that point twice already. It is not historically correct.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge the understandable concerns of the business community in Hong Kong? Notwithstanding that, does he agree that we should give priority to protecting those institutions that have made Hong Kong special, and in particular to the rule of law?

Mr. Hurd: It is right that someone in these exchanges should mention the anxieties of the business community, and my hon. Friend is quite right to do so. He is right also to put it in context and draw the conclusion that he has.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): My right hon. Friend reminded the House, through his liking for the word "Peking", that he was once based there. He knows that the Chinese will not respect us if we do not fulfil our commitments under the agreements with China to hand over in 1997 with still strong economic and social stability. It must be the Government's judgment, with the Governor, how that can best be fulfilled. The previous Foreign Affairs Select Committee, of which I was a member, wanted us to go faster on democracy so that the Governor's current proposals should have the full and whole-hearted support of the House, and the Chinese should understand why.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right in his history, and I agree with his latter point.

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): Does my right hon. Friend think that it is a question of the Chinese not understanding, or not wanting to understand, that greater democracy is an essential guarantee of the British legacy to the Chinese after 1997, particularly the rule of law, the efficient and relatively corruption-free administration, and the free enterprise system that prevails in that colony?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend. In trying to answer the questions that have come from many parts of the House about the reasons for the Chinese attitude, in fairness one must say that they feel a good deal of suspicion that, with its institutions, Hong Kong could

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become a centre for what they would regard as subversion, of advocating violent change in China. They feel a certain suspicion of the British Government and of the Governor.

It must be our job and the job of the people in Hong Kong over the next three and a half years to get those suspicions put on one side and pushed into the history books, because the present interests of Britain, Hong Kong and China in all those matters coincide to a remarkable extent.

Orders of the Day

WAYS AND MEANS

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [30 November].

AMENDMENT OF THE LAW

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and the public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply, acquisition or importation;
(b) for refunding any amount of tax;
(c) for varying the rate of that tax otherwise than in relation to all supplies, acquisitions and importations; or
(d) for relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description.—*[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

Question again proposed.

Budget Resolutions and Economic Situation

Madam Speaker: I must inform the House that I have seen fit to limit speeches between the hours of 7 and 9 pm to 10 minutes.

4.17 pm

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): The whole House will agree that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor presented a skilful and imaginative Budget last week. He tackled the deficit decisively and set public borrowing on a downward path with the robust and penetrating help of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary. He cut no less than £10 billion from previous spending plans, with tough measures to reduce the cost of government and bring spending on social security under control. His tax increases are carefully targeted to protect incentives, as the House would want, and help the supply side of the economy. The Budget has new measures to help businesses and jobs.

The Budget creates the right climate for business and for investors. It will foster the economic recovery that is clearly gathering momentum. *[Laughter.]* Already unemployment is falling and output is expanding—a laughing matter to the Labour Front Bench. Industry is more competitive and exports are at record levels. Our inflation and interest rates are among the lowest in Europe. This year and next year, we should have faster growth than any of our major partners on the continent.

As part of that picture, education will be critical in the next three years. That is why I am all the more sorry that the Labour party did not think the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) sufficiently weighty to field for a debate such as this. Quite properly, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment spoke in a similar debate last Friday, the shadow spokesman on employment also spoke. It is unusual in House of Commons practice for an Opposition spokesman not to take part in a debate, but not surprising considering the shambles to which the hon. Member for Dewsbury has reduced Labour's education policy after only 18 months in the job.

Let us take higher education policy. Had the hon. Lady been here to speak, she might have been able to tell us a bit more about Labour's "Now you see it, now you don't" policy on higher education. After she became Front-Bench spokesman on education, she was telling anyone who would listen that she would have the guts to tackle the issues and that Labour would produce a green paper with radical proposals on the future funding of higher education.

The hon. Lady instructed the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker)—unfortunately, he is not here—who was then the Labour party spokeman on higher education, to go away and draft a paper on higher education. Following her instructions, that is precisely what he did. The paper was prepared and copies were sent, as part of a pitch-rolling exercise, to a number of journalists. Vice-chancellors were briefed and sent a copy of the paper. Yet, at the eleventh hour, and on the specific orders of the leader of the Labour party, the green paper was withdrawn. As the author later conceded, it did not even contain any concrete proposals, yet it was obviously thought that to commit itself to any form of action was too risky for a party that had been in opposition for only 14 years.

As some hon. Members may recall, a copy of the paper fell into my hands. In the interests of open government, I published the green paper during a press conference. It stated precisely:

> "Labour will not simply stand on the side . . . We will not simply wring our hands. This would not be a serious response from a mature political party".

I agree: it would not. So why is Labour still standing on the side and wringing its hands? Could it be because of some of the barmy ideas in its green paper—ideas such as a new corporate levy on business to pay for higher education? As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment never fails to point out about Labour's training levy, that would be just another job-destroying tax.

What was the reward of the hon. Member for Perry Barr for producing that radical document? He told us all about it in an article in *The Times* on 8 November last month, in which he said:

> "unfortunately, I wrote myself off the front bench".

In other words, he was sacked. He was forced to fall on his sword for following the instructions of the principal Front-Bench spokesman. No wonder he went on to write in exasperated terms:

> "One of the greatest dangers facing Labour after such a long period outside office is that of becoming a professional Opposition. That is, a party that opposes the government, but never risks upsetting the vested interests . . . a responsible political party cannot hide its head in the sand".

I agree with the hon. Gentleman, although I have some difficulty with the concept of Labour "becoming a professional Opposition". As my hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench will no doubt agree, we see Labour remaining an amateur Opposition.

Winding up the debate in the House on the Loyal Address a week or so ago, I asked the Front-Bench spokesman on home affairs, the ever Peter Panish hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), "Where's the beef?" I was asking that about Labour's policy on law and order, but when it comes to education, I can equally ask, "Where's the bottle?" Now, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has suffered the ultimate indignity of being dragged off the bench and substituted for the hon. Member for Dewsbury. I ask the hon. Gentleman, where is the intellectual honesty? I hope that it will be displayed this afternoon, and that the hon. Gentleman will welcome the Budget specifically and in terms—particularly in regard to the help given to all pensioners paying value added tax on domestic fuel.

Not long ago, the hon. Gentleman was interviewed in another article. I love it when Opposition Members write newspaper articles—whether it is the hon. Member for Perry Barr or the hon. Member for Garscadden—because they are always most revealing. The hon. Member for Garscadden was revealing in his article in *The People* on 21 November, when he said of the VAT issue that

> "the Government has to add something on to take account of that"

He went on to say that we

> "could do it with an extra 50p on pensions".

That is exactly what was done by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden) *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I will give way with pleasure to the hon. Gentleman, because I am sure that he will congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Dewar: I am delighted that the right hon. Gentleman raised that issue because it allows me to put the record straight—as I have already done in letters to the Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Secretary of State for Social Security. I make it clear that I did not write an article but was quoted in a way that did not represent my views. At no time have I said or suggested that 50p would be adequate. How could I, when—to take one example—a married couple with two children under 11 will receive only 45p as a result of the so-called compensation package?

If the Secretary of State wants the truth, and as he seems to be so keen on reading *The People*, no doubt he read in that newspaper on Sunday an excellent article by the interviewer who spoke to me for the article that is at the centre of this argument, who described the use made of the quote as "a load of cobblers".

Mr. Patten: It is wonderful to see the hon. Gentleman wriggle on the hook. He had four or five days to think about that matter and has made a pretty pathetic response in trying to get away from his quoted remarks in *The People*. If the hon. Gentleman does not want to eat his words, he should take his complaint to the Press Complaints Commission. Otherwise, my right hon. and learned Friend, who used to be an advocate at the criminal Bar, will have him bang to rights.

My right hon. and learned Friend has provided a focus on public expenditure, maintaining expenditure on law and order and, with my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, allowed my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment to introduce the excellent new apprenticeship schemes that were so warmly welcomed last Friday by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), Labour's new Front-Bench spokesman on employment—for which we were most grateful.

A similar focus on public expenditure has come with the additional money made available for "The Health of the Nation" and with the targeting of record amounts for the education of the nation's young—to which I now turn. If at any stage the otherwise mute and inglorious hon. Member for Dewsbury, who has been gagged by members of her own Front Bench, wants me to give way on any point, I will do so. I believe in freedom of information, and

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I think that it is rotten that Labour's Chief Whip and the Leader of the Opposition have conspired to stop that fine public servant having her say.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor and my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary rightly focused on measures designed to give this country a competitive edge in a fiercely competitive world. Among those measures, none is more important than investment in human capital, represented by our education system. We must ask much of our schools, colleges and universities, and we must ensure that consumers of education—pupils and students, parents and employers—have more information available than ever before to help them to make increasingly informed choices.

It is our responsibility to give more money where we can, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor and other Treasury Ministers have. It is our responsibility to set higher standards and to give more information, but we must also look for responsibility from those in the education system.

It is a matter of grave distress to me to have to report the irresponsible acts that have happened on various university campuses over the past couple of days. I am sure that no hon. Member would support those activities. The first matter was the outrageous attack and jostling of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury in Liverpool. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry that Opposition Members think that it is a joke. Eggs were thrown at my right hon. Friend and his staff, at least one of which struck my right hon. Friend. Luckily, he was wearing his campaigning suit. That was disgraceful behaviour by university students.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Was it a socialist egg?

Mr. Patten: Yes, it was a smelly egg.

On Friday, students at the University of East Anglia in Norwich displayed equally disagreeable and yobbish behaviour. I expect that that will be supported by Labour Members, some of whom, of course, made their careers early on through agitation on campuses, but it is a serious matter. A large number of students invaded the registry at the university. They sat in at the weekend and were removed from the university this morning, having caused damage and trouble, only when a writ was served on them. They had particularly targeted the university loans office, which was shut as a result last Friday.

Such events are not only happening in Norwich and Liverpool. Last Friday, some disagreeable events occurred even in the eternal city, Oxford, which I have the honour to represent. I hope that Opposition Members will treat the matter seriously because I was giving my constituents the opportunity to see me at my advice centre, which is the proper thing for any hon. Member to do. I hope that all democrats support that.

I was not allowed to leave the parish hall in Botley—more than 100 students were sitting outside and blocking my way. They refused to let me and my helper, Mr. Austin Griffiths, a man in his seventies and a parish councillor, leave. They were led by a lot of yobs from Balliol college, who were easily identifiable by a large banner that had "Balliol JCR" on it. We were driven back into the hall, the doors had to be locked and the police had to be called. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry that Oppposition Members treat the matter as such a joke because it was a great waste of police time. The police had to send two cars to break a way through the students and make it possible for me to leave my surgery.

Worse than that—and I suspect that the hon. Member for Dewsbury will laugh even louder at this—were the disgraceful scenes that happened earlier in the sort of parish hall that many of us use for our surgeries: a prefabricated building with windows. As my constituents queued to see me, the hall was surrounded by yobbish students from Oxford university, who I am ashamed to represent in Parliament, and from Oxford Brookes university. They form a tiny minority—most of the students are hard working. They hammered on windows and walls and put my constituents in considerable fear.

The Vice-Chancellor of Oxford Brookes university, Dr. Booth, had been to see me earlier. It is a pity that he could not stay on a bit to remonstrate with the students outside. I was equally surprised when the chaplain to Oxford Brookes university—he came to see me during the demonstration, which was upsetting my constituents, who, like all constituents, want to see us to raise problems; that is our democratic job—said that the behaviour of the students was the type of thing that we should expect.

I have detailed three examples of extraordinarily bad behaviour by university students. If nothing else, it shows the need for the Education Bill, which will be debated in the other place tomorrow, including the necessary reforms of student union matters.

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Patten: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. The attitude of the Labour party throughout has been entirely frivolous. It obviously approves of such demonstrations and does not care if the democratic process is disturbed.

I exonerate the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) who, I think, probably has some sympathy. At least he has been allowed to speak this afternoon. For one dreadful moment, I thought that the Liberal Democrats might have let out the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) for the afternoon but, luckily, we shall hear from the hon. Member for Bath.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): The Secretary of State complains about the behaviour of students. Does he agree that the best way to ensure that there was better behaviour generally throughout the education system would be to invest in pre-school and nursery education? Will he take this opportunity to answer the question that he refused to answer during the debate on the Queen's Speech concerning the Prime Minister's reported enthusiasm for nursery education? Two weeks ago, we heard that the Prime Minister was mad keen on nursery education and had plans for 1 million new places. Does the Secretary of State know anything about that?

Mr. Patten: We debated these issues last Friday week when the House discussed the national education and training targets. The Labour party is so keen on education and training that it did not field one person to support the hon. Lady. The Benches behind her were completely empty, which shows the lack of support for her policies. She had the opportunity then—and will have it again at Question Time—to debate nursery education.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Will the Secretary of State answer the question—where are the plans for nursery education? Do they exist or not?

Mr. Patten: As I have told the House many times, the plans are there. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Lady has asked me a question; does she want me to answer? At the moment, 56 per cent. of three and four-year-olds receive nursery education, and 90 per cent. of three and four-year-olds receive nursery education, pre-school playgroup help or other forms of help, and the number is increasing. The position here is very different from that on the continent—most children in this country start school at rising five, and we have a better record on combined nursery help and primary school education for three and four-year-olds than any other western European country.

I have said many times, although the hon. Member for Dewsbury does not seem to understand—perhaps that is why she is not usually allowed out to speak these days—that the parents, higher education and further education charters have signalled a revolution in the availability of information. There is more and more evidence that performance tables are stimulating individual schools and colleges to look hard at what their students achieve and how they can be helped to do better. *[Interruption.]* Does the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) want me to give way, as he appears to be muttering to himself rather menacingly?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I was waiting for the right hon. Gentleman to answer my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) who asked when the Government are going to plan for nursery education for all. I was saying that the right hon. Gentleman thinks that he is in a public school debating society and that his going to various colleges means that he has been educated beyond his intelligence.

Mr. Patten: That is uncharacteristically ungenerous from one of the few members of the Labour party who can oppose. We leave nursery education largely as a matter for local decision: whether in Tory-controlled Wandsworth or in Labour-controlled Tyneside, nursery education is provided as a matter of local choice.

The combination of ambitious public targets and informed consumer choice will raise standards, and is already doing so. I pay tribute to the devoted teachers throughout the education service who are already——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): A collection of about six intelligent students, led by the president of the students union, came to see me on Friday. They were later joined by some rather less intelligent ones but one of their number made a fair point. He was a mature student who pointed out that he was too old to get a loan and would therefore lose 10 per cent. of his income. That could be a difficulty for the small number of students in that category.

Mr. Patten: We are proud of the fact that about half of the 100,000 additional entrants into the university sector this autumn—the equivalent of 12 new universities created by the Government—are aged 24 or over. One of the problems is that a large number of local authorities do not seem to use their discretionary grants in the way that we believe is right in order to help—as they have the discretion to help from time to time—people aged over 24.

I pay tribute to the devoted teachers throughout the education service, who already make an enormous contribution to the improvements that are made each year, but we constantly need to keep an eye on the international competition. No part of our economy—neither the private sector nor the public services to which, as a nation, we rightly attach importance—can flourish unless the wealth-creating sector flourishes. That sector can flourish only if it has a work force—at all levels, technician and graduate—whose skills are equal, if not superior, to those of our rivals.

Public spending on education is today a higher proportion of gross domestic product in the United Kingdom than in Germany or Japan—a point which I have endlessly made to the hon. Member for Dewsbury during the past 18 months. She is a very slow learner and does not yet seem to have picked up the substantial proportion of GDP that we spend on education in this country compared with our competitors. That means that some aspects of the British education service are the envy of the world, but we want that to be true for the whole of the service. That is why, since we were returned at the last general election, we have given, under the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, priority to education.

We have made it a manifesto priority that one young person in three should benefit from higher education by the end of the decade. As a result of a magnificent effort by the universities and colleges, we have almost achieved that target seven years early. We made it a priority last year to increase the numbers of students in further education by 25 per cent. We are on target to achieve that. The plans that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced will continue that growth. We have made it a priority to support the continued expansion of the self-governing schools—grant-maintained schools—which are a central part of our strategy for levering up standards throughout the education service.

The Government's achievements in each sector of education are, therefore, linked. Our policies for raising standards in school, including the introduction of the GCSE under a Conservative Government and the establishment of a national curriculum, were designed specifically to lead to improved examination performance. They are doing so and they have led in turn to record numbers of young people staying on after the age of 16. I am pleased to be able to tell the House that last year more than 70 per cent. of 16-year-olds were in full-time education; in 1987, the year before the GCSE was introduced, the figure was only 48 per cent. Those improvements have produced the record A-level passes that we are now witnessing and the record numbers of students entering further and higher education—a great success story, backed by substantial sums of money, but we have to get better value for money out of our education system.

In a moment, I shall consider the Government's achievements and plans for each sector of education, but I should first say what is obvious to all, at least on the Conservative Benches. We have promoted levels of participation, for example, in higher and further education, beyond the dreams of the last Labour Government, but we have done so cost-effectively. While the numbers in higher education have increased dramatically, so has the universities' productivity—by 20 per cent. during the past five years. I pay tribute to that.

The expansion of further education and its new independence from local authority control means that we can expect the same increases in productivity from our 480

[Mr. Patten]

further education colleges and sixth form colleges. In education, we are getting more for taxpayers' money than ever before, but I think that we can do more and should do more.

I welcome what my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor said about the Government's private finance initiative. Co-operation between the public and private sectors means valuable new flexibility in funding capital projects. We are already seeing results in higher education, where, I can report to the House, in 1991 the universities were able to add a third again to the funding that was provided by central Government. That is a considerable improvement. The different scale of schools and further education colleges means that we shall have to work even harder to make progress there, but I can assure the House that we are closely considering the application of the private finance initiative to all of education, including schools, especially the secondary sector. My hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury and I are working hard to those ends at the moment.

Let me say clearly that this initiative is about introducing additional resources into the school capital programme where we can, and certainly additional flexibility into the capital funding of education. Public funding will, I can reassure the House, remain an essential element of our capital expenditure, but if, by working closely with the private sector, schools and colleges can make public money go further and use it more effectively, I trust that no one in the House will quarrel with that.

I said earlier that I would speak in more detail about each of the sectors of education and I think that it is important to do that in the light of my right hon. and learned Friend's Budget statement. I shall start with those aspects of education for which I am directly responsible —higher and further education—before moving on to schools, where local authorities are still the channel for most of the funding.

I make no apologies for highlighting higher education. The scale of the success story here is still far too little recognised. When the last Labour Administration left office, only one in eight of our young people was entering higher education. This autumn, the figure will be almost one in three. We have moved from an elitist education system under Labour in 1978-79 to a system with much greater and wider access, after 14 years of Conservative Government. Although I am certainly not complacent, judged by the evidence of A-level entry scores, of completion rates and of degree classes, I think that it has been achieved without compromising quality.

We must watch quality extremely carefully as we expand university education. Universities and colleges have maintained the quality of higher education while achieving large increases in productivity. Productivity has improved by 20 per cent. between 1989 and 1992 and new approaches to teaching and learning should allow further productivity gains to be achieved in future while maintaining quality. Some especially good ideas were put out last week by Lord Flowers in another place about the more intensive use of university buildings.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Can the Secretary of State now tell the House what he anticipates would be the impact of charging students tuition fees, as proposed in the Government document that was under discussion before the Budget?

Mr. Patten: I never comment on stolen documents inside or outside the House. *[Interruption.]* I never comment on stolen Government documents inside or outside the House. I am grateful for all others from all other sources. I am easily found at Sanctuary buildings, SW1.

As far as participation is concerned, the fact that participation among young people is already held close to our target for the year 2000 is excellent news.

Mr. Skinner: Too clever by half.

Mr. Patten: That is something that I will never be able to say about the hon. Member for Bolsover.

However, the recent growth places a large burden on the taxpayer as well as on the institutions. That is why we plan to stabalise participation at its current record level for the next three years. The proportion of young people who are admitted during the next three years will stay the same. It will give universities a welcome breathing space after the recent pell-mell pace of change and an opportunity to ensure that every mechanism is in place to maintain quality. Quality must be the touchstone of our world-beating university system.

It will, of course, be for each university to decide precisely how many students to admit, but we are helping that stabilisation by reducing the level of tuition fees while boosting by an equivalent amount the grant that is paid to universities through the Higher Education Funding Councils. I must emphasise that that shift will have no effect on the overall level of resources that are available to universities, but it will mean that the funding council is able to influence recruitment more closely than in previous years.

Within the new fee levels, we are retaining the differential between the lecture room and the laboratory. We do—especially my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell), the Minister for Further and Higher Education, building on the earlier important work of my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) when he was Minister for Further and Higher Education—wish there to be an increase in the proportion of students in engineering and technology: a fundamental underpinning for the country's future prosperity. The fee differential is one way of encouraging that. Another is our new engineering bursaries scheme, which we hope will start next year, giving 2,000 of the most able young people each year an extra £500 a year for starting on accredited engineering courses. We need that for simple supply side reasons.

The Government's plans provide for capital grant to universities to increase by 20 per cent. in real terms during the next three years. That is good news for universities. In addition, universities' ability to raise from the private sector a significant proportion of the capital that they need is greatly enhanced by changes in the capital regime this year. These allow universities to borrow against Exchequer-funded assets and they relax the rules governing the reinvestment of proceeds of sales of such assets. That demonstrates the great strides being made by the private finance initiative.

Investment in higher education is certainly investment in the economic, as well as the cultural and social, future of the country. In a demanding Budget, we are providing for recurrent funding to universities to rise by 6·7 per cent. between 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Will my right hon. Friend accept that an important element in this higher education improvement is the export opportunities for British education which it will throw up? Indeed, increasingly it already throws them up; and there is great interest world wide in British education. Is this not a promising field?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend the Member for Daventry informs me that more than 100,000 foreign students are studying in this country today. That represents massive foreign exchange earnings. We recently welcomed 12,000 students from Malaysia, and when His Majesty the King of Malaysia was here only a few weeks ago, the Malaysian royal party spoke warmly of the education that those students receive here.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) is of course right, although I am somewhat alarmed by the fact that we do not command a bigger share of the teaching of English abroad. Of the £6 billion market world wide, all too much is in the hands of colleges in Australia and Ireland. I should prefer more of this teaching to be in the hands of our home countries.

Mr. David Shaw: May I suggest that one of the ways in which more foreign students could be attracted to learn English here would be for state-run schools in my constituency and in east Kent to be allowed to take fee-paying students from Europe? It is an anomaly of the Education Act 1944 that we cannot expand an industry that is just sitting in east Kent waiting to be expanded, to the benefit of the public exchequer, of contacts with students from abroad and of helping to develop business contracts abroad.

Mr. Patten: That is an interesting idea which I have not heard before. I shall look into it and write to my hon. Friend whereupon perhaps we will have the chance to talk more about it.

I referred earlier to the burden that the expansion of higher education has placed on taxpayers, the great majority of whom have not enjoyed the economic and other benefits that higher education brings. As the Chancellor said in his Budget statement:

> "Tuition is free; but why should the bus driver or the pensioner also pay higher taxes to finance all the living costs of tomorrow's lawyers?"—*[Official Report,* 30 November 1993; Vol. 233, c 929.]

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Is not the answer to question the fact that it is the son of the taxi driver or bus driver who becomes tomorrow's lawyer—if he has an opportunity to go to university? Without a grant, he may miss that opportunity.

Mr. Patten: It is precisely the sons and daughters of taxi drivers, pensioners and others who have been going to university in ever greater numbers. In 1979, only one in eight of them went to university; now one in three goes. I am proud of that record. I hope that the hon. Gentleman, with his characteristic fairness, will at least recognise that progress.

The Government are not alone in believing that the time has come to redress the balance. We want to do so in a way which does not deter qualified young people from entering higher education and which builds on the success of the Government's policies of recent years. There is a strong moral case for doing that—for not asking those who do not have a lifetime's benefit from higher education to contribute too much from their hard-earned lower incomes. That is socially just, and I am surprised that the Labour party does not agree. There is an equally strong case on the ground of motivation. I cannot stress enough the fact that people value more what they have to pay towards, and are much less likely to drop out, thereby wasting our money and their efforts.

That is exactly the story of mature students—the people to whom my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) referred earlier. Mature students have to struggle to pay for their courses; they work exceptionally hard, they do not drop out and they get their qualifications. The best way of ensuring that graduates bear more of the cost of their attendance in higher education is to accelerate the already planned shift in student support from the grant to the student loan.

That does not mean that students will be poorer. The total resources available through the main rates of maintenance grant and loan will be 4 per cent. higher next year than this, maintaining their value in real terms. The change will not adversely affect parents either. The average parental contribution will continue to fall in real terms. Nor will it affect graduates who are unemployed, at home with children or in low-paid occupations. Borrowers do not have to repay a penny until their income exceeds the threshold for deferment: about £14,000 a year at today's prices.

I should like to say a word about the contribution that further education makes, and will increasingly make, to economic regeneration. As we come out of the recession, it will be essential to have a highly skilled, up-to-date work force. Further education has a key role to play in improving the level and quality of our skills base, among young people and among those already in employment.

That is why we value so much the national targets for education and training which were the subject of such lively debate among Conservative Members two Fridays ago, when not one Labour Member, apart from the hon. Member for Dewsbury, turned up. That was disgraceful.

These targets enjoy the absolute commitment of the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Employment and all of us involved in the education service. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Garscadden disputes what I have said, but he has only to look at the pages of *Hansard.* He will learn that not a single Labour Member spoke in the debate, apart from the hon. Member for Dewsbury.

Our reforms of further education have given colleges new freedoms to meet the needs of their customers—students and local employers. Our expenditure plans will allow them to increase participation and will help to sustain progress towards achievement of the targets. Our commitment to further education is clear: we are expanding the sector by 25 per cent. over the next three years, taking student numbers to more than 1 million full-time equivalents in the coming financial year——

Mr. David Shaw: A remarkable achievement.

Mr. Patten: It is indeed, and by a Conservative Government. Next year, for the first time, more than 2 million students will be in further education.

[Mr. Patten]

The basis on which the higher and further education sectors build is the output from schools. Our school reforms are founded on our commitment to raise standards. The improvements in examination performance and in staying-on rates are a vote of confidence from pupils that their education is both relevant and worth while.

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): Will the right hon. Gentleman comment on capital expenditure in the FE sector? Will he acknowledge that the increase in capital expenditure is extremely modest and will do little to meet the real needs created by the increased number of students in the sector?

Mr. Patten: The FE sector has never had so much money, relatively speaking, spent on it this century. We have increased the amount of money available for capital expenditure in the FE funding council's remit this year and, together with the Financial Secretary, I hope soon, through the private finance initiative, to be able to lever in much more private money, in exactly the same way as we already do in the university sector.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I recently had the pleasure of attending a management development centre's opening ceremony at my further education college. It has successfully obtained funds from local firms to start this excellent venture, where an old shell which used to be used for decorating courses has now become a wonderful college.

Mr. Patten: I am pleased to hear it. We want further education colleges to be linked with local training and enterprise councils and with the business community, both in terms of teaching and of sharing management skills. Investment of this kind will expand the sector even more quickly.

At the heart of any good school is good teaching. That is why the Government have produced proposals on teacher training which will be debated in another place tomorrow. They are radical proposals, building on the progress that we have already made.

When the new teachers come out of their teacher training colleges they will go into grant-maintained schools or LEA-maintained schools. Although well over 1,000 schools have voted to go grant maintained, the majority of schools are still maintained by local authorities. The settlement announced for local authorities last Thursday allows for more than £17 billion to be spent on them and on other local authority education services next year. That represents an increase of 2·4 per cent. on this year's settlement, so education has fully maintained its share of the local government total. That is a reasonable and realistic settlement.

Doubtless in his winding-up speech the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) will issue terrible threats about what will happen if the settlement works out in the way he thinks it will. Speaking about last year's settlement, the hon. Gentleman said:

> "this can only mean job losses, even with a . . . pay freeze".

That did not materialise: there are as many teachers this year as there were last year. The hon. Gentleman also said:

> "councils will be short of £200 million in cash, comparing this year's budgets with next year's settlement;"—*[Official Report, 26 November, 1992; Vol. 214, c. 1012.]*

The hon. Gentleman said that there would be huge cuts in education, but LEAs increased their spending by more than 2 per cent. at a time of low inflation—*[Interruption.]* I hope that the hon. Member for Blackburn will not treat us to more scare stories in his winding-up speech, which I shall return from dinner to hear.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I am sure that my hon. Friend looks forward to that. Will the Secretary of State confirm that the Audit Commission has shown that class sizes have risen in the past year?

Mr. Patten: I shall be coming to the Audit Commission shortly when I deal with efficiency in schools. Perhaps the hon. Lady will wait until I come to that. What matters is not just spending money, although it seems that that is all Labour wants. The issue is all about raising school performance. That requires action on a number of fronts, and we are tackling it through our wide-ranging programme of education reforms.

No doubt Opposition Members will speak about resources rather than performance. They will deal with percentages of this and that, but I remind them that there is no link between money and performance, as recent reports by the independent inspectorate, the Office for Standards in Education and the recently published performance tables have shown. I am not at all afraid to defend the Government's record on raising resources for schooling. There has been a huge increase of 47 per cent. in real terms on funding per pupil between 1978-80 and 1991-92, and next year's settlement allows for a further increase above the rate of inflation.

We have radically increased the amount that we spend on books, repairs and maintenance and school support staff, and I am keen to see that efficiency continue, because efficiency is important. The more that local education authorities can cut waste and bureaucracy, the more they can put into school budgets. For example, authorities are wasting huge sums maintaining up to 1·3 million surplus school places. That is costing LEAs £250 million a year.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury spoke about the Audit Commission. It found that LEAs could make savings of more than £20 million on, for example, home-to-school transport without any change in provision. Authorities continue to spend far too much on the administration of their LEAs. For example, in 1991, they spent £880 million on running those departments and covering the cost of corporate services which were charged to schools.

Many LEAs waste an enormous amount of time on debating frivolous issues rather than getting down to the serious business of running their schools properly. At a meeting of the Lib-Lab-controlled Oxfordshire county council 10 days ago, about half the time was spent attacking fox hunters and the other half was spent attacking me. That is a real case of the inarticulate and the politically irrelevant pursuing the splendid—in both cases. The sooner local authorities such as Oxfordshire county council —*[Interruption.]* and those in Lancashire and particularly the one in Derbyshire, which has made a real pig's ear of running education, are abolished, the better. Several Opposition Members leapt to their feet to defend Derbyshire.

Schools must keep under careful review the size of administration overheads to ensure that money is spent wisely. We shall keep a close eye on that. The Audit Commission reported that some schools were developing their resources efficiently and well, but it also found that schools of similar size serving similar areas with similar socio-economic backgrounds and circumstances could sometimes show a fivefold difference in administration costs. That money should be spent not on administration but on children, books, teachers and buildings.

The Government's principal aims for education are to raise standards of achievement; to secure the best possible return from education resources, in which we invest more than Germany or Japan; to enhance parental choice, ensure rigorous testing and transfer responsibility to individual schools and their governors; to increase participation in higher and further education; and to maintain the present record level of participation in higher education while ensuring its continuing quality.

In my brief speech, I have spoken mainly, but not exclusively, about the spending programmes for which I have responsibility, but I could have made the same pionts about efficiency, effectiveness and the targeting of resources had I been speaking about any of the Government's proposals. The Budget statement by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor made clear the Government's continuing intellectual vigour and our readiness to scrutinise without preconceptions all areas of Government activity. It also made plain our determination to clear the way for the private sector in areas where it can produce results most effectively, whether in social or capital spending, and to concentrate public investment where it is likely to do most good. For those reasons, I commend to the House the Budget and the Government's excellent spending plans.

5.6 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I am always slightly puzzled by the Secretary of State for Education because he likes to make himself unpopular. I can assure him that in the past 50 rather tiresome minutes he has entirely succeeded. I shall not spend much time complaining bitterly that the Secretary of State for Social Security will not speak in the debate because to do so would be rather puerile. I console myself with the thought that the Secretary of State for Education managed to sound remarkably like a slightly upmarket Oxford yob—the sort of person he complained about in his speech. We should be grateful that he spoke for only 50 minutes and not for one and a half hours, which was the time that he spent on an earlier speech.

The right hon. Gentleman's speech started by being offensive and deteriorated into boredom. It was largely cold kale reheated, and I shall not spend much time on some of the issues that he raised. Predictably, he mentioned the quote from *The People*. I hope that this is the last time that I shall have to refer to it, but I am happy to do so. The Secretary of State will know what I am about to say because he has had a letter on the subject.

I received a telephone call before the Budget from a journalist who wished to run past me—I think that that was the phrase used—some possibilities to see whether I thought that they were likely to be in the Budget—*[Interruption.]* The journalist was Mr. Nigel Nelson of *The People*. He tried out a number of rumours. He said he had heard that the Government might put 50p on every pensioner. I said that they might do that if they wanted to try to go beyond the uprating machinery. At no time, as Mr. Nelson has confirmed—personally through the Chancellor, I understand, and certainly through me—did I suggest that I approved of that possibility, although I certainly said that it was a possible starter for what the Government might do.

When I first raised the matter with Mr. Nelson he said that the very contrary was the case. It is easy to quote from *The People*, but it is obviously far too much trouble to read it. In his column, Mr. Nelson deals with the matter at some length. He quotes the Prime Minister's suggestion that I had endorsed the proposition and says:

> "What a load of cobblers, as I told Ken Clarke when he brought the matter up again over a drink of white wine in his Treasury office . . . Donald said nothing of the sort."

I do not necessarily endorse all the robust language in the column, but the facts are perfectly clear. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will not continue deliberately to misrepresent them now that he knows what they are.

Mr. Patten: The initial fact is that my right hon. and learned Friend wastes public expenditure by giving white wine to journalists from *The People*.

If the hon. Gentleman is recanting on what he said earlier and taking back the words quoted in *The People* newspaper, will he say exactly and precisely what additional sums of public expenditure he would wish to see spent on relief for pensioners, whether he has the approval of his hon. Friend the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer for that, and where the money will come from?

Mr. Dewar: The right hon. Gentleman is being a little less than gracious. I hope that he will accept my word and the word of the journalist about the way the quote originated. It makes it clear that at no time can I be unfairly accused of the interpretation rather tendentiously put upon it by Ministers, who must be very unconfident of their own case.

We believe that value added tax on domestic fuel is a regressive tax. It should not have been imposed in the first place and will undoubtedly do damage. If the right hon. Gentleman thinks that he can sell to pensioners the idea that an increased charge of £1 a week, or if it is a family with young children approximately £1·30 or £1·40, is adequately compensated by 50p—and if it is an uprating of benefits it will be less—then he is living in a fool's paradise and he will be very quickly awakened.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I have looked at *The People* again. I realise that Mr. Nelson has made these comments about it—I had an exchange with him about it also—but the original report actually quotes the hon. Gentleman. I do not believe that Mr. Nelson has retracted the accuracy of his report. It says:

> "The Government has to add something on to take account of that, and they could do it with an extra 50p on pensions."

Nothing follows that quotation. It is capable of only one meaning, and the hon. Gentleman, with the assistance of a journalist—who is entitled to his political sympathies and is no doubt sympathetic to the hon. Gentleman—is trying to retract it in order to maintain a fairly useless course of opposition to the proposed measure.

Mr. Dewar: I am sorry that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is taking that attitude. I have explained to him how the conversation progressed. The 50p was put to me as a possibility for inclusion in the Budget. I said that it could be done. That is what happened. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, the right hon. and learned Gentleman and the House have my word for that, and it is backed up by the journalist who carried out the interview. I will be sorry if

[Mr. Dewar]

the Minister is not prepared to accept that. If the Minister offered me that explanation in similar circumstances, I would accept it from him. I hope that on wiser consideration he will do the same.

I have said my piece on that, so let me turn to the Budget.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: I do not know who the hon. Gentleman is, but I want to turn to the Budget.

Mr. Richards *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that he must resume his seat if the person who has the Floor does not give way.

Mr. Dewar: I now turn to the Budget, and particularly to some of the social security implications, which are of importance.

I have heard some complementary things said about the Budget. I have heard it said that it is adroit and agile. I have heard some of the Chancellor's hon. Friends saying that he got away with it—"They bought it", was one of the phrases that frequently arose. There is a degree of truth in that.

There may be some hon. Members who believe that the Budget has been a success; in the same way that they thought that the Budget of Lord Lawson, when he was in his unassailable period, was a success; and thought that the Budget of the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), who is now a pundit on the less popular television programmes, was a success.

One simple judgment of the Budget will endure: the public will see it as a "pay-more-get-less" Budget. The old adage that politicians give with one hand and take with the other is, sadly, singularly inappropriate in this case. We have seen a tax hike of £24 billion over three years, the largest since 1945 and perhaps in history, and a tough public expenditure round that will take another £3·5 billion or £4 billion out of the expected total.

It is a Budget with a mark of dishonesty about it. Others have been left to do the dirty work. I suppose it was ever thus that local government is to bear the bad news and take the blame. Other Ministers will also be in the firing line.

I do not like violence of any sort—it does not help the course of public and political debate—and I do not sympathise with people who throw eggs or offer violent conduct in the way that the Secretary of State has described. I would be sorry if there were yobs at Balliol, as I would be if there were yobs in any other institute of higher education. The right hon. Gentleman should realise that the cuts, year by year over the next three years, are not likely to be forgotten and will be persistently resented, as will the rumours that the Treasury has its eye on tuition fees as the next nice little earner.

We face difficult times and I take no pleasure from that. There are some neat calculations on public expenditure. The contingency fund has been heavily raided and almost eliminated. It is unlikely that those neat calculations will hold; they will pinch and turn out to be too neat. There is something of a sleight of hand about the accountancy, and the word "creative" springs to mind.

The root cause of our problems is that within a year a £36 billion public sector borrowing requirement escalated to £50 billion. The Chief Secretary offered an explanation the other day to my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms Armstrong). He said, "We thought the recession was coming to an end." That might help some people to decide whether it was deceit or incompetence. I presume that was a plea in mitigation, but it was the latter. If the Minister thought that he had no problems with the public sector borrowing requirement because he anticipated sudden and exponential growth, he is living in some sort of extended fool's paradise. That is the sort of optimism that has been the hallmark of Conservative predictions for several years.

People will remember the Prime Minister telling the electorate, with all the panache of an under-manager of the local building society—*[Interruption.]* I imagine that the Secretary of State for Education is writing that line down; I take it that he thinks it is worthy of himself. The Prime Minister said, "Vote Conservative on Thursday and the recovery continues on Friday." Since then we have had increasingly difficult times. Even the most loyal of Government apologists can only describe the recovery as fragile.

We have learnt quite a lot from what the Chancellor has said about social spending and, particularly, the social security budget. He said that a 3 per cent. per annum increase in the social security budget was unsustainable because it was out of line with growth in the economy as a whole. In some ways that is a fair point. It underlines the fact that one of the problems of the Budget is that it is aiming for low growth again. It assumes that there will be a period of continuing high unemployment. The assumption—I accept that it is not a prediction—over the next two or three years is 2·75 million unemployed and a continuing sluggish growth rate, which will be further depressed by the public sector cuts and the hikes in taxation.

We will get an increase in social security spending—people are talking about £92 million or £93 million in three years' time—but that is not a rush of generosity to the Minister's head. It does not tackle with renewed vigour the problems of poverty and deprivation in our society but funds the social fall-out of recession, which continues to dog everyone involved in the social security field.

It is important to point out that this country is not unusually spendthrift in social matters, especially social security. The Secretary of State for Social Security, who is not present now—I make no complaint about that, and I am glad to see that one of his senior colleagues is here—published some very helpful international comparisons. As the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury will know, the comparisons showed that in 1992—the last year for which figures were available—social protection expenditure, which comprises social security and health spending, accounted for 23 per cent. of our gross domestic product and 26 per cent. of that of the European Community, as it was then known, so in that sense our spending was below the European average. I am the first to accept that we should take account of certain problems, but those figures provide a useful corrective for the dangerous fallacy that we should rush into instant, damaging and irrevocable decisions because the whole structure is about to implode and crash down on us.

I must confess to being fascinated by what is currently happening in the Treasury. I am particularly pleased that both the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary have had the courtesy to be present this afternoon. Perhaps they, or the Financial Secretry when he winds up the debate, will be able to throw some light on what has been happening.

The Chief Secretary is very much the leader of the pack. He is the central figure in what the Prime Minister once defined as the bastard tendency—the leading figure of the hard right. I have read with considerable interest what the right hon. Gentleman has said in recent months. I have read a number of his lectures—for instance, the lecture that he delivered to the "Church at Work" conference, and the series of lectures that he gave to try to secure the spotlight at the Conservative party conference in Blackpool.

We all know that the Chief Secretary is deeply committed to the minimalist state. He is deeply committed to the idea that the state should withdraw from major areas of provision—that public sector spending as a percentage of national income is currently far too high and should be reduced as a matter of political faith. I believe that that is an honourably held opinion and I have no doubt that although the right hon. Gentleman is 100 per cent. wrong he is also 100 per cent. convinced—I know a zealot when I see one. Honest Tory Back Benchers have been astonished to discover that public spending, for example, brings moral evils in its wake, that the state should withdraw from whole areas of provision and that the Chief Secretary is worried about what he has described as the

"giddy atmosphere of high generosity with other people's money"

which apparently marked the days of Lady Thatcher and her Conservative Administration.

I realise that "back to basics" is important. The Chief Secretary wants to get away from what he has described in another of his phrases as the

"studied amorality of the state".

That is all of a piece. Therefore, I, too, was astonished when I read the other day about the Chancellor's on-the-record briefing, which dominated the front pages of *The Times* and a number of other papers. Following our opening exchanges, I recognise that journalists can be fallible, and the Chancellor may have been misquoted. According to the journalists who attended the briefing, however, the Chancellor denied every one of the principles that the Chief Secretary has paraded so energetically: indeed he almost went out of his way to tick them off. The Chancellor went out of his way to say that he did not believe in the minimalist state. He wanted no part of the revivalist "back to basics" campaign. He said that the

"'day to day practicalities of politics' had to deal with society as it was . . . 'But I do not think we should use things like the welfare state as an instrument for trying to move those changes in any particular direction.'"

Some of us may have considerable sympathy with that view, but it is a very odd comment on "back to basics", and the beliefs expressed—and widely advertised—not only by the Chief Secretary but by the Prime Minister.

The Chancellor went on to say that there was to be no nonsense about contracting out of the basic pension. The Secretary of State for Social Security has been hinting at that—nudging it up the political agenda—for months.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): The hon. Gentleman is out of date.

Mr. Dewar: If the hon. Lady wishes to speak, she will have to wait.

I was told by journalists at the briefing that, when it was suggested that the Secretary of State for Social Security might say that contracting out of the basic state pension was a runner, the Chancellor told him very brusquely that it was not. It could not have been clearer. That shows an interesting tension—optimists, I suppose, might call it constructive—in the Treasury team: one Minister seems to be saying exactly the opposite of what the other is saying. I can only say that the Chancellor has given short shrift to the Prime Minister and summary execution to the Secretary of State for Social Security, and his advice to the Chief Secretary is clearly "Button up and shut up". I do not think that the Treasury can be a very happy place.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: I am anxious to give way to the Chancellor, and I shall do so in a moment.

We come next to a particularly interesting case study. I have mentioned contracting out of the state pension. According to *The Times*, the Chancellor said:

"I do not see that"—

the basic state pension—

"as being opted out of—or left as a vestigial remain for those who cannot provide for themselves."

That little bit of fractured grammar has the ring of truth: it sounds like a genuine quote to me. The Chancellor has specifically ruled out such a move, but we know that the Department of Social Security has been hinting at it—indeed, talking it up in a very deliberate way. Moreover, we know from documents that have reached the public domain that the Department has set up a working party to prepare the ground for a report in February 1994 on a scheme to encourage people to opt out of the basic contributory pension. That is one of the central strategies, but the Chancellor is apparently denying its existence.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for pausing for breath, and for his courtesy in giving way to me.

The hon. Gentleman has quoted my remarks to journalists—indicating where quotation marks appeared—with precisely the same degree of accuracy that I used in quoting what he had said, again in quotation marks, to *The People*. The hon. Gentleman, however, added embellishments that bore no relation to what appeared in the newspaper. I certainly made no disparaging remarks about "back to basics".

The basics that all Conservative Members agree should be returned to are the proper running of a free-market economy and the reform of a welfare state that needs to be kept modern. So far, the hon. Gentleman's speech has betrayed no views on the proper running of an economy, or on the reform of the welfare state. Presumably it is all in abeyance: presumably he will try to explain to the great and the good on the commission that his party has set up how the welfare state should be kept modern and affordable.

Mr. Dewar: I am not being sarcastic. Of course I understand that politicians can be misquoted. The Chancellor says that I am "embellishing" when I say that "back to basics" is not an issue as a result of what he has been quoted as saying. Given what has been said by the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Social Security, by the Chief Secretary and by various others, I understand "back to basics" to mean that we can use the social security system to try to reshape the moral climate.

[Mr. Dewar]

That is the whole point of a "runner" which I do not think will become Government policy, but which has been much discussed: the New Jersey experiment. Under the system, the more children people have, the less chance they have of being recognised in the benefits system. I do not think that anything dishonourable is involved, but the Chancellor should recognise that some of his views are not compatible with "back to basics" as it is understood by a good many of his hon. Friends, quite apart from my party. For instance, he has said that we should not use the welfare state

"as an instrument for trying to move those changes in any particular direction."

I have the papers here, and there is no doubt that the Department of Social Security intends to set up a working party

"To examine the scope for extending the opting out of contributory benefits, and the greater use of private provision for contingencies, including unemployment, sickness, invalidity and, in particular, retirement".

The party is to report, by February 1994,

"a progressive move towards voluntary opting out of entitlement to basic state pension through private provision being made initially by younger people".

There is no doubt that that was on the stocks, although I understand that it was ruled out by the Chancellor at the meeting.

As the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) was about to draw to my attention, it was fascinating when the Secretary of State for Social Security appeared on the "Walden" show on Sunday. I have never doubted that the Secretary of State for Social Security is a man who is with the hard right heart and soul, who has been picked out again and again as one of their leaders —perhaps not as intellectually distinguished as the Chief Secretary, but certainly a man of considerable intelligence —and is a true heir to the Conservative party's former leader.

Strangely, Mr. Walden appealed to the Secretary of State not to disappoint his fans and to stand his ground, but he appealed in vain. The Secretary of State said that he would never contemplate people contracting out of the basic state pension. It was for him a case of not now, not ever. Of course, he could not talk for Governments in future, but while he was there that heresy would never see the light of day. To say that I was astonished is not meant lightly. It is an interesting example of the dynamics of the Government at the moment. The Secretary of State for Social Security was reduced to acting like a naughty boy caught defaulting—over-protesting innocence by saying "cross my heart, hope to die" or "I'll never do it again, Guv,". It was a humiliating climb-down.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The gist of the hon. Gentleman's speech seems to be that all the thinking is going on among the Conservative Members. Would he enlighten us about Labour party policy? Is it still to spend vast sums of money increasing child benefit and reducing the common age for pensions?

Mr. Dewar: There were many opportunities for such debates, which shall continue. There has been some interesting speculation in the press, which is flattering, but not always well informed. It may have escaped the hon. Gentleman's notice that we are debating the Queen's Speech and what the Government are doing——

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Budget.

Mr. Dewar: The right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) now sees himself so much as some sort of colossus bestriding the scene that that slip of tongue is perhaps understandable.

Allow me to give the Chancellor some warning words of advice—they are well meant: "Watch your back because zealots do not give up". I notice that in the *Glasgow Herald* today, Mr. Geoffrey Parkhouse refers to the Secretary of State for Social Security and the Chief Secretary as squashed and having to bear it, but that they would bide their time. I have no doubt that they will. As the economic strategy falls apart and the reality of the Budget becomes apparent, the Chancellor is very much at risk.

Mr. Clarke: I am not entering into combat again with the hon. Gentleman, but I must follow up the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham). We are debating the Budget, yet the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) is spending all his time voicing what he thought we could have done, what he thinks that we may do in future, what he hoped that we had done and, so far, he has not dealt with what we have done. Does he have any views on equalising the state pension age, the affordability of the system into the next century and whether invalidity benefit should be subject to an objective medical test to determine whether somebody is fit for work? Will he deal with the Budget at all or is his speech merely a handful of speculation about what may or may not be going on in that lively intellectual tumult of the Conservative party?

Mr. Dewar: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has some difficulty in recognising well-documented events when they are drawn to his attention.

I shall not speak for much longer, but will now turn to some of the issues that the Chancellor raised because they are important. He is not going to get many brownie points for his rather depressing selection of social proposals. I shall begin by mentioning what I welcome. I welcome the disregard on family credit to help with child care provision. My advisors—I make no bones about taking advice on such a complicated scheme, which has not yet been spelt out in great detail—tell me that it is nothing like as generous as was first suggested when one gets down to the fine print. As I understand the scheme, if one is working and receiving the maximum family credit—the cut-off point of £71.70 a week—one does not benefit at all from the special proposition. Perhaps the Financial Secretary, who is well informed, can confirm, as I am told, that over 90 per cent. of lone parents with one child who currently receive family credit are receiving the maximum amount and, therefore, will get no help whatever from the new concession. If that startling figure is true, the gratitude with which the proposition was greeted will be heavily muted.

We knew that invalidity benefit was marked for execution. It was a long, contemplated strike, but before it, the "thought police" had to go to work. The Prime Minister may be astonished at the extent to which the numbers had risen—I think the phrase that he used was that it "beggars belief"—but people such as the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People remember evidence given to the Public Accounts Committee in 1990 by the present permanent secretary, Sir Michael Partridge, who took the view that the increase in numbers was partly demographic and partly due to rising unemployment and the direct connection between the two phenomena. I have no doubt that Sir Michael has rethought his position—civil servants have to adopt the stance of their masters. The current Leader of the House has left the Department of Social Security and a much more harsh regime now rules in its place.

The incapacity benefit is not an attempt to reform or improve the welfare system. It is a rather petty change that has more to do with achieving minor savings for the Treasury and feeding some of the prejudices found among Conservative Members. The scheme will create an odd situation in which an enormous number of people—many who are anxious are already contacting me and other hon. Members—imagine that they will be at risk even if they are not. Of course, the whole point of the scheme is to ensure that 70,000—a figure quoted by Ministers—who were geniuinely eligible for invalidity benefit will not be eligible under the new benefit. Whether it is worth all that trouble, misery and uncertainty, I beg to doubt.

We shall have to wait and see the effects of the taxation, as it will be carefully phased, but it will be odd that some people on invalidity benefit will not pay tax, while other people in receipt of incapacity benefit will be taxed. I remember asking a parliamentary question on that subject and the answer given was that if invalidity benefit was taxed—admittedly, including everyone—900,000 people would face increased tax bills of about £500 a year and 200,000 people would pay tax although their only income was invalidity benefit. When the Financial Secretary replies, will he confirm that that is the kind of pattern that he expects to emerge? He may be aware of one of the arguments of the working party studies that have reached the public domain against taxing invalidity benefit in the way in which it has now been decided was that it would be a considerable disincentive to people trying to enter the Labour market. If they took a job and it collapsed under them—perhaps through no fault of their own—they would then go back on incapacity benefit for which they would worry whether they would qualify and over which they would certainly have an encounter with the tax man. Apparently, that scruple has been overcome.

There is also the matter of sick pay transfer and the burden of it shifting on to the larger firm. Again, many responsible people—I am not talking of partisan politicians —see that as a double squeeze. People are worried about their eligibility under the new benefit scheme. They are worried that if they move into employment and experience genuine illness, it may affect their record, because there is no rebate on statutory sick pay and therefore an incentive to get rid of them or not to hire them in the first place. Given the rather paltry and mean change, it is clear that the difficulties have not been properly assessed.

I do not intend to go into great detail on the job seeker's allowance. However, I protest about one aspect. We are told that if the cut from 12 months to six months were applied now to unemployment benefit, 240,000 people would lose entitlement. That would mean—in Ministers' minds, this is possibly a fortunate by-product—that 240,000 people would also be removed from the unemployment roll. I recognise, of course, that Parliament can change the rules; that is what parliamentary sovereignty means. I recognise that Ministers are irritated if one says that if one was paying into a policy and building up an entitlement for unemployment cover, and if the company suddenly changed the terms so dramatically, one would shout from the roof tops. It is not the same. We can do that. The question is not, "Can we do it?" The questions are, "Should we do it? What does it do to confidence? What does it do to the contributory principle?"

I remember the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, a few months ago, eloquently defending that principle as an important part of the Government's programme. Again, there is a nasty element of expediency. That is especially wounding when, on Monday, we shall give a Second Reading to the Social Security (Contributions) Bill, which will put up national insurance contributions by 1 per cent. That will rake in about £2 billion—£300 million more than would come from a penny on income tax. We are cutting entitlement on the one hand and asking for more on the other hand in an especially unpleasant fashion. The Budget is about paying more and getting less.

I recognise that some people—the Secretary of State for Education may be a candidate—will sneer a little bit about the politics of envy. However, when I open the *Evening Standard* this evening, when I look at the financial pages of two or three days ago and when I read about the settlements taking place in Goldman Sachs, where executives have been made millionaires by their Christmas bonuses, over and above their salaries, I wonder about the poor society that cannot deal with the problems of poverty and about a Government who feel that they must send in the demolition men simply because we cannot afford to deal with the problems.

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): The hon. Gentleman has an unerring ability to sound like Eeyore every time he speaks because of his depressing remarks. He cannot see a piece of silver without wrapping a dark cloud round it. Will he tell the House of one sentence in his speech, which has gone on now for 35 minutes, which is designed to boost the confidence of consumers, of businesses or of international investors who look to this country? Is it not his job, as a responsible politician and as a responsible Member of Parliament, to try to help the country out of recession? Can he tell us of one point in his speech that has contributed towards that end?

Mr. Dewar: I concede right away that I am dealing with one particular aspect of the Budget—its impact on social policy. I have not dealt with industry and I make no apology for that. Many of my colleagues have and will, no doubt, return to the subject.

I do not believe that we can extract ourselves from our difficulties by the battening-down approach that is the mark of this Budget. I unashamedly accept that we are in difficulties. This Government, who used to be amazingly arrogant about the performance of their predecessors, are now borrowing £1 billion a week to balance the books. That position cannot be shrugged off. However, I am not sure that we get out of it simply by battening down the hatches, by cutting public expenditure and by hiking up taxation, certainly not in the way that the Government have chosen. We have a Chancellor who is determined to ride out a storm. That is very uncomfortable and is not always the best way in which to deal with the problems.

My difficulties with the Budget are the Government's attitude and ambitions. Their ambitions and their approach to infrastructure development and to the building of the nation's future are depressing. I listened the other night to

[Mr. Dewar]

the debate on transport and on investment in the transport industry. I have seldom seen a Government more taken apart and more on the defensive.

When I read reports on Europe—I only read them because I am not involved—I read of the dog-in-the-manger attitude taken by Ministers to the, no doubt, halting and sometimes insecure but genuine efforts to try to work out a European approach to dealing with the problems of unemployment and to combating unemploymemt. When I talk to friends in politics, who are on the left and on the right, in other countries, I find that one thing certainly unites them—the belief that this Government are consistently unhelpful and consistently obstructive.

This Budget is about yesterday's problems and how we scramble out of them; it is not about creating any sort of opportunity. I fear that it will become more and more painfully apparent that we are making mistakes as the months unfold. We talk a lot about morality and we talk a lot about the need for economic success. It seems to me that we are combining in many ways the worst of both worlds in this Budget. We shall all come to regret it.

5.44 pm

Sir Terence Higgins (Worthing): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor on his presentation on Budget day, which was extremely effective. The Select Committee on Procedure has just published its responses to the Government's proposals on budgetary procedure and I very much hope that we shall have the opportunity before long to debate that report. It is important that we should appraise the way in which the new format is working.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), in a Freudian slip, referred to the debate on the Queen's Speech. That was a rather understandable slip. We had an economic debate on the Queen's Speech, at the choice of the Opposition, just a few days before the Budget statement and we now have a wide-ranging debate on the Budget this afternoon. That does not really fulfil the objective set by the Government, who said:

"this improved presentation should contribute to a more informed and focused debate . . . on public expenditure, taxation and borrowing".

We shall need to look carefully at the extent to which the change in timing and the change in format are achieving the Government's objectives.

The centrepiece of my right hon. and learned Friend's Budget is, in a very real sense, the proposal for putting VAT on fuel and the proposal for compensating pensioners and people on low incomes who are affected seriously. My feeling, as my right hon. and learned Friend well knows, is that this is a political time bomb. No tax, not even the community charge, has caused as much furore as this tax before a single penny of it has been paid. I felt that there was a strong caes for going to the 17·5 per cent. rate straight away rather than for moving to 8 per cent. next spring and then to 17·5 per cent. after that.

I in no way complain about—on the contrary, I greatly welcome—my right hon. and learned Friend's proposal for helping those on pensions and those on low incomes who will be affected by the tax. My right hon. and learned Friend has emerged as a kind of Robin Hood. [HON. MEMBERS: "Nottingham."] Indeed, he comes from Nottingham. I sometimes thought that he might make a rather good Friar Tuck; Robin Hood was not the role in which I envisaged him. My right hon. and learned Friend now proposes to impose VAT on fuel on virtually the entire population and then to spend almost half the money raised on 15 million people. That action cannot be described, as the hon. Member for Garscadden did, as a regressive move. On the contrary, it is a move in the opposite direction.

I am glad that my right hon. and learned Friend has resisted the temptation to extend VAT to other items that are presently zero rated. The experience of extending VAT to fuel should give us a clear indication of what the consequences of extending VAT to other items would be. We should be likely to lose half the revenue in compensating the people affected. Be that as it may, I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will not be tempted to stick at 8 per cent. for fuel. The introduction of multiple rates in VAT is a move that should not be made. In addition, my right hon. and learned Friend will have to be pretty tough with members of the European Community in resisting their pressures to abolish zero rating here. Perhaps I might also express a general concern about the tendency of Chancellors of the Exchequer—perhaps two of the recent Chancellors—to anticipate future tax changes. If the Treasury forecast was brilliantly accurate and could be relied upon, there might be a case for that. Any attempt to pre-empt the view of the Chancellor 18 months or two years ahead, when the forecast clearly is not accurate, should be done with considerable restraint.

Another thing that has worried me since the last Budget has been the extent to which many proposals for tax increases or public expenditure cuts have been floating around. Despite my right hon. and learned Friend's view on purdah, the case for both the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary going into purdah in the period up to the Budget is considerable.

Of course, there is great relief once we have heard in the Budget that many of the scare stories have not come to fruition. We should not underestimate the concern which scare stories about the closing of sub-post offices or the means-testing of pensions can cause to our constituents. Their fears are real, and the fact that those fears turn out not to be realised in no way should diminish the concern that is felt in the intervening period.

Mr. Dewar: I have some sympathy with the right hon. Gentleman. Does he accept that the disinformation sometimes comes from the Government, not from the Opposition?

Sir Terence Higgins: I said that it had been a rather general tendency lately and it is important to bear that in mind.

Having got through the Budget, there are other proposals which have been floated immediately. I refer in particular to the proposal for negative income tax or a tax credit scheme which has been going around for the past few days. Long ago in 1974, the Conservative Government did a great deal of work on that subject. Had we not lost the 1974 election, we had every intention of legislating and we had gone a long way towards drafting the proposals.

There is a great case for a tax credit scheme. We recognised at that time that we did not have the money to make the change. It is an expensive change and we proposed to legislate and to implement gradually over time. The same idea came up 10 years ago, when a study group on the subject, which I happened to chair, was set up in the Conservative party. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House was much involved at that time. We were concerned that changes had been made in the interim by the Labour Government, because Joel Barnett and Barbara Castle—as they then were—had stopped our proposals. It was felt that, in the intervening space of time, we had probably diverted from the direction which a tax credit scheme would require. That turned out not to be the case.

If one looks in detail, it is no more difficult now than it would have been earlier to implement a tax credit scheme. In some ways, it would solve the problem of child benefit and similar problems. The problem with child benefit is that it is universal, because it is a tax allowance which applies to everyone, whatever tax rate they might pay. That is why we are stuck with the universal child benefit handout. However, if we were to move to a tax credit scheme, that would mould automatically to the arrangements where, as income goes up, so benefits decline and tax payments increase.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): It is no secret that the Labour Government which came in in 1974 also looked at the tax credit proposal. For similar reasons to which the right hon. Gentleman adverted, they decided that they could not go ahead at that time because of the additional cost, over and above the existing and separate schemes of tax allowances and social security benefits. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the cost of implementing such a scheme would still be substantial?

Sir Terence Higgins: That is certainly the case, but I do not think that that was the reason why the proposal was killed. It was killed by a Committee which contained—as I remember—Barbara Castle, Joel Barnett and someone else.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I was on the Committee also.

Sir Terence Higgins: I apologise to my hon. Friend.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady has been here long enough to know my feelings about seated interventions.

Sir Terence Higgins: I accept the point made by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and I said so a moment ago. We were proposing to legislate and then bring in the proposal as soon as it could be afforded without wrecking the economy.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): I was also a member of that Select Committee. The major reason why the proposal was not brought in was the cost, but also 44 benefits would not have been included. That would have produced a large number of falsifications of the amounts of money which were going to be paid to an individual. That was the complexity on which the proposals foundered.

Sir Terence Higgins: That is true—I am agreeing with everyone. It is true that we could not have a tax credit scheme that was totally comprehensive.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Terence Higgins: With respect to my hon. Friend, I must press on. I will now leave what turned out to be a remarkably controversial remark and speak on the Budget judgments.

I will speak about two of the broad issues raised by my right hon. and learned Friend. We are having the old debate between Keynesians and monetarists. It does not seem inappropriate that, in the present economic situation, we should run a large budget deficit. I understand the points which have been made by my right hon. and learned Friend about the need to reduce that in time. There are arguments for delaying that until such time as the recovery has proceeded further, and one could then see to what extent the PSBR had diminished because of increases in tax revenues and reductions in unemployment benefit.

I fear that, if anything, there is a danger that my right hon. and learned Friend may have planned to take out rather too much too soon. After all, a swing from £50 billion to £38 billion on the PSBR is a pretty massive shift. On the other hand, it may well be taking coutervailing action with regard to the money supply, because my right hon. and learned Friend persisted in the rather strange arrangements which were announced by the previous Chancellor, who confused the issue with regard to funding policy.

The Red Book states that funding policy would continue on the basis set out in the 1993-94 medium-term financial strategy, with sales of debts to banks and building societies from 1993-94 onward counting as funding in the same way as debts to other sectors. That, of course, is a complete perversion of the normal terminology. When one says something is "fully funded", one means that it is being fully funded from the non-bank sector. Therefore, what is involved is that it is being fully funded, including payments to the banks. I will not go into the usual rigmarole about printing money and so on.

It reassures me that, if my first proposition were true, my right hon. and learned Friend may have overdone the reduction in size of the PSBR or, at least, in not funding it completely. We must hope that the overall effect of those difficult matters of judgment will be to lead us to recovery without an upsurge of inflation. The forecast of 2·25 per cent. growth in non-oil GDP during the next year, against the present background of unemployment, is not a highly ambitious target.

I will say a final word, and I will finish as I began. It is important that we should look at the new procedures. It has always been the case that, at the time of the autumn statement, the House has debated both public expenditure and taxation. The same has been true in the spring. However, the Budget was not a unified Budget in the sense that any hon. Member could say that he would like to put up taxes on this or put up public expenditure on that, with the two being taken together. That is not so.

We are precluded by the rules of order and by rules about money resolutions and about Ways and Means resolutions from debating all the proposals which might be made for increasing taxation or public expenditure. The Procedure Committee's recommendations are worth while, but it is not even a unified Budget in terms of the Government. I have a strong suspicion that, when various Ministers went to my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary or my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor, they did not say that they would have more money if my right hon. and learned Friend was prepared to put up tax on this or that. The Budget is not unified even within the

[Sir Terence Higgins]

Government. So we are a long way from becoming a Parliament that has a properly unified Budget. There was initially a lack of consultation on the unified Budget. The consultative document was published, then we had an election and no one thought about it any more. The next thing we knew, the unified Budget was about to happen. I hope that we shall manage to get our procedures sorted out despite that and after the event, but I am not at all convinced that the arrangements that we have brought into play are ideal. We should in any event look at what the Procedure Committee has said in response to the Government's reply to its report.

5.59 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): I admire the ingenuity of the Government in devising new and additional taxes. I suspect that my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) is quietly admiring, too. I have to hand it to the Chancellor: the tax on commercial insurance is a first-class wheeze. I use the word "wheeze" because there was a previous Chancellor who used it—indeed, as I watched the present Chancellor presenting his Budget, I asked myself, "Who does he remind me of?", then banished the thought immediately from my mind. The tax on commercial insurance is extremely clever and opens up possibilities for next year, because, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman told us, insurance is in the exempt list attached to the sixth directive, as are financial services and consumer credit. That is because—as the right hon. Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins) knows better than anyone, having introduced this wretched tax—it is very difficult to impose VAT on insurance and commercial and financial services. How would we deal with inputs and costs, for example?

I congratulate the Government on the way in which they have been able to invent more and more taxes—whether on aeroplanes, cars, houses, individuals or fuel. And who knows what will happen next year; we may have VAT at 17·5 per cent. on food, domestic transport, print and water services. The Government have shown themselves to be far more ingenious than Labour Governments at increasing taxes and imposing new taxes on the British public, even though Labour is supposed to be the party that imposes taxes.

At one time, Tory Governments and Tory Chancellors defended increases in and the proliferation of indirect taxes by saying, "Ah, but we are reducing income tax. That will mean more money in the pocket and will be an incentive to business men, workers and industrialists. It will bring freedom of choice." But there is no freedom of choice when people are taxed on their homes or motor car insurance. Intellectually, therefore, the Conservatives' freedom of choice argument is fast disappearing.

The Government cannot even argue that they are reducing income tax, because they are putting it up: it has been increased in the previous Budget and again in this Budget—very cleverly, of course. Allowances are not to be indexed. When I was on the Government Benches, Lord Lawson, as he now is, would bore us night after night about how important it was to index everything. In those days, Conservative party policy was: "If it moves, index it." Now we have moved away completely from the concept of indexing allowances. Allowances now apply not against 40 per cent. but only 30 or 25 per cent.—and down to 15 per cent. in the case of mortgage tax relief. The Government have proliferated indirect taxes and created and imposed more income tax.

May I make a plea, as I did last year, on behalf of someone about whom we have all forgotten. I refer to the middle manager—the person who is a manager or technician in a small or medium-sized engineering or manufacturing firm. I realise that—with one or two exceptions—the modern Conservative party has little interest in manufacturing or engineering. Managers and technicians in smaller firms earn £40,000, £50,000 or perhaps even £60,000 a year. Above £30,000 or even less, their income is taxed at 40 per cent. That is an extraordinarily high rate of tax to charge people who, as much as anyone, are our wealth producers. It would be quite easy to reorganise the income tax system to increase the ceiling on the 30 per cent. band to £50,000. I have tabled some questions on that subject and I will not go over the ground again, but the Chancellor could perfectly well have done that.

The present system is unfair. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said, we read on the front page of the *Evening Standard* that someone who happens to be a partner in an American merchant bank receives £1 million in bonus. What has he done to earn it, I do not know. But taxing a person who earns £1 million in bonus, wages or emoluments and someone who earns £35,000 a year working in an engineering firm at the same 40 per cent. rate is not the way to get Britain back into a position where it is producing again.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): Did not the hon. Gentleman's own party's manifesto contain a specific pledge to raise the 40 per cent. band to 50 per cent.? Are not the people to whom he refers tonight the very people who would have paid more tax under Labour? Was that why Labour lost the election in 1992?

Mr. Davies: The hon. Lady is being very boring. I am advancing a proposal that I advanced last year, with which many people would agree: a 40 per cent. band that starts at £30,000 a year penalises those who produce much of this country's wealth. The old Conservative party—not the Conservative party as it is now—would have accepted that argument and I am sorry that the hon. Lady fails to see the point.

What of the Budget itself? After 14 years of Tory Government, the national balance sheet is hopelessly out of kilter. The Tory balance sheet just does not balance: the assets cannot cover the liabilities. After four Tory Governments, our assets have shrunk. They have diminished because of the squandering of North sea oil revenues, the plundering of public assets for private gain and the wholesale destruction of our manufacturing industry in the early 1980s. I will not accept any lectures about monetarism from Conservative Members: the profligate monetary policies of the mid and late-1980s have diminished this country's assets.

Our assets have also been diminished as a result of the extraordinary glorification of consumption and the consumer at the expense of production and the creation of wealth. We hear little from the modern Tory party about the creation of wealth. As the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer said the other day, we now tax capital and income at the same rate. Capital gains and income, emoluments and receipts alike are taxed at 40 per cent. The Tory party has forgotten the difference between capital and income, just as it has forgotten the need to produce and generate wealth before starting to consume.

The Government's assets have shrunk and they cannot cover their liabilities. One approach to the problem would be to try to rebuild assets in order to cover liabilities. But that is likely to be rather difficult because our manufacturing and engineering base has shrunk. The present Budget does not even begin to rebuild the assets. I do not know where the growth—we are told that it will be 2 to 2·5 per cent. some time next year—is expected to come from. Perhaps we will achieve 2 to 2·5 per cent. growth. If we do, I imagine that most of it will come from consumption and imports. It will certainly not come from the creation of wealth and assets. A growth rate of 2 to 2·5 per cent. will not begin to rebuild the assets on the balance sheet.

There is a hidden message in the Budget—and no doubt the Financial Secretary will deal with this when he winds up—to the effect that everything will come from the reduction in interest rates. It is 5·5 per cent. now—or is it 5 per cent.; I lose count?

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): It is 5·5 per cent.

Mr. Davies: It is 5·5 per cent. now. We hear much about the reduction in interest rates, but I thought that steady Eddie was in charge of interest rates now. The Financial Secretary looks surprised, but I read it in the newspapers.

Mr. Dorrell: I looked surprised because I was remembering our debates on the subject as the Maastricht Bill was going through the House earlier this year. The right hon. Gentleman should be in no doubt that the responsibility for fixing the rate of interest rests with Ministers. Responsibility for the timing and handling of the announcement of it has been shifted to the Bank of England.

Mr. Davies: What does one say to that? One has to admire the Treasury. It does not want to give the Bank of England any more power. I do not either. But the trendies whom one reads about in the newspapers, the Select Committee in the House of Commons and the Europeans, want to give the Bank of England all the power. The Treasury is doing a marvellous job—at least in the short term—in conning the City and stemming the fashionable tide by pretending that it fixed the rate, but steady Eddie does the timing.

But what if steady Eddie does not do that for two years? Steady Eddie is a steady man and may decide that there will not be a further half per cent. cut before next November.

Mr. Dorrell *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Davies: The Financial Secretary shakes his head. What can steady Eddie decide? He cannot decide anything, of course. We hope we know who decides: the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister.

Mr. Dorrell *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Davies: The Financial Secretary has nodded, so let us forget the notion of steady Eddie deciding on the timing. I am glad to hear it.

I shall now move on—or back—to assets. The assets have shrunk and are getting smaller. They cannot be increased. What does one do with a balance sheet where the assets are going down and there are liabilities. One would have to start shrinking the liabilities. One cannot do anything else. That is all that public corporations can do. They might indulge in a bit of creative accounting—perhaps a lot in some of them—but at the end of the day one must shrink the liabilities if one cannot shrink the assets. That is the journey on which the Chancellor and the Government are embarked.

I am sorry to say that the liabilities that will bear the brunt of the shrinkage, or the jettison, will be the old, the infirm, the poor and the unemployed. They are on the liability side of the balance sheet and those liabilities will be diminished. That is the best that the Government can do.

There are three Ministers whose job it is to shrink those liabilities: the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, about whom my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden made some interesting remarks, which I shall try to follow in a moment; the Secretary of State for Social Security; and, of course, Top Cat himself, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. They are embarked on a venture to try to shrink the liabilities and balance the budget, in a few years' time. That now seems to be the great goal, as was the European monetary system at one time. The Government apparently need something else. They need the absolutism of a balanced budget to work towards.

Those three Ministers are embarked on a journey to shrink the liabilities, get rid of the PSBR and balance the budget. Let us first take the Chief Secretary. I am sorry that he is not here, but I well understand that he has other duties. He will carry out his job—I watch him on television—with considerable zeal; the zeal of the righteous.

The Chief Secretary brings to the debate the kind of intellectual veneer that he acquired at a somewhat dotty college in the backwaters of Cambridge. But allied to that veneer of intellectualism he also brings—I see it again on television—the arrogant glint of the Castilian. He is the conquistador. He is the man who will lay about them. He will lay about them with his sword. No liability will be allowed alive on the battlefield so long as the Chief Secretary is around.

Then there is the second of the triumvirate: the Secretary of State for Social Security. He is a more complex individual. He also worships, as we have been reminded, at the shrine of the free market. That is his absolutism. In economic terms that is his totem pole. But he is no conquistador or Castilian. Perhaps he is some kind of Anglo-Catholic with a conscience and a concern. He has been left in a terrible problem. On the one hand he worships the marketplace, on the other he must try to deal with those who suffer as a result of the marketplace: the redundant; the bankrupt business man; or the unemployed.

I would say that the Secretary of State for Social Security is the priest and the Chief Secretary is the warrior philosopher. I do not know how he will cope with those contradictions.Perhaps he will remain to the end of the journey, or perhaps there will be problems for him. Perhaps we should wait for his speech at the next Conservative party conference to see whether somehow he can work out those contradictions.

[Mr. Davies]

Now we come to the Chancellor himself. He has one thing in common with me—we are both Members of the class of 1970. He has done rather better than I have, but I genuinely congratulate hm on his success and his forensic triumph last Tuesday. I have admired the way in which, during the 1980s, he managed to survive, indeed prosper, as a left-wing Tory during the reign of the great dictator —a bit like those members of Stalin's politburo who kept out of the dictator's way, did good works and survived.

The good work that the Chancellor of the Exchequer carried out was that he laid about the pressure groups, which no doubt earned him points with the great dictator. Many of us felt some sympathy with him for doing that. He engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the British Medical Association, the National Union of Teachers and the Police Federation. As a result of his successes, eventually he ended up at the Treasury.

The trouble with the Treasury is that it is difficult to find those devils. One does not see the British Medical Association, the National Union of Teachers or the Police Federation. Because of the long corridors, one does not see any devils, but they are there. The devils are there; the sorcerers are there. Looking at the Budget, I am sorry to say that the Chancellor has fallen for the oldest and one of the cleverest sorcerers around—the balanced budget. He has fallen for it immediately, hook line and sinker.

Now we find the Chancellor—the pragmatist; the warrior philosopher—the Chief Secretary, and the priest —the Secretary of State for Social Security—all locked together on a journey towards a balanced budget, and to jettison the liabilities. They are all in the little truck known as no turning back: the left of centre—hard centre we are now told—Chancellor and the other two who are far to the right.

I am sorry for the Chancellor. He needs the Castilian more than the Castilian needs him. It is the Chief Secretary who, in the main, will deliver the balanced budget that he needs. He needs the right wing of the Conservative party in order to deliver on the basis of his Budget.

If the Conservative party wants a balanced budget, so be it, but it is a rather foolish enterprise in which to be engaged. Governments have tried it before and, in many countries, they usually fail. If a Conservative Government want to be so foolish as to go down the road and eventually try to get to a balanced budget, so be it, but there is a price to be paid for a balanced budget.

That price should be paid by the money changers and the share dealers in the City, who are now cheering the Chancellor as they go along to collect their £1 million bonuses, as we have seen in the *Evening Standard*. It should not be paid by the poor, the unemployed, the infirm and those least able to do so. They will get no bonus out of the Tory Budget.

6.19 pm

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor on four points in his Budget. The first is help to the pensioners, about which we had arguments earlier today. It is morally right that we should cushion pensioners against the rise in the cost of fuel, for three reasons—they lived through the slump of the 193Os, they fought in the war and they have no expectation of increased incomes.

Secondly, I am glad that the Budget did not impose VAT on books and printed material. Taxes on knowledge were removed over 100 years ago, under Gladstone. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education told us today of the increased number of people going on to higher education, and that will mean a shortage of books in libraries. People on constricted incomes cannot buy books for themselves, so it is vital that universities have the right books in their libraries. I would not want a tax on books.

Thirdly, I welcome the Chancellor's intention—I trust that it will be more than an intention—over the next three years, to cut from 45 to 42·5 per cent. the amount of GDP going to Government. In a free society, 40 per cent. should be the limit. Beyond that, one becomes a collective society, irrespective of the colour of the Government, because at that stage more money goes to the Government than is healthy for Government or people.

Fourthly, as a London Member of Parliament, I welcome the green light for the extension of the Docklands light railway, which will be helpful.

Let me return to the real problem—the growth of the Government sector. Under Gladstone, to whom I have already referred, 9 per cent. of GDP went to Government. That was 110 years ago. The percentage has increased throughout the century, until under the last Labour Government it was 49 per cent. At the beginning of their time in office, the Conservative Government got it down to about 40 per cent., but now it is back up to 45 per cent. That is £5,500 for every man, woman and child in the country. In Japan, it is held at 30 per cent. In countries such as Taiwan and Hong Kong, which have a far greater growth rate, it is held down much more.

One reason why so much goes to Government is that there are more people in government. I do not wish to give an historical lecture, but the facts must be considered. In 1900, when we were the largest colonial power and controlled one quarter of the world, the great Lord Salisbury was both Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, and he had to help him only one Minister, an Under-Secretary in the Commons.

Now that the Empire has disappeared, the Foreign Secretary has five Ministers to help him. They all seem to be busy travelling around the world, whatever it is that they are doing. In Lord Salisbury's time, there were only 17 Ministers outside the Cabinet—36 Ministers in all. Now, there are two to three times that number.

More Ministers means more offices. They will want to do more things, there will be more legislation and more money must be poured into Government. The best thing to do is cut the number of Ministers. Business has survived only by cutting costs. If the Government really intend to cut Government provision, they should, as an example to the country, dismiss some Ministers. It would be rash to suggest that 20 should go over the next month, but the number must be cut.

The more Ministers we have, the more people there are in the Executive, the less that Back Benchers can challenge the Executive, and the more that the Government, irrespective of colour, can get away with what they are doing. That is unhealthy. The Chamber was created to challenge the Executive powers of the Crown. At the moment, there are few of us left to challenge the Executive. Too many are concerned about becoming a Minister at some point.

The Government may ask my advice on how that should be done. I have a solution, which I am sure will appeal to hon. Members.

I listened carefully to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education. He has invented league tables. I believe in them. There should be evidence of what is being done, so that the results from one school can be compared with those from another. One can then see what is happening and learn why.

The Government should have league tables for all Departments, and possibly a year without any legislation, which would be healthy, and instead have debates about what the House should be about and the way that the country should be going. Every three months, a league table could be published showing how much money had been saved in each Department, and by how many the staff numbers had been cut.

Furthermore, now that civil servants are getting honours based on merit, a number of knighthoods in the honours list could depend on how many people each head of Department had been able to dispense with, and how much money had been saved. That could transform the country. I give that idea free to the Minister. The leap should come not from the bottom but from the top.

I am not asking for any more money for London. I just want money moved from one pocket to another, because the money is there. *[Interruption.]* I must not reply to seated interventions. I shall say only that I would expect even the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz), a non-London Member, to approve of and support me in the London matter with which I am dealing.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I live in London, in Brent.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I am astonished and honoured. I shall expect support for what I am saying from at least one Labour Front Bencher.

Mr. Vaz: I live in the London borough of Brent. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman can tell me how it is that the Conservative-controlled borough finds so much difficulty in emptying the dustbins in Teignmouth road.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I have a simple solution for the hon. Gentleman. If he moves to Brent, North, I will ensure that the dustbins are emptied night and day. At 3 o'clock in the morning, the cart will rattle along. The offer is there to the hon. Gentleman if he wishes to take it up.

I am concerned about the state of the London Underground. It has become dangerous, difficult and a threat to safety. Some parts are 100 years old. The cables on the Central line, which caused so much trouble recently, are 70 years old. Some of the signals are 40 years old. Travelling today on a route that I had travelled last week at the same time, I saw that an escalator had still not been repaired. That is not far from here. One sees old people trying to struggle up escalators that are not working. This is the capital of the country. This is one of the five great cities of the world.

Having lived more of my life in London than in my native Lancashire, I can say on behalf of myself and of my constituents that there is a desperate need for investment in the underground system. I prefer that to concreting over the country, with county after county being destroyed by road building. If £2 billion or £3 billion of the money for roads were put into London, much could be improved. Without it, London will not be the capital we want it to be, with tourists coming in all the time. That is an important point.

I have three points with which to end—three is a good number; it is like the holy trinity, so no doubt I will get the support of the House for what I have to say—two of which are non-party political.

This afternoon, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education mentioned the need to reintroduce apprenticeships. Germany has 700,000 apprentices, one third of whom complete their apprenticeships before they enter university. They can therefore both manufacture and design. We have no equivalent.

The strength of an apprenticeship was that the pupil was linked to a craftsman, who served as a father figure. The problem with a boy in a one-parent family is the lack of a mature male figure as a model. If apprenticeships are reintroduced, they must involve fine journeymen, and apprentices will take their patterns of behaviour from their tutors—whereas, at present, many young people adopt the behaviour patterns of the running gang. I commend to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State apprenticeships that assign the apprentice to an individual. That will do more for law and order among young people than anything else.

I am not over-excited about the immediate improvement in the number of young people entering higher education. I believe that a lot of that is because young people cannot get jobs. In any event, much of it is not higher education but longer education. One can keep people in schools until they are 60. A more important question is what education is provided and the speed with which it is accomplished.

I am not against a loans system, but we must be fair and ensure that students have enough money to complete their education. If not, there will be an aggrieved minority in universities who may prove troublesome—not while they are there but when they leave—irrespective of the Government.

Twenty per cent. of students should be given a full higher education grant—those with starred As.

Ms Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West) *indicated dissent.*

Sir Rhodes Boyson: They are the students who keep learning alive. There is no point to long-term education of the kind that the hon. Lady favours.

Such university students would do something for the country, as well as for themselves. The top 10 per cent. or 20 per cent. of students should receive full scholarships.

Mr. Vaz: State scholarships?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: Yes, state scholarships—a full grant, with all the costs of teaching paid. That was done in the 1930s, with a mixture of the two. Such students could read whatever they wanted, because they are the students who keep learning alive.

The other 80 or 90 per cent. could be subject to a full loan system. They should be asked, "Do you really want to go, or is it that you cannot get off that escalator? You had better go for something that will pay for your bread and butter later, so that you can pay back that loan." I refer to students on vocational courses, for which there is a desperate need thoughout the country.

Men and women sit on a three-legged stool. If one leg falls off, something goes wrong with society. One leg is

[Sir Rhodes Boyson]

religion. One does not need to be religious, but one must have a view of life and what it is about. The second leg is social—the ability to work with people as a unit. The third is economic. If one gets those three legs right, society is right.

One element of the Budget knocks one of those legs away, with the cut in the married couple's allowance. The family is under desperate attack, and we must revive it. It may make economic sense to cut that allowance, but it does not make sense in terms of society. Unless we rebuild the family structure, the future will be worse, whatever we may do in material terms.

It should be the policy of any Government to check whether their future actions help the family. I appeal to the Government to change their mind and to ensure that the family is helped in every possible way.

6.34 pm

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): I listened with considerable interest to the right hon. Members for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) and for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins). The Financial Secretary will doubtless reflect that, among today's many speeches, only that of the Secretary of State for Education seemed to support the Budget.

An increasing number of Conservative Members may share my view that the Budget was like over-indulging in cheap champagne. When it was presented, Tory Back Benchers hailed the Chancellor of the Exchequer's champagne performance, but we are beginning to see the after-effects and hangover caused by the right hon. and learned Gentleman's statement. In recent days, there has been revelation after revelation that the Budget will in no way tackle the real problems confronting this country, but that it has created a large number of hardships.

Most notably, the Budget fails to tackle the urgent need to return people to employment. We heard recently of the desperate concern of the Secretary of State for Social Security to reduce spending on social security benefits. He could achieve that not in the way done in the Budget—a shameful reduction in the availability of unemployment benefit—but by getting more people back to work through a Budget that invests in the economy.

It would be churlish not to acknowledge that the Budget contains some positive elements. I welcome the modest move towards establishing child care allowances. As the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said, that measure does not go far enough, but it makes a welcome start. I applaud also the proposals to support small businesses, and the belated recognition that work must be done on introducing measures that support small businesses that suffer as a result of the late payment of debt.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Does the hon. Gentleman realise that the two points that he just made are closely linked? He alleges that the Budget will not help employment prospects, but the package of measures for small businesses includes a 1 per cent. reduction in employers' national insurance contributions in respect of employees earning less than £200 a week—which is one of the best examples of the way in which the Budget will help to create future jobs.

Mr. Foster: I made the point that some Budget measures make improvements. I acknowledge that those two proposals combined will make a small contribution to improving job opportunities. A third creates further job opportunities, in a small way. The increased investment, albeit modest, in the energy efficiency scheme will create some additional jobs.

However, although those measures are welcome, they are insufficient. Sadly, I must share the view expressed by the right hon. Member for Worthing——

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): The hon. Gentleman speaks of modest measures, so why is it that every small business group in this country gave them an overwhelming welcome?

Mr. Foster: I welcome them, but I would like them to go further. The Government have not acknowledged that small businesses will be the engine room of recovery and the source of the vast number of new jobs that must be created. If the hon. Gentleman will join in my call for a real cut in the uniform business rate, which is desperately needed, and for the removal of one-way rent reviews, I would be delighted to have his support.

Mr. Ottaway: The hon. Gentleman will know that I introduced a ten-minute rule Bill calling for just such a measure on upward-only rent review clauses.

Mr. Foster: I was not aware that the hon. Member had done that. I give my full support to his proposal.

The right hon. Member for Worthing talked about the fears that had been raised before the Budget. I very much share his concern about the way in which the matter was handled, and about the lingering problem that raising those fears has created.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House probably now acknowledge that investment in education is crucial. The question, therefore, is the level of investment and how it should be used. Liberal Democrats have long argued for the need significantly to increase investment in education. At the last general election, we were honest enough to tell the electorate what that increased spending would be and where the money would come from.

We said that we would spend further money on starting to tackle the backlog of repair and maintenance work in our educational establishments. We were delighted that that view was supported by a recent report from the National Commission on Education. We continue to make that pledge, in a desire to ensure that there is increased investment in education.

Sadly, however, despite what the Secretary of State said about the importance of investment in human capital, the Budget does not propose the significant investment that is needed. Indeed, I am disappointed that much of the information provided about the Budget and the subsequent statements has tended to hide the lack of investment it proposes.

The largest failure of investment in the Budget is the failure to invest in nursery education. The right hon. Member for Brent, North referred to the need for increased jobs. The Library estimates that the provision of nursery education for all three and four-year-olds whose parents wanted it would create an additional 40,000 jobs. Furthermore, as recent reports have shown, that would be not only a sound educational investment but a sound financial investment, because evidence shows that expenditure on nursery education produces a net financial benefit to the nation.

It is important that both sides of the House agree on the number of children who would be involved. The Secretary of State told the House today that more than 50 per cent. of children were in nursery education. The Library has prepared a detailed briefing for me on those figures, which does not confirm what he said. It says that 26 per cent. of three and four-year-olds in England attend nursery schools or nursery classes in maintained primary schools. I understand where the Secretary of State obtained his figures. He has added the 20 odd per cent. of three and four-year-olds who attend infant classes in primary schools to that 26 per cent. That is different from true nursery provision. It is important that the House debates the true statistics.

Mr. Dorrell: Is the hon. Gentleman really saying that he is against infant education?

Mr. Foster: The Financial Secretary may find the briefings interesting. The evidence is now clear, and certainly growing, that nursery education for three and four-year-olds is far preferable to the early introduction of rising-fives into reception classes.

Ms Armstrong: The Financial Secretary might be assisted by reading the recent inspectors' report on problems in primary schools. One of the most serious difficulties it identified was the number of four-year-olds who are not gaining nursery experience, because of the lack of appropriate equipment, of the appropriate staff ratios or of appropriately trained staff to lead them into infant education. There is a difference between nursery education and reception classes, and the Government will have to address it.

Mr. Foster: I am grateful for that intervention.

I am sure that the Financial Secretary will now be willing to consider the issues in detail. Knowing his interest in finance as well as education, I hope that he will carefully consider the recent research, which shows that not only an educational benefit but a financial benefit can accrue to the nation from investment in nursery education.

It would be wrong to deny that some increased money has been made available to the Department for Education and Ofsted. Unfortunately, the vast majority of it will be swallowed up in ways that will not improve the quality of education. For example, quite a lot of it will go to further feather-bed grant-maintained schools.

I draw attention to the rather strange phrase that the Secretary of State has coined. He now calls grant-maintained schools "self-governing schools", despite the fact that his own legislation—the Education Reform Act 1988 and the Education Act 1993—specifically state that such schools shall be called grant-maintained schools. Windscale's name was changed to Sellafield because it had become so unpopular that a way had to be found around it. Many hon. Members are aware that grant-maintained schools are beginning to be a very unpopular part of the education service.

Of the increased money, some—albeit a modest amount—will go to higher education. That is hardly surprising, given the rapid and large expansion in the number of students in higher education, about which the Secretary of State boasted yet again today. He said that that expansion was the equivalent of 12 new universities, yet when I asked him only eight or nine days ago to tell me whether the equivalent amount of capital investment that would be needed for 12 new universities had been made available, he did not respond. He failed to do so because of the Government's embarrassment at the growing backlog of repair and maintenance in our higher education institutions, the increased overcrowding of students and the many other problems in higher education which have resulted from their failure to invest in expanding education.

Despite the modest increase in expenditure on higher education, the growing drop-out problem remains. One in eight of our university students—the highest number ever—are dropping out of higher education, and the morale of staff is at an all-time low. As the right hon. Member for Brent, North said, students in higher education are now having difficulty even in getting the books that they require.

Students have suffered in other ways from the Budget. The cut in grant, matched of course by the increase in loans, has betrayed the earlier agreements to phase in the change from grant to loan much more slowly. The Government said that the introduction of loans has in no way affected the number of students entering higher education and, to judge from the speeding up on that process, it certainly appears that they want to test that thesis to destruction. According to documents that are alleged to have been stolen, it now appears that we have on the agenda the possibility of students also being required to pay some of their fees. I hope that time will be found as soon as possible to debate these issues.

It was wrong to suggest that many students in higher and further education can take advantage of discretionary awards. As most hon. Members will know, the availability of discretionary awards has been significantly reduced across the country in recent years, as the squeeze on local government finances continues.

As I said, some money has been made available for education, but it is rather like the magician's card trick—one can see the cards in his hand but one does not know what cards are up his sleeve. Since Budget day, more information about what was up the sleeve has been revealed, but on Budget day itself, and in the first few days after it, many people were misled.

Even *The Daily Telegraph* managed to miss the subtle irony of having the following two statements on its front page. The first said:

> "Overall, Government spending on education in a very demanding public expenditure round will increase next year by 2·7 per cent in real terms."

However, on the same page, a second statement read:

> "Local councils in England were told last night that they face cuts in services and job losses next year as a result of the Chancellor's decision to limit the growth in their cash spending to 2·3 per cent."

If we are going to discuss educational expenditure, we must consider the money given directly to the DFE and Ofsted, and that available to local government. It then becomes clear that the squeeze on local government funds will mean that local education authorities will have to make further cuts in expenditure in the next 12 months, and that very few will be able to improve the level or quality of their services.

The Secretary of State for Education proudly boasted that spending on individual pupils has increased significantly since 1979. I think that he quoted a figure in

[Mr. Foster]

excess of 40 per cent. Such a claim has been made many times in the House, and I thought it important to have that figure checked.

I have here a detailed brief prepared by the Library which examines the claim of increased expenditure. The brief shows clearly that, if one takes account of appropriate education price deflators and the changes in pupil numbers, the total increase in resources is not 40-odd per cent. but just 2 per cent. It also reveals that there has been a fall in real terms in spending on secondary education, and that spending on further education, about which the Secretary of State boasted so proudly only a couple of hours ago, has fallen by some 22 per cent.

From the total money made available to the DFE and Ofsted and the effective reductions in expenditure to local government, it is clear that the Budget does not provide the desperately needed investment for our education service. I can do no better than end by citing an editorial in the magazine *Education:*

> "Sweet words do not soothe the acts of fiscal brutality contained in this week's announcement. True, the battered State service continues to survive. But let's not get too excited. More than ever, the contents of the Whitehall honey pot begin to taste increasingly bitter."

6.54 pm

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): In the *Financial Times* on Saturday, there was an interesting review of Mr. Alfred Malabre's book entitled "Lost Prophets", which deals with the uselessness of economists. Mr. Malabre, who has been reporting for the *Wall Street Journal* for the past 35 years, said in his book that in 1958 the *Wall Street Journal* employed no economists; nor did Salomon Brothers or any of the principal banks in the United States. At that time, the economy in the United States and Europe, including the United Kingdom, did very well.

With the use of computers and high-powered mathematics, the economics profession has created an aura of scientific competence and has produced various theories of which right hon. and hon. Members will be aware—Keynesianism, monetarism and even supply-side economics, which is the daft way of cutting taxes so much that growth would occur and eventually create its own revenue. Mr. Malabre states that Keynes had no effect on the United States until Kennedy in the 1960s and that "demand management" came to mean inflation plus budget deficits. Very much the same has occurred in this country.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) inserted a clause in the Industry (Amendment) Act 1976, which insisted on the Government making an economic forecast. That forecast has been included in the Red Book ever since. The seven so-called wise men, who are economists appointed to the Government, have their views printed in the Red Book, which gives them some sort of status as though they were official advisers to the Government and had some powers of economic forecast not available to ordinary men. I believe that it is ludicrous to place such weight on these forecasts.

One begins with an absolute certainty, which is the amount of money one owes—£50 billion—and then, by sleight of hand, one arrives at the rate of growth necessary to fulfil that deficit. In two years' time, it turns out to be a rate of growth of 3 per cent. I very much hope that we shall get there, but I applaud the admirable determination of the Treasury to bring down the deficit. That is by far the best contribution that the Government could make to the economy.

I said at the time of the Budget that the £50 billion deficit was in any case too large. It should have been reduced in the previous Budget to about £38 billion and we should have applied value added tax to fuel and power much earlier—in April—together with the various offsets and the social security relief which have now been announced. As it was, for some time we had all the pain of the most unpopular tax without any of revenue. That cannot have been a good thing. It shows that fine tuning is a greatly exaggerated art.

We should be aware of the substantial international flows of money, such as those that occurred during the exchange rate mechanism debacle. We must recognise the fact that not only can large sums of money be shifted around the world very quickly but the people who shift them look carefully at the public sector deficits of each country.

I was surprised to learn that in Germany the share of interest in total public spending is likely to rise from 11 per cent. in 1989 to 16 per cent. in 1994 and to 23 per cent. in 1997. No country in Europe can afford to neglect its public sector finances and every country has to seek to reduce its deficits. That is the practical truth of the matter. We cannot simply go it alone, either, in exchange rate policy without cost if we expect foreigners to finance our deficit.

Since 1985, the sterling index has fallen to 81 from 100 and that has meant that our long-term 10-year bonds, which have been issued, have to bear a penalty of about 1 per cent. compared with German bonds. In every respect, the best way is to reduce the amount that one has to borrow and thus to become less dependent on overseas markets.

The position now is very different from what it was years ago, when we could with some comfort declare what the Budget was going to be and look upon settling our own Budget quite comfortably within our resources. Every country now is susceptible to the winds of fortune; to large sums of money being shifted from one country to another at the press of a button. It is not possible to engage in domestic economic policies without paying any care or attention to that phenomenon. It is a very important factor. We are, in that respect, all interdependent rather than being able to address ourselves, as we would no doubt like to do, to the importance of arriving at a correct national Budget.

With that in mind, I would also like to follow what my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins) said about the funding. I mentioned that the last time that it was produced in the Budget. I notice that my right hon. Friend proposes to issue £7 billion-worth fewer gilts to the non-bank public. I am old-fashioned enough to think that that means issuing £7 billion to the banks, which will act as the base from which they can lend in future. That is no bad thing at the moment because we are well below our productive capacity and I see no strain on inflation at the moment, but the danger will arise in two years' time, when we achieve the 3 per cent. growth that we all wish to see. I notice that the Financial Secretary is paying close attention to that matter and I wish to put it on record that I think that printing money is a most dangerous development. It has served us no good in the past and it is a mistake.

Some very interesting things come out of the Budget statement, not least that in the *Hansard* of the same day the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson)—I am sorry that he is not in his place—tabled a most interesting question. It appears from the answer that the top 10 per cent. of the population now pay three times as much tax as the bottom 50 per cent., whereas 14 years ago they paid rather less than twice. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for asking that question because it shows, better than any Conservative Member could have done, the benefits of low rates of taxation on direct income. I hope that the hon. Gentleman asks many more.

As it happened, in the same volume of *Hansard*, there was a question about capital gains tax. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary is in his place because the yield of the capital gains tax in 1988-89 was about £2·3 billion; in 1992-93 it was £980 million. That is substantially less than half. In 1988-89, 155,000 people paid capital gains tax; 85,000 paid it last year. That is a serious case of declining revenue. The capital gains tax is taking on more of the character of the development land tax, which, as some of my right hon. and hon. Friends remember, was imposed by the last Labour Government and had to be dropped because it simply brought in no revenue.

I have to tell my right hon. and hon. Friends that the question of capital gains tax is now serious. It is producing less and less revenue and it is clear that the rate of tax is entirely inappropriate. It seems tragic that it brings in less than £1 billion in revenue at a time when the markets are reporting increases in capital values of several billion pounds a day. It is missing all the revenue that it could get if it had a substantially lower rate of tax.

Suppose, for example, the rate of tax were 15 per cent. Assets would be exchanged freely and the Government would get substantially more revenue. I know what the argument is. It is the old Inland Revenue argument about people converting income into capital. We have to recognise the most important point about revenue, which is that one should get as much revenue out of taxation as one can and not impose dotty levels, which fail to get the revenue which is so badly required.

I shall say one last word about public spending. It has long been my view that the state should not indulge in unnecessary activity. Therefore, the Department of Employment should be scrapped altogether and its functions divided between Education and Training, and Social Security for the unemployment benefit.

I do not know whether my right hon. and learned Friend has seen the figures—my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing and I have seen them—showing that the reform of local government will cost £1 billion when all the dispositions have been made.

Sir Terence Higgins: Much more.

Sir Peter Hordern: My right hon. Friend says much more. I never disagree with my right hon. Friend and in this case I certainly do not.

We cannot afford £1 billion and in the case of West Sussex the reform is unasked for, quite unnecessary and an absurd waste of time. Of course, I realise that it is necessary to do away with Humberside and Avon and all those ridiculous authorities, but in West Sussex we require no change and it is a total waste of money. We should stop it.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman can correct me if I am wrong, but I believe that he was in the House between 1970 and 1974 and voted, with the current Secretary of State for the Environment, for the local government changes that created Avon and Humberside. Did he vote against them and speak out against them at the time?

Sir Peter Hordern: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I was voting for West Sussex, which I thought was excellent. I do not really know about those other parts of the country, which I seldom visit. I naturally thought that those were the names that they wished to have.

Sir Terence Higgins: People in the Treasury at the time were desperately worried about the cost.

Sir Peter Hordern: In my experience, any reform of local government or of the health service always ends in disaster in terms of extra expense and more administrators and we do better to leave well alone.

I commend my right hon. and learned Friend's approach. It seems to me that his approach to good house-keeping is essential. He comes with no economic or econometric baggage. It is a good, practical Budget, which deserves the support that it is getting.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Madam Speaker has ruled that speeches from now until 9 o'clock shall be no longer than 10 minutes.

7.7 pm

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): It is now six days since the Chancellor delivered what he described as a "no nonsense Budget". In the intervening period and over the weekend, it was often difficult to reconcile reports by the various pundits on the Chancellor's speech with the comments that I heard from people in my constituency, most of whom were greatly concerned at the effects of the Budget. I read with interest the words of Ms. Bronwyn Curtis, chief economist with the Deutsche Bank, who commented:

> "the cuts in spending make it as painless as possible for the voters"

as if "the voters" were a heterogeneous group who all feel the same amount of pain right across the board. That is nonsense.

Tell that to any of the three million people who are without a job at the moment—and their families—who will see their unemployment benefit replaced by the profoundly, I think, insultingly titled job seeker's allowance. It is not the name change that will concern them most, however; it is the fact that the payment is to be cut in half and restricted to a mere six months. I come into contact all too often with people who have been denied work and none of them—not one—wants to claim unemployment benefit for any more than six days, far less six months. Implicit in the new allowance is the suggestion that many people do—that is assuming that they can get round the already oppressive "actively seeking work" conditions that are applied under the present regime.

The proposal is also dishonest, because people in work, as we all do, pay taxes, a proportion of which is to sustain them, should they be unfortunate enough to find themselves unemployed. Now, from 1996, someone who loses his or her job will be denied half the benefits for which he or she has been paying for, perhaps, 20 years or more. If an insurance company tried the same thing on us, we would describe it as a con trick and immediately phone our solicitors. I do not believe that the Government should be allowed to get away with the same thing: it is legalised robbery. A no-nonsense Budget? I think not.

[Mr. Mike Watson]

Another gung-ho pundit who seemed to like the Budget was Professor David Currie of the London Business School, who described it as "politically highly astute", and said that the Chancellor had "skilfully defused" the household VAT row. These people seem to be wholly divorced from reality. I do not know what Professor Currie's domestic heating bills amount to, but we can be sure that an additional 8 per cent. or 17·5 per cent. will not cause him to lose much sleep—or much heat. If he and Ministers believe that the issue has been skilfully defused just because Tory Back Benchers—cheaply as ever—have been bought off, they should think again. Many of us see this as a campaign that must and will continue.

The derisory 50p or 70p for pensioner couples will meet half the anticipated increase in heating costs. That is of course woefully inadequate; but what about low-income families who will not qualify for any help at all? For them, the issue has certainly not been defused. It is all too real.

The stark fact arising from the cruel imposition of VAT on domestic fuel is that people will die as a result. I am not being dramatic. The Government may contest the figures, but they cannot dispute the fact that VAT on fuel is a killer tax. Statistics show that over the past eight years there have been 35,000 so-called "excess winter deaths" throughout the United Kingdom. That refers to deaths between January and March as compared with the period from July to September. Between 1975 and 1985 about 40,000 such deaths occurred, so a decline in the numbers had begun and the suffering had begun to be alleviated.

VAT on fuel, it has been estimated by a wide variety of agencies, will reverse this trend and send the figures sharply upwards again. This is no startling revelation, but the fact is that cold kills. The Government, however, seem prepared to brush aside that fact in their desperation to cut their massive budget deficit. Their motto seems to be that they will impose cuts where they can be least resisted and to hell with the consequences.

I do not raise this issue lightly or use the term "killer tax" lightly, but the evidence is clear and unequivocal. An organisation known as the campaign for cold weather credits is based in my constituency and campaigns throughout Scotland on behalf of the old and the poor. It has carried out research throughout Britain and its revelations are startling:

> "People on a low income have difficulty keeping adequately warm on their present incomes. If there is an increase in the cost of keeping warm, for instance, because the weather is colder than usual, these households cannot increase their expenditure to compensate. They get colder, their health is put at risk and more will die. The imposition of VAT on domestic energy will have the same effect. An 8 per cent. increase in VAT will cause an extra 5,000 deaths per annum. A 17·5 per cent. increase in VAT will cause an extra 10,000 deaths pere annum. In both cases, the imposition of VAT will cause more deaths than occur on the roads each year (approximately 5,000)."

Even if we reduce these horrifying statistics by 40 per cent. to take account of the offsetting 50p or 70p payments, the imposition of VAT on fuel will result in thousands of excess deaths each year.

I challenge the Chief Secretary or the Financial Secretary to deny this. Perhaps they have simply accepted the fact that those deaths will represent a reduced burden on the state and further savings to be set against the £50 billion deficit. I should like to hear how they and their colleagues justify the move. In any case, they should not imagine that the fight against this callous tax is over.

Moreover, we should not forget the effects on low income families of the taxing of the vastly reduced new form of invalidity benefit, the increasing of the state retirement age for women to 65, and the adding of 3 per cent. to insurance premiums—this last is a punitive tax for many of the poorer neighbourhoods in Scotland such as Glasgow, Central, where only about 40 per cent. of homes are insured already. The change will hardly be an inducement to increase insurance.

There are to be grant reductions to local authorities, with consequent damage to—already inadequate—house building and house repairing programmes.

Leaving aside the question whether taxing and spending have been balanced in the Budget, the bottom line is that the average family will be £10 a week worse off next April and £16 a week worse off from April 1995. These people, the victims of the Government's economic incompetence, have been pressed into service in an attempt to bail them out.

I want to take up an aspect of the Budget referred to today by the Education Secretary. It will have a serious effect on many of my constituents, about 17,000 of whom study at Strathclyde or Glasgow Caledonian university. Already, the student grant, plus a loan, amounts to less than they would get on income support and of course they are no longer entitled to benefit. The announcement of a 10 per cent. cut in student grant in each of the next three years came as a body blow to many of them, as they told me last weekend. The fact that the size of the loans available will be sharply increased in no way compensates. Most students do not want to end their studies thousands of pounds in debt. Why should they be expected to do so? By 1997, on Government plans, the amount owed by a student who has completed his or her course, taking out loans throughout it, will be almost £5,000—plus another £1,000 in Scotland, where a typical honours degree takes four years.

Too many students, it would seem, are gaining entry to our universities. In other countries, they welcome that and provide resources commensurate with it. This Government, however, are attempting to halt the expansion of higher education by making it financially unattractive to go to university. What a way to run an education system. The changes will effectively reduce the number of students entering higher education and will unfortunately mean turning the clock back, with the effect that students from social classes 1 and 2 will dominate at the expense of those from poorer families. That is not what the Government claim to want, but it will be the effect. On top of all this, the widely leaked announcement that student fees are to be charged from next year represented more nonsense from a "no nonsense" Budget.

I would like to close with a brief statement on a subject that I have not heard raised so far—the bad news for the aid budget for developing countries. The freeze announced last year has been confirmed and it will mean real cuts over the next three years of about 10 per cent. At the same time, aid to eastern and central Europe has increased by about 23 per cent. this year and will increase by 19 per cent. in each of the next two years.

The importance of aid to developing economies is not in doubt, but it obscures the fact that there is a continuing transfer of our aid away from long-term development assistance to the poorest countries and towards the promotion of Thatcherite values and market economics in the former Soviet Union and its neighbours. There is a depressing parallel here with benefit reductions for this country in the Budget, a sinister sort of consistency: the Government are prepared to hit the world's poor just as hard as they hit the poor in Britain.

This has been a bad week and a bad Budget for the poor, not only at home but around the world. The Government's spending and taxing plans only hold out the promise that there is worse to come.

7.17 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): It was with mixed emotions that I listened to the Budget delivered by my right hon. and learned Friend and, despite the surge in the City, it is with very mixed feelings that the Budget has been received by the construction industry and the manufacturing sector of our economy.

As chairman of the Manufacturing and Construction Industries Alliance, launched in the House earlier this year with the support of colleagues of all parties and with welcomes from the Prime Minister and leaders of Opposition parties, I am sensitive to the needs of construction and manufacturing, and it is clear to me from my extensive contacts with industry that where the Chancellor failed in his Budget was in dealing with the fact that UK Ltd. needs a clear economic strategy for growth —and we do not have one.

The Budget provided some elements for such a strategy, but no really coherent explanation of just how we would achieve even the depressingly low 2·5 per cent. growth a year. The problem that we face is not merely one of controlling public finances and balancing the books. That, at the very most, is a by-product; it cannot be considered a substitute for a real economic and industrial strategy.

Similarly, tax increases and cuts in public expenditure, especially on roads, housing and other badly needed infrastructure projects, do not amount to a strategy. Our underlying problems of high unemployment, budget deficit and weak growth can be tackled only by a much more positive and constructive approach, by a positive programme of measures that focuses upon and maximises the opportunities that are currently open to the United Kingdom.

There is a world recession, and the United Kingdom cannot expect to achieve high growth when Japan, the United States and Germany are at various stages in a long recession. But it is possible to identify some bright spots and to make some reasonable assumptions about where opportunities will and will not be found over the next five years. That is precisely what President Clinton did two weeks ago at his summit with leaders of the economies of the far east. He identified the current economic power and the future economic potential of Japan, China, Taiwan, Korea and Malaysia which, together with the United States, make the Pacific the key focus for the 21st century.

The North American free trade agreement will undoubtedly in due course extend to much more of Latin America beyond Mexico, and a new fulcrum of world trade is emerging. The main economic players are sizing each other up and shifting their footing for the best possible position to take advantage of world markets. Unless we are careful, the United Kingdom will not even be in the ring with them.

In stark contrast, I shall now turn to the dull, gloomy and sorry spectacle of Europe to which our political and economic strategies seek to wed us. I welcome the Chancellor's strictures on Europe and his commitment to the conclusion of the GATT round, on which he has my support, but he did not tell us how he intends to deregulate Europe. The price of reunification, on top of Germany's burgeoning and inefficient bureaucracy, feather-bedded labour force and high social and production costs, has meant that Germany is no longer the economic heartbeat of Europe. It is approaching the economic equivalent of a cardiac arrest.

Through its foolish attachment to the franc fort and its pretence that the ERM is still alive, France is condemning itself to the same coronary care unit as Germany for some years to come. By its continued policies of forcing through monetary and economic union, social and other legislation —despite the determined efforts of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to persuade it otherwise—the European Community will price itself out of world markets and become an inward-looking and ultimately second-rate trading area.

Europe is over-regulated. It has high costs and it is uncompetitive, recession ridden and economically short sighted. However, there is still hope, because our membership of the European Community does not preclude us from competing for our share of those world markets which either are still growing or which may be expected rapidly to do so in the next five years. Thus, our economic strategy must be to provide the United Kingdom with an alternative to being able to trade only within the European Community so that we are able to seize an increasing share of world markets. Sadly, that strategy was lacking in my right hon. and learned Friend's Budget.

Europhiles who constantly pretend that there is no alternative to Europe should look at the real world and acknowledge the collapse of their fantasy. They should look at what the United States Administration clearly see, which is that alternatives are difficult to miss, not hard to find. The alternative strategy that the Chancellor should adopt for United Kingdom Ltd. has two key features, one of which has been started but not adequately explained by Ministers. It is deregulation, and I welcome the measures on national insurance and PAYE that the Chancellor announced. The second feature, interest rate reductions, has started by default, but has not yet gone far enough.

Deregulation recognises that drastic action to reduce the costs of British industry is essential to make us competitive. In the 1980s, reform of the trade unions and our labour relations legislation put in place new levels of cost efficiency. We must now proceed to reduce the cost of over-regulation and bureaucracy, which are a colossal millstone of overheads for every company, especially small businesses. The Prime Minister has announced initiatives to do that and a Bill will be introduced to repeal redundant regulations. That is welcome, but the exercise must be carried out rigorously and without delay, and all new United Kingdom and EC legislation must be subject to extensive new scrutiny to establish accurately not only compliance costs but whether legislation is in proportion to the problem that it claims to address.

If Britain is to become an internationally competitive nation selling to countries on the Pacific rim and to the United States and India and others, we must keep our unit costs down and resist expensive and unnecessary legislative burdens that will merely lengthen dole queues.

[Mr. Nicholas Winterton]

The second requirement for recovery is a competitive currency. Although the Government have been forced to reduce interest rates and let sterling fall, they have not gone far enough. Lower interest rates are urgently needed to reduce domestic costs, stimulate investment and underpin growth, force down the value of the pound and give our exporters an advantage in growth markets. That will produce higher United Kingdom growth than we currently enjoy, perhaps 3 to 3·5 per cent. after 12 to 18 months rather than the dismal 1·75 to 2·5 per cent. predicted by the Chancellor. That is the correct way to deal with the PSBR. It should not be dealt with by cuts in necessary public investment or by tax increases that will depress our economy.

Britain has a hell of a problem to face after 1 April next year. Some people in the Treasury and the Bank of England claim that my proposal is inflationary. They are totally wrong, and their obsession with inflation, which is rooted in outdated social and market conditions that no longer apply, threatens our economic recovery. I am sorry to note that Mr. Eddie George will apparently have too much say in future about the timing of interest rate changes. He is so far gone in his obsession with inflation that no longer exists that he is himself one of the largest single obstacles to the development of a coherent economic strategy and economic growth.

The Chancellor must personally accept full responsibility for a positive strategy for growth that will enable Britain to become a world trading nation, and he must make the necessary decisions on both actions and timing. In a matter of weeks, not months, interest rates should come down to between 3 and 4 per cent. Such a reduction was the centrepiece that the Budget lacked.

A Government who reduce our cost base and keep our currency competitive may truly hope to win the approval of industry and the support of our people at the next general election. The Government may also expect British industry to rise with relish to the new opportunities that will be presented by such a strategy for growth and prosperity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Gentleman is out of time. I call Ms Armstrong.

7.27 pm

Ms Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Opposition support for much of what the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) said was such that I did not hear my name called. I agreed especially with the early part of the hon. Gentleman's speech in which he declared that the Budget had no overall strategy for dealing with the long-term problems of the economy or for investing in the future of industry and the industrial base. Such a strategy is desperately needed.

The Budget continued to perpetrate the Government fraud on the British people. Before the election, the Government decried taxation and said that any increase would fundamentally undermine the economy, but every year since the election taxes have been unfairly increased. The Chancellor did nothing to remove VAT on fuel, a regressive and punitive tax on those who have little opportunity to increase their income. They will be heavily punished by the tax.

The Budget ensured that ordinary families, many of them struggling to maintain the standard of living they began to expect during the 1980s, will be the people who will pay more tax and get less. They will pay the price for the mistakes and the fraud of the Government. Many of them are already paying that price. The middle income earners will be badly hit. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) said, a typical family's tax bill will rise by £10 a week next year and by £16 a week in 1995.

Newspapers have become more aware of precisely what the Budget said, and are also recognising that there has been a bigger tax hike in this year's Budget than we have ever had, certainly since the second world war. The future for ordinary middle-income families is looking bleaker than they were ever led to expect by the Government—much worse than the Government, and the party that they represent, predicted when they were trying to scaremonger about Labour's plans.

More than 500,000 extra people will be drawn into taxation and income tax because of the freezing of allowances. More than 300,000 of those people will be women. It is a Budget which, once again, makes things much more difficult for many women. The Government have tried to target one-parent families—many headed by women—and the financial opportunities for them are being constrained by the Government's behaviour.

Mr. Hendry: What about the child-care initiative?

Ms Armstrong: I will come to the child-care initiative. There were no initiatives in the Budget to secure long-lasting recovery. It will not create the new jobs in north-west Durham that the people there are desperate for. It will not bring the new industries that we have been finding it so hard to secure. It contained no new incentives for investment and expansion for the firms in my constituency.

At the same time, the Budget has put a squeeze on public spending, which means cuts in many of the services that ordinary families and the vulnerable in our society depend upon. In particular, local government spending has been very savagely hit. That will mean that the expansion that we require in nursery education will not happen. I am sad that Tory Members are still trying to obtain pleasure out of the figures that were exceptionally well presented, I have to say, by the Chancellor.

When we look at those figures in the Red Book, we can recognise that the gloss is just that—gloss. Underneath the gloss lies a story that is much more difficult for people in areas such as mine to come to terms with. We desperately want nursery education, smaller classes in our primary schools and leisure facilities to help to promote the health and well-being of the population. It will be much more difficult to provide all of those.

The points made about local government reorganisation by the right hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) will be met with a wry smile in Durham. We must pay for an additional review because the Government did not like what the commissioners said the first time round. We have to pay not only for an initial review but for a second one because the commissioners did not come up with what the Government wanted.

Unemployment benefit is being slashed and, conveniently, approximately 240,000 people will be removed from the register. More than 600 people in my constituency have been unemployed for between six and 12 months. In October 1993, out of nearly 4,000 claimants in my constituency, more than 2,000 had been unemployed for more than six months, and nearly 1,500 had been unemployed for more than a year. Long-term unemployment is a reality in my constituency. It is not an area where a person can lose a job and quickly get another.

Conservative Members should consider more carefully the social consequences, the family consequences and the community consequences of unemployment. Unemployment is breaking up families, breaking up communities and bringing enormous distress to those communities. It was an insult for the Chancellor to imply that that is because people are not looking for work; that was something that many found too hard to bear.

On top of that, invalidity benefit is to be taxed. In areas such as mine, more people tend to claim invalidity benefit. That may be because of the increased numbers on unemployment benefit. It may be because the type of industrial work that many of them have done in the past has made them less able to work. That is a part of the Government's great insult. People who have worked and made commitments are having everything withdrawn from them, and they are being blamed for the economic mess that the Government have created.

I initially welcomed the announcement about the child-care allowance. I have argued for something like that and for the Government to introduce a national child-care strategy for a long time. Such a strategy would enable us to do our best for our youngest children and give women the opportunity to go back to work.

I hope that the Chief Secretary will tell me that I am wrong, but my understanding is that the total amount available for family credit will not be raised. I have discussed this with the Library, and it seems that if people are drawing the full amount they will not be entitled to any extra for child care. Two thirds of families are on the lowest salaries and are entitled to the maximum family credit, and they will not gain a penny. Some 90 per cent. of single parents with one child, who are entitled to family credit, will not gain a penny from this initiative. It is a fraud.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order.

7.37 pm

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): As someone who introduced two private Member's Bills, in 1986 and 1987, about the late payment of debt, I give a very warm welcome to the consultation that has been announced on the statutory right to interest.

I disagree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir. P. Hordern). I believe that the March Budget was right to delay the impact of the tax increases to allow the economy time and room to recover. That is now clearly happening. It is also clear that, although we have a debt problem, it is not a debt crisis.

Against that background, the Budget had to do two things: first, it had to prove that the deficit would be substantially reduced; secondly, it had to support the economic upturn without causing inflation. The judgment of both of those issues has to be considered in global, national and local terms—in my case, in Croydon.

Globally, it is clear that the markets have given the Budget the thumbs-up. The pound has strengthened since last Tuesday—up one cent against the dollar and three pfennigs against the deutschmark. That is because of the Chancellor's determination to control the deficit. The market looked at the overall picture and liked what it saw. It saw inflation coming down, output going up, unit costs coming down and productivity going up. It saw unemployment falling—and, having reached a verdict, it raised its stocks. In short, everything that ought to be going up is doing so, and everything that ought to be coming down is doing so.

Let us compare that with the picture in the rest of Europe. Spain has a 24 per cent. unemployment rate; Belgium has had a general strike; in France, every £100 ticket issued by Air France is subsidised by the taxpayer to the tune of £10.

Nationally, the situation looks a little different. This was a tough and pragmatic Budget, showing a sense of realism. Most important, it addressed the deficit; however, it also contained welcome increases in health and education expenditure. Those increases can be achieved by means of reductions in expenditure on defence, local government and transport, all of which I believe can be justified.

A certain amount of pain is bound to accompany the cuts in the defence budget, but they were inevitable. Indeed, now that the cold war is clearly over we should ask why we cannot reduce defence expenditure even more. The local government reduction can be managed: we need only look at a good Conservative council like Croydon to see how reductions in grant can be absorbed. Croydon council is sub-contracting out no fewer than six departments, which will result in huge improvements in efficiency and much less dependence on central Government funding. As for transport, road costs are now falling dramatically; given the current lower interest rates, I sincerely hope that the cuts will have little impact.

The most interesting aspect of the Budget is the fact that the deficit is being reduced not through a widening of the VAT base—which many expected—but through greater control of spending. How is that done? First, I belive that the unified Budget has given us a greater focus on the need to balance expenditure with taxation; I think that this vindicates the decision to present such a Budget. Secondly, there are the accounting reforms to be imposed on Departments, which will adopt private acounting practices. I understand that they will follow the New Zealand model, which has resulted in better management of public finances and resources. That is a critical aspect of the Budget. It will work only if spending control is effective.

Critics have said that huge tax rises will kill off the recovery. I think that that ignores two important points. Last week, Goldman Sachs commented that the tax rises would knock 1·5 per cent. off the growth in gross domestic product. But that is offset by the 0·5 per cent. cut in interest rates announced two weeks ago, and by cuts made over the past two years which have yet to work their way through the system. Those cuts have, in effect, produced a subsidy to industry of some £12 billion, which is bound to be of huge benefit to British industry as a whole. It cannot be disputed, however, that large tax rises are in the pipeline. If the recovery stumbles, the Chancellor should not hesitate to cut interest rates again.

Thirdly, what does Croydon man think of the Budget? The small business man will certainly have a smile on his face, as will the lone mother—or father, for that matter —who wants to return to work; she, or he, will welcome the new child-care allowance. Croydon's success, however, really depends on the prosperity of London.

[Mr. Richard Ottaway]

I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson): London must remain the commercial centre of the world. If it is to achieve that, four essential ingredients are necessary.

The first of those ingredients was introduced back in the mists of time, in 1980: it was the abolition of exchange-control regulations and the introduction of the free flow of capital—a measure opposed by the Labour party. Secondly, London must have the best telecommunications in the world, which it now has—Britain's telecommunications companies now lead the world. The Government's privatisation of those companies was also opposed by Labour.

Thirdly, my constituents want to be able to commute from Croydon to their work in London. Services from Croydon to London are much better than many people would give them credit for being: there are no fewer than 10 trains per hour from East Croydon to the centre of London. I also welcome the announcements about the infrastructure and the extension of the light railway; slowly but surely, too, the Jubilee line is making progress.

None the less, I must utter a murmur of dissent. We need better trunk roads to south London. For instance, it is imperative that the Coulsdon bypass, which is planned to go through the middle of my constituency, remains part of the Department of Transport's road programme. Hon. Members who get off the plane at Gatwick will know exactly what I mean: the traffic goes straight up the M23 into my constituency and is then funnelled into a single lane, causing intense traffic congestion.

It is said that we must get more people off the roads and on to the trains, but that will never happen unless we can correct the price imbalance. In that context, I warmly welcome the motorway pricing measures announced in the Budget, and the consultation that is to take place. I also welcome Labour's support for that policy.

London also needs the best leisure facilities in the world. Over the weekend, the news dribbled out that the two London orchestras which were under threat have now been saved. Indeed, a decision to shut them down would have been astonishing.

There is no doubt that there are hefty tax rises to come, but they are comfortably controlled. The two tests that I set have both been achieved. The deficit will soon show signs of coming under control, and this is not an inflationary Budget—how could it be, with some £12 billion coming out of the economy? The Chancellor has achieved both those aims, and I give him my full support.

7.46 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I should like to say a few nice things about the Chancellor's first Budget, but I find it rather difficult. I certainly agree that we need a new apprenticeship scheme, although I think that the provisions should go much further than has been suggested. I also welcome the proposal to offset the cost of child minding, and the moves to charge interest on the late payment of commercial debt—along with certain other provisions for small companies. I regret very much that the retirement age for women is moving up to 65 rather than men's retirement age moving down to 60; much-needed jobs could have been created. I also fear that the changes in sick pay may result in the moving of state responsibilities to the private sector, and I greatly regret the erosion of student grants. Many low-income families have an understandable fear of loans, and will not accept a loan-based regime for university education.

My main worry, however, concerns the total lack of basic strategy in the Budget. I fear that taking £11 billion out of the economy will undermine any possible upturn. It was interesting to note that those points were picked up by the more serious newspapers over the weekend. An editorial in *The Observer* commented:

> "behind Mr. Clarke's glib manner and slick presentation lies the most deflationary Budget in recent history. The Budget is a serious gamble with the current economic recovery . . . Far from being designed to reduce unemployment, this Budget is likely to increase it".

Another editorial, in *The Sunday Times*, observes:

> "Next year alone more than £11 billion will be taken out of the economy in extra taxes and reduced public spending. That might not be enough to abort the recovery but it hardly helps promote vigorous growth after the longest recession since the 1930s . . . The government's position would be more comfortable if the Treasury understood the nature of this recovery."

I believe that those comments underline the fear that the unemployment crisis which still faces so many of our communities will not be overcome.

The Government seem to have given up the fight against unemployment: the costs of unemployment built into the long-term expenditure programme seem to be on an even keel, which implies that the current unacceptable level will continue.

The Chancellor should have retained the present level of PSBR at least, if not slightly increased it to try to stimulate the economy. If we can sustain the low inflation rate that we have at present, with the current PSBR, it ought to be possible to live with it for a little longer. That situation should be facilitating capital expenditure in areas that include schools, universities and hospitals, yet the plans announced are to reduce capital expenditure from £29 billion to £20 billion by 1997. I would like to see capital expenditure programmes increased to encourage the construction industry, especially. It is ridiculous that we are willing to live with such levels of unemployment when those unemployed people could be used to build the capital assets that are greatly needed in so many parts of our communities.

I am concerned that there is not more money being invested in energy efficiency and conservation. I acknowledge that steps have been taken along that route, but a comprehensive programme is neeeded which will help all low-income households, pensioners, and disabled people to cut household bills, to reduce energy consumption, to protect the environment and to create jobs. That would have been a beneficial step involving an expenditure programme of between £1·5 billion and £2·5 billion.

Infrastructure work to the railway network in Wales is needed. The electrification of the north and south Wales line is needed as much as the announced expenditure on the west-coast line.

I am concerned at the effects of cuts on local government services. We know the effects of those cuts in England and I am worried that the same may happen in Wales. Page 118 of the Red Book shows that the level of public expenditure in Wales will remain static at £6·2 billion in real terms from 1994 to 1997. Given the demographic increases, which will lead to an increased demand for health services, I suspect that there will be an inevitable erosion of community care services. That is worrying. In addition, local government reorganisation will cost at least £150 million, which means that other services will suffer.

People may ask where the money would come from to pay for what I would like to see happen. The level of expenditure on weapons of war in the post cold war era is unsustainable. Spending £23,000 million on armaments is well over the top. The United Kingdom spends more than 4 per cent. of GDP on defence, compared with 1·6 per cent. in Spain, 2 per cent. in Italy, and 2 per cent. in Canada. Of our European Union partners, only Greece spends more on armaments. Surely it is now time to look for cuts in that area.

As I represent a rural constituency, I have obvious foreboding about the effect of increases in the cost of petrol. Between now and the general election, I can envisage petrol at £3 a gallon, which would be devastating for rural areas, not only directly hitting people on low incomes who have no alternative transport, but pushing up other costs. The issue of urban traffic pollution should have been more comprehensively addressed by road taxation rather than hitting those who have no alternative, such as those in rural areas.

At my constituency surgery this weekend, a pensioner told me that, living by herself, she spends between £15 to £20 a week on warming her house. VAT at 17·5 per cent. will result in an increase of between £2·60 and £3·50 in her fuel bills. She will receive £1 extra from the Exchequer, which means she is between £1·50 and £2·50 worse off. That extra cost will hit many disabled and elderly people hard and the Government will pay a price for that.

The changes to unemployment benefit are also worrying to me, especially as I represent an area that has a seasonal economy. Awarding unemployment benefit to seasonal workers recently was seen as a step forward, but some of those claimants will now lose their benefit. I suspect that we shall see the Government tinkering with the unemployment statistics to play down the level of unemployment if we are to define them not only as people who are out of work, but those who draw unemployment benefit.

As for the vicious ending of invalidity benefit and what that may mean, the citizens advice bureaux have drawn our attention to the many severely disabled people having their invalidity benefit withdrawn because they are classified as being capable of holding jobs such as being an artist's model. A person may be able to sit reasonably still in a chair to perform that function, but how many jobs are there in any community for artists' models? Defining a severely disabled person as employable on the basis of being an artist's model is an ominous portent of what we shall face with the new system. Disabled persons' organisations will need to fight that issue forcefully.

The non-indexation of taxation could be insidious over the years. It will draw people on low incomes into the tax net. A single person earning £66 a week may not pay tax this year but may have a wage increase of £2 a week and suddenly have to do so—perhaps only at a rate of 40p per week, but nevertheless that person would be drawn into the tax net and all its accompanying bureaucracy. The Government are stupid not to index the threshold levels for income tax and they should reconsider that.

The Budget is strategically misguided and is especially hard on vulnerable people—disabled people, pensioners, unemployed people, students, low income families and the rural poor. I remember an old trade union friend telling me once that what is morally right can never be politically wrong. I believe that the Budget is morally and socially wrong. It can never be politically right. It is cynical in the extreme and the Government will pay the price.

7.56 pm

Mrs. Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham): I totally disagree with the closing remarks of the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley). On the contrary, I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on a Budget that has restored confidence in the City, in world markets, and certainly among my constituents.

At the weekend, I took soundings of opinion in my constituency, and I am pleased to report that they feel that the Government are in charge of events, rather than events overtaking us. That is reflected in the reception that the Budget has received throughout the City and especially from the CBI, the Department of Trade and Industry and not least an organisation based in my constituency, the National House Building Council. The chief executive, Basil Bean, said:

> "We have been encouraged by this month's signs of recovery in the UK's private house-building industry, and by today's Budget which should sustain this recovery . . . We were particularly pleased to see the Government's continued commitment to the same level of social housing production over the next few years."

The figures show that an average of 636 new homes were sold per day in November—a return to the levels of June and July. That is certainly a sign that the Budget has brought a great deal of confidence.

However, there are a few areas that do not perhaps grab the headlines, and certainly have not been mentioned frequently in the Chamber—especially the Export Credits Guarantee Department premium rates reduction. I was delighted that the President of the Board of Trade announced those reductions, because any cut in premiums is good news.

Banks and companies involved in exporting have been complaining for some time that ECGD premiums in a number of markets are much higher than those of a number of our competitors. Many United Kingdom exporters have felt that they have entered the bidding process with, effectively, one hand tied behind their back.

The announcement of the premium rate reduction clearly shows that the President of the Board of Trade has been listening, but there is still progress to be made in those markets. For a recent project in Mexico, for example, the French premium was quoted at 2·1 per cent., and on capital only, while the ECGD figure, even with a new lower premium, was 3·5 per cent. on both principal and interest.

One of the keys to our economy's continued good growth is our ability to export more to a wide range of markets. The world markets, while increasing, are also being approached by our competitors in a more organised fashion. Only a couple of weeks ago, there was a successful Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation Forum meeting—a precursor, I believe, to a more formal regional trading alliance among the Pacific rim countries. Even China and Taiwan managed to sublimate their continuing political differences to discuss matters of common interest.

We need to be well aware of the levels of co-operation that could emerge from this highly productive region, which we ignore at our peril. Even with the extra cover announced, there is still more to be done. I ask my right

[Mrs. Cheryl Gillan]

hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to monitor our rates constantly and to give the extra help that our exporting companies require.

I now turn to fuel, but not the fuel that has come to the forefront of our Budget debates. I refer to the North sea oil industry, and to the problems of competition and the possibility of wasteful expenditure resulting from changes in that region.

My hon. Friend the Financial Secretary said in Committee on 29 June:

> "It is not the Government's aim to encourage wasteful duplication of infrastructure as opposed to fair competition. We embrace the objective of competition in an undistorted market".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A,* 29 June 1993; c. 633.]

I remind him of his words, and I should like him to focus on some continuing problems which require his attention despite the attempts to address the competition problems identified by the participants in CATS, the central area transmission system—the gas transportation system.

Concerns have been expressed to me about the unfair way in which the petroleum revenue tax changes distort the competitive position of other long-established companies operating in the North sea. There is also some concern that PRT, which was intended as a tax on oil and gas production, continues to attract profits from the transporting of oil and gas. The abolition of PRT for some but not all fields puts long-established North sea participants at a competitive disadvantage. Why should a long-established field be subject to PRT on its income from transporting oil and gas when a new field is not?

That unfair competition could lead to wasteful and environmentally unfriendly expenditure on new pipeline systems that the North sea and this country do not need. The Government really should not pick and choose. If North sea tax changes have distorted the competitive position, they should be looked at as a whole and not selectively.

Could we consider taking tariff income out of charge to PRT for new and old fields alike, or at the very least, could we reinstate the tariff receipts allowance on income from new fields? To do nothing could put existing pipeline systems at a competitive disadvantage and could lead to wasteful expenditure on unnecessary pipeline systems. Our resources should be targeted at finding new oil and gas fields around our island and not at littering the sea bed with extra pipelines which we do not need. I hope that these matters can be discussed more widely, so that the fears expressed to me do not become a reality.

I welcome the proposal to simplify the taxation of the self-employed and to move to self-assessment. However, although it may be a simplification to change to a current-year basis for the self-employed, the change from the present position will be far from simple. I shall look at the Finance Bill carefully to see how that change will be achieved.

Are we right to change to self-assessment so rapidly, more or less at the same time as we are changing to a current-year basis? That warrants further consideration, especially from the perspective of the timing of the changes. I hope that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary can give me assurances on this matter, which affects many of my constituents.

I speak now as a member of the Select Committee on Science and Technology. I express my concern about the support that we are giving, or rather not giving, to research and development, especially as it relates to industry. I know that many hon. Members on both sides are, like myself, concerned about the reductions in defence expenditure. I am especially concerned about the reductions in Department of Trade and Industry expenditure, because, if I have interpreted the figures in the Red Book correctly, the DTI appears to face a reduction of almost 60 per cent. between 1993-94 and 1996-97.

I agree wholeheartedly that we should support women with children through the new provisions on child care. I am absolutely delighted, as are many of my constituents, by the announcement of the help that we are giving to those least able to pay VAT on fuel. But surely we should be doing more to help our wealth-creating sector. Such help is not immediately obvious to me from the figures for the DTI. I look forward with great interest to a more detailed analysis of the DTI's programme from my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

On behalf of my constituents, I say a big "thank you" to my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor and his Treasury team. I say that especially on behalf of the editors of my local newspapers, including the *Examiner*, the *Advertiser* and the *Bucks Free Press*. It makes a change for a Member of Parliament to advertise local newspapers in this place and not criticise them. I also say a "thank you" on behalf of Halstan's, a very small specialist printers in my constituency which still produces hand-written sheet music.

All those organisations would have been badly affected if we had introduced VAT on publications. I ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor to remember, if he is thinking of introducing VAT on publications in his next Budget, that newspapers and small printers, such as Halstan's, will be in real trouble if he does.

This Budget was a thoughtful one, and a difficult one to deliver. I believe most fundamentally, after the reaction in my constituency, that it has manifestly improved the Government's chances of winning the next general election. This was my right hon. and learned Friend's first Budget; it was a first-class Budget.

8.5 pm

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): In 1968, I listened very carefully to the Budget, because I was concerned that there was likely to be a rise in interest rates, and I was contemplating purchasing a house. I mention that so that Conservative Members realise that there are people who still remember what life was like before a Conservative Government. Having heard Conservative Members reciting commercial data and saying how satisfied the City and industry are, I am even more determined to ensure that I never forget those days.

I am concerned about the person in the street. My constituents, unlike those of the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan), do not take a sanguine view of the Budget. That is understandable, because in my neck of the woods male unemployment stands at 20·4 per cent.

I want to register a protest about the misuse of words by the Chancellor. He no longer talks about unemployed people, but about job seekers, and we now have job seeker's benefit instead of unemployment benefit. The new expression has connotations of the workhouse mentality. In a sensible and civilised society, anyone who was seen to be seeking something that did not exist would normally be regarded as a fool. We now have job seekers who are seeking jobs that do not exist. In Sunderland, North, they have not existed for a long time. There is little in the Budget to lead us to believe that that position will change.

I was pleased by two points. I was very pleased to hear that the Chancellor intended to do something about tax evasion and tax avoidance; I thought that that was admirable. I then pondered a little, and I realised that that objective was unattainable under this Government, because it would bring them into direct conflict with the business interests on which they rely. Tax evasion does not come only from odd individuals who do not have much money, and it does not come from social security scroungers. It normally comes from fairly large vested interests, as the record shows.

I remember Lord Healey as Labour Chancellor saying that he would tax the rich until the pips squeaked. He probably meant what he said, but unfortunately, after his term in office, the rich got richer and the poor got poorer —although not to the extent that has been the case since 1979.

We have also heard that we are going back to the apprenticeship scheme. I am pleased about that. Like many other people, I was an apprentice in the north-east, and, at that time, there were apprentice electricians, fitters, boilermakers, welders and shipwrights. Almost every trade was covered, because a tremendous amount of industry was thriving at the time when I served my apprenticeship. If the apprentice scheme is brought back now, all my constituents can look forward to is being apprentice job seekers. That is what would be brought back to the north-east.

The Chancellor has said four or five times that he is a great believer in indirect taxation. I am not, because I recognise it for what it is—a redistribution of wealth away from the poor to help the rich. It is no coincidence that, at a time when we have a massive public sector borrowing requirement debt, the estimated amount of tax which has been given back to the wealthy since 1979 by various pieces of legislation is now worth the equivalent of approximately £5 billion per annum. That would have gone a long way to help to get rid of the debt.

Another alarming thing is that the debt is not a slow thing which has accrued gently during the years. Three or four years ago, the nation was in profit. It is only in the past three years that the debt has escalated to its present level.

The Budget is likely to cause more unemployment, not less. Local authorities will be under greater financial pressure than they are now, and that will lead to unemployment. The Chancellor talks about efficiency in the public service industries. If those industries are to get no extra money and they are expected to carry out the same work and be more efficient, that can only mean one thing —more people unemployed, with those who are left having to do more work for the same money. That has been the history of the Government, and it is the way they operate.

The hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham said that she was pleased with the housing situation. Compared to what this nation showed itself to be capable of in the 1950s and 1960s—under both Labour and Conservative Administrations—the present housing programme looks poor indeed. There is the plight of the homeless and of those who are badly housed. The only answer that seems to be put forward is to bring back the private landlord system.

Mrs. Gillan: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Etherington: I only have 10 minutes to speak, so I am not prepared to give way. That is not out of churlishness, but because there is a shortage of time. I find that 10 minutes goes by quickly.

The hon. Lady mentioned research in this country. I attended a Committee meeting last week at which I elicited the fact that research in the United States and in Japan represents 3 per cent. of their GNP. In this country, research represents 2 per cent. of GNP. That is quite a difference, and it has come about because the nation has completely abdicated its responsibility. The Government have left everything to free market forces, and those forces are not working.

We are not creating wealth in this country. Instead, we are recirculating money, and that is what the Budget is about. Until the Government have the courage and the political will to ensure that our citizens who do well in times of prosperity make a commensurate contribution in times of adversity, we will get no further on. It is an absolute insult that the Government are looking for scapegoats, be it the unemployed, single mothers or, worst of all, those who are drawing invalidity benefit.

It is all very fine for hon. Members who are earning £30,000 a year, and for Ministers who are on twice that, to be speaking out from on high and telling the poor how they should run their lives. The Government say that the poor are a burden on the state and they they cannot afford to service them properly.

I will now speak about motoring tax. There are many people in my constituency for whom the only way to get work is to travel up to 100 miles a day for civil engineering or building work. They need vehicles to enable them to carry out that work. I do not see them running many Jaguars or Porsches—the vehicles are usually fairly modest—but the increase in taxation on fuel will hit them particularly hard.

I will not be altogether ridiculous and say that the £5 increase in vehicle tax will make any difference. Every hon. Member will not notice the increase, but there are many out there who will, including people who live in villages where there is one bus per hour, and the only way in which they can get about is by the use of their own transport. If we had a better public transport system, that would not be the case.

I have heard a lot of complaints and worries expressed during the past year concerning the overseas aid budget. I am afraid that the budget has been cut in real terms. It is a bad state of affairs when a country which agrees in principle to pay 0·7 per cent. of its GNP then pays one third of that. That does not give much sense of pride as a Member.

I remember when this country used to be known as the workshop of the world. Under the present Administration, it is becoming the sweatshop of Europe. The Budget must be taken within that context.

8.16 pm

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I wish that I had the time to take up many of the points made by the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington). I will content myself by commenting that the hon. Gentleman predicted in his speech that one effect of the Budget would be to reduce the prospects for his

[Mr. Nigel Forman]

constituents who are seeking jobs and those who have been seeking them for a long time, in the case of the long-term unemployed.

I believe that the hon. Gentleman is wrong about that, for some of the reasons which I mentioned in my intervention on the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) regarding the package for small businesses. I would gently point out to the hon. Gentleman that the shadow Chancellor, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), predicted at the time of the March Budget that unemployment would rise as a result. Unemployment has fallen very agreeably since then and it will continue to fall under the sensible macro-economic policies of my right hon. and learned Friend.

I welcome this responsible Budget, because the Chancellor set the public deficit reduction as his highest priority. He sought to achieve that, at least in the coming year, more by putting the emphasis on public expenditure restraint than on increased taxation. I recognise that increased taxation is in the pipeline—including a good deal of taxation brought in by the previous Chancellor—but the broad judgment of the Budget was right for two principal reasons.

First, there is a continuing fragility in the economic recovery—however much that recovery is welcome—because of the fact that our main export markets are going deeper into recession, rather than coming out into recovery. Consumers in my area—southern London and the south-east generally—are still rather risk-averse and they are not inclined to borrow if they can avoid it. They are spending more time trying to restore their personal balance sheets.

Secondly, there is a good deal of taxation in the pipeline from the Budget of my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) earlier this year. If one looks at those two Budgets together and logically one should, they represent a considerable and timely fiscal tightening. That has had many good effects, not the least of which has been to reassure the markets that the way will be left open for further interest rate cuts. We must also tackle what is almost as much a moral challenge as an economic one—the enormous public deficit. If that deficit had been left untouched or unaddressed, we would have passed on unacceptable burdens to future generations.

For all those reasons, I warmly commend the thrust of the Budget. In the brief time that is available to me, I wish to make two general points which look to the future and which concern my right hon. and learned Friend's approach to future Budgets. First, on public expenditure, I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will try consistently to focus public spending on investment rather than on consumption. He should focus on programmes which will provide the necessary public services cost-effectively, rather than transfer payments, which so often merely recycles money from one part of the middle class to another or which acts simply as a state savings bank to deal with certain contingencies in a person's lifetime. If Opposition Members asked me which kind of public investment I would particularly advocate, I would unhesitatingly refer to investment in human capital in all its forms and in physical infrastructure.

All public expenditure decisions really turn upon three questions. First, how much can the nation prudently afford in total at any one time? Secondly, what should be the priorities within that total? Thirdly, how can we ensure the greatest possible value for money? In relation to the last two criteria, it must be right to find extra money for further and higher education, as the Government are doing, and to back real quality improvements in our schools. It must also be right to find the money to invest heavily in the improvement of British Rail's track and signalling and of London's antiquated underground system.

In any civilised and modern society, there is, and always will be, a place for some transfer payments from the rich to the poor and from the invulnerable to the vulnerable. That is what the dreadful jargon word "targeting" should mean. But other financial transfers—for example, to deal with the unfortunate contingencies in our lives—should increasingly be seen as our own responsibility rather than that of the taxpayer whenever that is possible. For example, better-off people in full-time and secure jobs should contribute more completely and directly to the cost of rearing their own children, to the costs of elective health care at a time of their choice, and to the cost of supporting themselves in their old age, when they are likely to need more expensive forms of support.

Provision for such contingencies can be and is being made more cost-effectively even now, and I think with a degree of social justice, via private insurance arrangements, private pensions and specially tailored financial packages to help people who are asset-rich but income-poor to turn their assets into useful income schemes in their old age.

Lest I should be thought to be outlandish in what I say, I stress that all those developments can and should happen only gradually. But I believe that this is the direction in which the Chancellor and his colleagues should move in future Budgets and in future policy on both sides of the public accounts.

My other main point concerns tax policy and the interests of longer-term tax reform. Naturally, I welcome the small steps towards tax reform taken by my right hon. and learned Friend in the Budget—for example, broadening the tax base by pruning two of the most egregious tax reliefs in the shape of the married couple's allowance and mortgage interest tax relief and introducing two new taxes which, between them, will bring in an extra £1 billion.

There is more to do in future years. I suggest that what is really needed is the future reshaping and rebalancing of our entire tax system to make it as simple, efficient and publicly acceptable as possible. That could best be done by following and developing the approach of my noble Friend Lord Lawson who in his corporation tax reforms of 1984 and his personal tax reforms of 1988 very successfully broadened the base of tax in those two areas and achieved the concomitant benefits of lower rates of tax and simpler structures.

I believe that the priorities of future Budgets should be to extend the coverage of VAT virtually to all forms of consumer expenditure instead of just over half, which is the present position, and, in the process, to introduce one lower introductory rate—perhaps 8 per cent.—on the real essentials and a new standard rate which could be lower than the present standard rate—perhaps 15 per cent. That is only an illustrative example, but such a package would bring in an estimated net benefit to the Exchequer of between £5 billion and £10 billion at current prices and would be worth while in financing desirable forms of public expenditure.

Much more important, however, it would constitute a giant step towards more of an expenditure-based tax system, advocated years ago by Professor Meade. Such a change should be accompanied by lower rates of tax on income and a move towards minimal or even no tax upon savings and capital, which would be in the interests of investment. That would produce a better balanced and more buoyant tax system, which would be good for saving, good for investment, good for thrift and good for enterprise. Provided that it was supported by generous but carefully targeted transfer payments on an income-related basis, it could also be fairer and more efficient.

Such a system would not only bring with it the benefits of taxing income and capital more lightly and expenditure and property more heavily; crucially, it would improve public motivation to work and save and make it easier for us to match our competitors in what is becoming a very competitive world market for investment—inward investment in particular. In the longer run, such a reform will become necessary—perhaps even unavoidable—if we are to safeguard our national revenue base and so enable ourselves to afford those forms of public expenditure that are desirable in a modern society.

In a modern global economy—with freedom of capital movements, an information technology that is transparent and instantaneous and firms and individuals becoming increasingly mobile—taxation upon income and capital, both corporate and individual, is becoming increasingly voluntary, or at the option of taxpayers rather than tax collectors. There is growing competition between national jurisdictions to lure in foreign investment and high net worth individuals, and those arriving on our shores can in many cases just as easily leave again if they perceive that the national tax climate is turning unfavourable. The perfectly legitimate tax avoidance industry also needs to be taken into account.

In all those ways, my suggested reforms would produce a better-balanced tax structure. I commend them to my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor to be considered in any tax reforms in future.

8.26 pm

Mr. Keith Hill (Streatham): Dr. Samuel Johnson, a frequent visitor in his time to my Streatham constituency, once aptly remarked that when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life. On the evidence of last week's Budget, reinforced by the statement on local government grants, this Government have clearly tired of London. The Budget, as the *Evening Standard* remarked with some restraint, did absolutely nothing for London. On the contrary—it represented a further catastrophic assault on London's prospects and services.

It is as if the Goverment had a death wish on them in relation to London. Nowhere is that better highlighted than in their extraordinary decision to lop another £80 million off the funding for the London underground. After a fortnight in which the tube system had been reduced to a nightmare shambles, the very least that Londoners might have expected was some kind of recognition from the Chancellor of the urgent need for the modernisation of the underground network. Instead, London Underground will receive only two thirds of what is required to run the sort of system that the capital so desperately requires. The blunt truth is that London Transport will not even be able to maintain existing services.

There will be more cuts to come—cuts in our public transport services, to the long-term benefit of road-building projects outside London; cuts in our London hospitals, but more hospital building in the Tory heartlands of the home counties; and now the prospect of massive cuts in spending on London's schools.

Such cuts are the inevitable consequence of last week's announcements on local government finance. No fewer than 13 of the top 20 losers are London authorities. A month ago, to the usual fanfare, the Government published their league tables for schools. Of course those tables are crass and misleading. Of course they ignore the appalling handicaps with which many of our inner-city children begin their school lives. Of course they fail to take into account the often outstanding progress that such children make through their own efforts and the efforts of dedicated teachers. Of course they show very many of our inner London schools at the bottom of the league tables, and that is not in the least surprising.

Inner London is replete with the factors that lead to under achievement in education. It is entirely normal for schools in Streatham to number in their school rolls children with 50 or more non-English first languages. Homelessness, poor housing, lone parenting and unemployment are the all-too-common background experiences of many—in some schools, most—of those children, yet those are precisely the social factors that the Government have chosen to downgrade in their calculations of financial support for local authorities.

Larger classes, less help for vulnerable children and fewer day nurseries for London's children will flow from the spending announcements of last week. How will that help to break the cycle of deprivation? How will that help to lift London's schools from the bottom of the league tables? How will that help to meet the skills shortage from which London's economy so desperately suffers? There have been cuts in our education services and cuts in our health, housing and transport services. The Government are systematically stripping London of the vital sources necessary for recovery.

London has suffered the longest and the worst from the present recession. We have the largest number of unemployed of any region in the country. We have the largest number of teenagers out of work. Our rate of unemployment is way above the national average. That is no passing or transient setback. Our economic problems are structural and deep-seated, reflected in the fact that the total number of long-term unemployed in London is also higher than anywhere else in Britain.

Of course, all Londoners suffer from the decline of London's services and economy. Yet the Government, through their Budget, are planning to inflict excessive penalties on the very people whose skills and enterprise might lift the city out of its cycle of decline. It is precisely middle-income earners who will suffer most from the national insurance increases.

In London, with higher house prices, middle-income earners will also pay more through the changes in mortgage interest relief. The MIRAS changes will hit the young and aspiring who bought their homes between 1988 and 1991 especially hard. We have learnt from figures that were published today that two fifths of those people are in

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London and the south-east and now have negative equity, owing more on their mortgages than the value of their homes.

In London, house insurance is higher, car insurance is higher and, consequently, the cost to middle-income earners of those increases will be greater. The truth is that the tax noose will tighten drastically on middle-income Londoners in the coming months. Will they get more from their increased tax bills? Of course not. Money for new housing has been cut; money to improve London's environment—cut; money to improve our transport services—cut; money to improve council services—cut; student grants—cut. The money to repair our hospitals, our schools, and for our local libraries has been cut, cut, cut.

There was a time when London could afford to pay out far more to the Government's coffers than we got back. That time has now passed. A drastic reassessment of London's needs is urgently overdue. We need a fair deal for Londoners and we need it now. Ministers may be tired of London; London is certainly tired of them. But there are 4·5 million voters in London.

Finally, I shall adapt the words of Sam Johnson with which I began. The longer that Ministers stay tired of London, the more likely they are to pay with their political lives.

8.33 pm

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Many Conservative Members were alarmed at suggestions—indeed, assertions—in the press before the Budget that we were to face substantial increases in all forms of taxation. Therefore, we were relieved when we found that the Budget contained a balanced approach to the need to reduce the deficit substantially by reducing Government expenditure, while increasing certain taxes to reduce overall the totally unacceptable level of deficit.

I believe that the Chancellor has made the right macro-economic decisions in assembling the Budget, although I am somewhat concerned that he has chosen to underfund the deficit by about £7 billion. I understand that liquidity considerations have forced him to make that decision, and in the present circumstances that may be justifiable. I suspect that he thinks that his present rather modest forecast for growth next year may, in the outturn, be somewhat higher than he has suggested and that may assist him with that underfunding. I hope, however, that it will not become a precedent.

There is a great deal in the Budget that I applaud. First, as one can imagine, representing as I do a constituency that probably has more retired people than almost any other in the country, I was particularly pleased to see the assistance that has been given with VAT on fuel. I believe that, coupled with the reductions in the cost of fuel of 5 per cent. in the case of gas, and 3·75 per cent. with electricity, with further reductions coming next year and in following years, that will fully protect those who are most in need in our society. I am delighted that the Chancellor was able to make those decisions.

I was particularly pleased to see that my right hon. and learned Friend has assisted with business rates. You, Madam Speaker, will recollect that it was I who tabled the amendments when the Local Government Finance Bill was going through its Committee stage which limited the increases to business to a fixed percentage per annum. I am pleased that in these difficult times the Chancellor has been able to go a little further, particularly for the small business where the proprietor lives above the premises. That was extremely welcome and, coupled with the many other measures that he has taken for small businesses, is helpful and good in the long term for jobs.

You, Madam Speaker, may also recollect my campaign for a blindness allowance, which more than half of hon. Members signed some years ago. It gave me particular pleasure to see that, at a time of considerable financial constraint, the Chancellor was able to increase the blind person's allowance by £120. That will be extremely welcome to all blind people.

I shall now turn to the schemes that have been produced to encourage investment. As a member of the Trade and Industry Select Committee, I find them welcome. Much of the evidence that has come before our Committee in recent weeks hs shown that there is no particular shortage of funding for the larger—particularly the quoted—companies, but there is a problem in finding equity finance for the smaller and unquoted companies. There has long been a need to address that. The business expansion scheme went some way, but it was heavily abused. Therefore, I am particularly pleased to see that the new enterprise investment scheme will, I hope, remove some of the abuses to which the BES was subject. But I am much more excited about the venture capital trust scheme, which, I hope, will direct the much-needed institutional investment into the unquoted sector.

One area that gives me some concern at the moment is the insurance premium tax. The insurance industry as a whole has been going through a difficult time in the United Kingdom and, compared with many of our overseas competitors in Europe, is relatively under-capitalised. That has been due to past tax structures, some of which have now been rectified, but the imposition of the tax at a time when many insurance companies have suffered appreciable losses in recent years will make it much more difficult for them, as well as for the many users of insurance who are suffering from greatly increased premiums.

Will my right hon. and learned Friend tell us what will happen, for example, to the collection of premiums that are paid in instalments? Will the tax itself be paid in instalments? What arrangements will be made? Will the tax have to be paid up front? How will he deal with the fact that it is proposed that insurance that is effected through insurance brokers will be subject to tax only on the premium and not on the broker's commission? That is entirely admirable, but it does complicate the collection arrangements.

Similarly, I am a little concerned to know that it will apply to most general risks. Perhaps my right hon. Friend will tell us whether it will apply to terrorism insurance, where the Government have come forward, very much to their credit, with a scheme that will assist in the insurance of terrorism risks. But if the additional tax is to apply to terrorism as well, might that not in itself be somewhat self-defeating?

I hope that the Chancellor will direct future Budgets towards an investment-led recovery rather than a consumer-led recovery. Many people have said that we want consumers to spend more, but a consumer-led boom is the last thing that we want. It would not help because it would only suck in more imports. We need more encouragement of investment. For that reason, I am not at all concerned that the Chancellor should choose to concentrate on indirect rather than direct taxes.

One thing that has been wrong with our economy in the long term is that we have not had a sufficiently good savings ratio compared with most of our major competitors. We need to encourage people to save and we need taxes that encourage people to save and that encourage enterprise, rather than taxes that attack those who save or invest. On that last point, I was particularly pleased with the further relief given to capital gains tax.

Many of my hon. Friends have mentioned capital gains tax. It is an iniquitous tax and I hope that, in the long term, the Chancellor will abolish it. In the meantime, it is anomalous that someone who has invested in a company and built it up over many years will, when he disposes of it, pay the same rate of tax as somebody who has made a six-month or even three-month speculative investment. That is nonsense. The least that the Chancellor could do to redress that anomaly would be to have a sliding scale for capital gains tax whereby the longer the investment is held, the lower the marginal tax rate—preferably down to zero.

8.41 pm

Mrs. Jane Kennedy (Liverpool, Broadgreen): The self-congratulatory style of the right hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) left a bad taste in my mouth and will only contribute to the low esteem in which the public hold politicians. He made himself ridiculous. We shall be judged harshly if, as parliamentary politicians, we do not address the structural problems underlying our economic malaise. Some Tory Members believe that they have done so, but I agree with the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), who pointed out many of the failings of the Budget.

Last week, the Chancellor announced unnecessary spending cuts. I accept that spending has been switched from some sectors—largely from the contingency funds—and is being used to boost spending in health, the education service and social security. However, although I welcome the extra spending on health, it is too little too late. I have travelled down from Liverpool today, where the largest children's hospital in Europe is appealing, for the second time in two months, for qualified paediatric nursing staff to come to its aid to assist in a crisis.

Two families, from the north of England and from Wales, went to the hospital with their children who were to have heart surgery. The children were admitted to the hospital on the Wednesday, and it was expected that surgery would take place on Thursday, but the operations were cancelled at the last minute. The operation for one of those children was rescheduled to today. Instead, at 11 o'clock this morning, the family was told that the operation had to be cancelled and again the reason was a shortage of staff.

The right hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) spoke of the chaos that ensued when radical reform of local government and health services—introduced by Tory Governments in the early 1970s and now—failed to address the problem of lack of resources. In Liverpool, the hospital has been given impossible spending targets. It has had to reduce its staffing levels to the point where it cannot cope with the simple day-to-day crises with which one would expect it to be able to deal.

It is a pity that Conservative Members use as their only criterion of whether the Budget is a success what the City and the financial markets have to say about it. The attitude of the City of London towards investment and its short-term view of what produces profits is causing some of the problems that we have to face. The public sector deficit has provided an impetus for the Government to continue their creeping attack on the welfare state. I do not believe Tory protestations that there is no such attack. Their deeds speak louder than their words. The primary objective seems to be to achieve savings, sector by sector, while attempting to mask the effects of benefit changes.

The expenditure of the Department of Social Security for 1992-93 amounted to around £80 billion, at least £15 billion of which can be directly attributed to the recession. Elements of the remaining £65 billion are related to such cyclical expenditure. No one is suggesting that reforms are not needed, but considering possible changes to enable the welfare state more effectively to fulfil its function is entirely different from saying that current levels of spending are spiralling out of control.

The study by the DSS called "The Growth of Social Security", published in July, shows that, come the turn of the century, spending on social security will account for 12·4 per cent. of GDP compared with 12·3 per cent. now. That is assuming a growth of 2·5 per cent. in unemployment—a quarter less than at present. That sum is well within the nation's means, especially if a strategy for growth and jobs is implemented.

I wonder whether the Chancellor had a chance to see the document produced by the United Kingdom industrial group called "Manufacture or Die". In its strategy for recovery, it says:

> "There is . . . at last a growing recognition that to generate wealth it is necessary to seek markets and manufacture, to engineer or process competitively in order to add value and satisfy market needs. The service sector, which is vitally important, has to play a supporting rather than a lead role. The primary significance of manufacturing must be re-established and placed at the top of the national agenda."

Those whom I have had an opportunity to meet since the Budget, who have been actively involved at the highest level in manufacturing industry, have told me that on this Budget, the jury is still out.

I take this opportunity to apologise for getting a fact wrong last week. In the excitement of being called to ask a question after the statement by the Secretary of State for Social Security, I exaggerated the problem of unemployment in Liverpool. Frankly, the problem is so great that it does not need exaggeration. The facts of the case are that 40 per cent. of the people in the city of Liverpool have either never worked or not worked for five years. I forgot the second fact and I am pleased to be able to set the record straight. Those facts on their own demonstrate the scale of the task that is set us—and Government Departments, because they are the people who are responsible for getting us out of the mess that we are in.

In Liverpool, people take offence at the idea that young people who have been seeking work where there is none for year after year, who have gone for interview after interview, becoming excited at the prospect as each interview came along only either to go away disappointed or to feel lucky enough to be given a job that then evaporates after a couple of weeks, are deeply offended at the suggestion that they may not be genuine in their search

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for work. That deep offence that the Government are giving unemployed people who are looking for the work that is not there will cost them the next election.

Last week, the Secretary of State for Social Security said that he would like to see Parliament determine that benefits go to those whom Parliament wishes to help. I believe that Parliament will be judged by what it does for those who need our help.

8.50 pm

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): It was encouraging to hear support expressed by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House—I am glad that the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) is in his place—for Budget measures specifically to help the small business sector. Those of us who take a particular interest in small businesses are aware that what suits the City does not always suit small businesses.

I was pleased on behalf of the Small Business Bureau, which I and other hon. Members represent, that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor abolished the statutory audit for small, unincorporated companies having turnovers below £90,000. Perhaps I should declare an interest as I am married to an accountant. The change will not do me much good but it is welcomed by the small business sector. Many of us are pleased that my right hon. and learned Friend considered our representations favourably.

We welcome also the reduction in documentation for companies with a turnover below £350,000. It is important to rid small businesses of such burdens, because we shall be looking to that sector for the growth and jobs needed for recovery.

As to capital gains tax, my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) drew attention to its effect on Government revenue since the rate was linked to that of personal taxation. Although my right hon. Friend is right, it had the significant effect also of providing less private capital for reinvestment into small firms or new business start-ups. I welcome the proposal to examine the ways in which capital investment and venture capital may be attracted to the unincorporated sector. There is scope for further changes to capital gains tax, because that source of investment is not being used in the interests of small businesses, or of the Treasury in terms of revenue receipts.

The investment needed in the unincorporated sector should be of a long-term nature. There should be more competitive, fixed rate investment and also something which our European competitors have but which we lack. In Germany, for example, investment is accompanied by good business advice. That is the result of the equity holding of banks and others that invest. Such advice will be particularly important as this country emerges from recession and small businesses start to grow. At a time of growth, problems can arise with overtrading. Often, difficuties occur when order books are full and businesses must recapitalise. Sound financial advice from banks and others is as important as investment.

I welcomed the announcement by my right hon. and learned Friend that there will be consultation on late payment of debt—a subject on which there is a difference of opinion in the small business sector. The Forum of Private Business lobbied hard for interest to be statutorily added, whereas the Federation of Small Businesses opposed that. If late payment to small businesses is to be addressed, court procedures must be reviewed. In some cases, a facility already exists for busineses to add interest to outstanding debts—but they must still proceed through the civil courts. Even if a judgment is made in their favour, they may have to return to the courts to have it enforced. It is a matter not just of having a statutory requirement but of reviewing civil court procedures and the way in which bailiffs operate. There is a remarkable difference in some areas between the efficiency of bailiffs who act for magistrates and those who act for county courts. I hope that consultation will take into account recovery procedures through the civil courts.

The 1992 Conservative manifesto promised to continue to reduce taxes as fast as we prudently could. Opposition Members had a lot to say about manifesto promises. To be imprudent in the levying of any tax would not serve the people of this country or produce a sound economy. In my own election address, with which I doubt that hon. Members are familiar——

Mr. Don Foster *indicated assent.*

Mrs. Browning: If the hon. Member for Bath likes, I will put a copy in the Library. I made two promises on the economy. One was that we would build on the lower rate 20 per cent. tax band. I am pleased that my right hon. and learned Friend promised to do that in his Budget. Tiverton has lower-than-average wages, so the 20 per cent. band is important to people in my constituency.

My second promise—I am pleased to see the hon. Member for Bath nodding in approval at this, or I assume that that is why he is nodding—was that a Conservative Government would maintain sound money. When the country has a £50 billion public sector borrowing requirement, that cannot be done by giveaway Budgets which do not address the need to claw back such an overspend. It necessarily had to be a tough Budget, but it was also a sound and fair Budget.

On the Second Reading of the Finance Bill which followed the March Budget, I made what I hoped was a strong speech. I have continued to make representations that the underpinning of VAT on domestic fuel should cover all pensioners—not just those on income-related benefits. Devon has a high retirement population, and it seemed that we were being particularly hard on a group of people whom we in the Conservative party rightly encouraged to be prudent by investing in a small occupational pension or putting aside savings for their retirement. I warmly welcome the decision by my right hon. and learned Friend to extend to all pensioners additional benefits in respect of VAT on domestic fuel. I shall have no hesitation in supporting that Government measure, having lobbied hard for them to listen.

I warmly welcome also the child care allowance. Opposition spokesmen expressed concern today as to who will receive that allowance. I understand that it will help 150,000 families, including 50,000 lone parents. As someone who has long advocated tax relief on registered child care, I must not lose this opportunity to encourage my right hon. and learned Friend to consider seriously for future Budgets tax relief on bona fide child care. That would be an enormous advantage and benefit to the most common form of working family units—single parents or households where both parents have to work.

I should like to flag again one matter which, as I represent a rural constituency, it would be wrong of me to ignore: tax on petrol. I am sorry that an additional burden has been placed on the cost of petrol, because in rural areas cars are not luxuries but necessities. A large supermarket with a petrol station has recently opened quite close to my constituency. Since then, reduced-price petrol has been available and other garages have matched that station's prices. I hope, therefore, that the Financial Secretary will consider competition in the petrol industry because it would help my constituents.

I welcome the Budget and I shall have great pleasure in supporting my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor in the Lobby tomorrow.

8.59 pm

Mr. Jamie Cann (Ipswich): The Chancellor's Budget statement on 30 November has been well received in the media, or certainly on the news pages—the financial pages seem a bit windier about it—and it has been gratefully received by Conservative Members: the civil war, for the moment, appears to be off.

What has the Chancellor done? On the spending side, housing, defence, transport and council revenue support have been ruthlessly cut. When even that did not produce sufficient savings, the contingency reserve was slashed from £7·5 billion to £3·5 billion in Tommy Cooper fashion —just like that. That £3·5 billion is only just above 1·5 per cent. of total projected spending for 1994-95. I was leader of Ipswich council for 12 years, and there was no year when the contingency figure allocated at the beginning of the financial year was less than 5 per cent. Indeed, I usually had a job making the treasurer keep it down to that figure. The Chancellor's reduction is a bold stroke for a Government who overspend on budgets as prodigiously as this one.

I notice, however, that the contingency total for 1996-97 has been left at a healthy £10·5 billion. Being a naive young man, I cannot think why the Chancellor should foresee the need for a contigency for that year three times higher than for 1994-95. I am sure that most hon. Members will share my puzzlement. We certainly should cast out of our minds any uncharitable thoughts about the timing of the next general election and the ability to have a little money in the kitty for tax cuts or yet again to send out hundreds of millions of pounds to reduce national health service patient waiting lists. The Chancellor has chosen to risk reducing his contingency this year so that he can claim to have reduced public expenditure in total. That has pleased the City. It has also obviously pleased Conservative Members as they are grinning, smirking and smiling. Whether they will be so pleased in a year's time remains to be seen.

Even those reductions—the real reduction in much-needed capital programmes and the spurious reductions in the contingency fund—cannot balance the books, so tax increases have been decreed: the largest tax increases since the Napoleonic wars according to one commentator, but perhaps the Minister will correct me if I am wrong. And the increases have fallen, of course, on the shoulders of ordinary men and women and old age pensioners.

How did the public accounts get in this mess? Why are such measures necessary? In the 1980s the Government received £146 billion in North sea oil revenues and privatisation proceeds. Some of that money, to be fair, was spent redeeming national debt, but the vast majority of it was blown: it was used as an alternative revenue to allow massive reductions in income tax—predominantly, of course, for the very best off. As those revenues have now gone, the hole in the Government's tax base must be made up, and it is being done by imposing additional tax increases such as VAT on fuel and power, such as 1 per cent. on national insurance——

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cann: No, I will not. It was spent on anything, it seems, except the one tax that is accepted by the British people as fair—that is, income tax.

On the first Monday of every month, I hold a surgery at Age Concern's old age pensioner drop-in centre in Ipswich. Today I asked the people there about nice Mr. Clarke's package of help to pay the value added tax on their fuel and power. They were not very impressed. Even if the projected compensation package covered the likely increase in their bills, which it will not, they would still not believe in it because they no longer believe a word the Government say.

The City and Conservative Members may applaud the Budget; backs have no doubt been slapped and I am sure that jolly parties have been taking place, but there is no rejoicing or smirking elsewhere. People are gritting their teeth in the knowledge that in April their real income, whether from wages, pensions or benefits, will be reduced and that their bills, unlike those of members of the Government, will rise yet again.

In Ipswich, 18,000 people signed petitions against VAT on fuel and power, as I am sure people have done in towns and cities across the country. Yet the Government take no notice. They took no notice of public opinion on the poll tax or the closure of the coal mines, but at the end of the day the Government will suffer because this is a political Budget aimed only at looking after their own. The people will take their revenge on the Government every time they are given the opportunity to do so, in ballot box after ballot box.

9.6 pm

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): I willingly join my many colleagues who have congratulated my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor on the content and delivery of his first Budget. If I needed any persuasion of the rightness of his Budget, all that I should do would be to watch the antics and behaviour of the Opposition parties in the debate.

It is bizarre that a Budget which the Opposition tell us will damage recovery and the prospects of job creation should be welcomed by every sensible leading business organisation. It is equally bizarre that a Budget which the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms Armstrong), who has left the Chamber, tells us is bad for lone parents should be welcomed by the National Council for One Parent Families. Even Mr. Gavyn Davies, who has been an adviser to the Labour party on economic policy, said that it was a brave and sensible Budget. It appears that the only people who do not recognise that, although they probably know it in their hearts but must pretend to oppose it, are members of the Labour party.

Watching the Opposition is like watching an audition for Scrooge in a Christmas pantomime. Having witnessed

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the failure of the policy to bring more women into the shadow Cabinet, Labour Members know that the only way to become a member of the shadow Cabinet is to be more miserable, pessimistic and depressing than any other Labour Member.

It is one thing for the Labour party to talk down the recovery, but it is despicable and even odious to tell old people to turn off their heaters because they will not be able to afford to pay their gas and electricity bills when they know that measures in the Budget mean that people need have no such fears. It is very sad that a party which no longer has any policies or principles and which, following the Government's lead in other areas, has even contracted out their search for new ideas, should now have to rely on the politics of fear to make capital out of this debate.

We have heard nothing from the Labour party about how to stimulate economic recovery. But that is what the Budget is all about, which is why the business men in High Peak welcome it and are writing to tell me that they think the Government are on the right track. The Opposition are fundamentally wrong to say that the recovery is fragile —it is not a fragile but a cautious recovery. Business men are looking to invest, but they are taking it step by step. There was fragility at the end of the 1980s when things were boiling over. People are cautious, but the recovery is now anything but fragile.

The aspects of the debate on which I shall concentrate are those of housing, because that is a subject in which I have taken a special interest during the past months, as joint chairman of the all-party parliamentary group on homelessness. Initially, any attempt to reduce the housing budget would be viewed with concern throughout the House, but the more I consider the proposals in the Budget, the more I think that there are elements there which, through creative thinking, will enable us to tackle the problems of homelessness and of bad housing better. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] We constantly hear from the Opposition the mantra that we need 100,000 new houses a year. We know that if we built 100,000 new houses a year they would say, "Not enough; we need 150,000" and that if we built 150,000 they would say, "Give us 200,000." The debate always concentrates on building new houses, when already there are 800,000 houses in the country which are built but which are lying empty. The top priority for the Government, in trying to tackle the problem of underhousing and homelessness, has to be to bring those empty properties back into use.

Seventy-six thousand properties that are owned by local authorities are lying empty. That is a disgrace because those local authorities are the guardians of the public interest and if they are unable to look after those houses and bring them back into use, the houses should be turned over to members of the public who are willing to spend their money on bringing them back into use so that they can contribute to the housing stock.

Sixteen thousand houses that are currently owned by the Government are empty, but the Government have taken a direct lead on that, because the Ministry of Defence is the worst offender and directly through the Budget it will be made to bring those houses back into use. If the Government can give that sort of lead, it is a shame that Labour local authorities insist on sitting on so many empty houses.

It is in the private sector, however, where 700,000 houses are lying empty, that the biggest part of the problem exists. The Government are tackling that problem by changing the rules on terms of tenancy and now by seeking to take tougher action on squatting so that people do not have the fear about people moving into their properties.

We have already taken action in relation to flats above shops, to bring those 100,000 flats back into use, but we need to go further. In my mind, it is nonsense that one gets a council tax rebate of 50 per cent. if one has an empty property. If one runs a commercial business and chooses to keep the flat above one's shop empty, it is quite reasonable that one should pay that council tax bill in full.

The only aspect of the Budget with which I am disappointed is that there was nothing to stimulate the private rented sector because, with the loss of the business expansion scheme, there is a case for more help to be given. For example, we are already seeing the success of the rent-a-room scheme, whereby people renting out a room can get up to £60 a week. It would be legitimate to say to individuals who own houses that they could have their income from renting out those houses tax-free for the first year to encourage them back into the market. There will be no loss to the Treasury because those houses are currently lying empty.

We need to find a better use for the housing stock. There are many ways of doing that. The housing associations which reacted with some concern—I think misplaced—to the announcement in the Budget last week, can play a vital role in that. A few weeks ago, I went to see an elderly lady in my constituency. She is on income support and she owns her house outright. She is 87 and she wants to move into council accommodation. She has been told that she might have to wait 10 years and at 87 that does not please her much. It would make much more sense for housing associations to go into properties such as that, to carry out the conversion, to enable her to live in a smaller unit in her own house, with better insulation and greater ability to contain her heating costs, and then for the housing association to manage the letting out of the other portion. She will not do it on her own because, at 87, she is frightened of bringing in building contractors, but if it is made easier for her, it is something which she will be willing to do.

We could spend a small amount on bringing back into use the empty housing stock in the country and on using the housing stock better, which would cost a fraction of the cost of building new houses. If this debate does anything in terms of housing policy, it has to make us think creatively of how we bring that housing stock back into use and how we deliver better housing for all our people.

We can consider those aspects without even thinking about how we can contain demand. Over the past 14 years, there has been a net increase of 2 million houses, yet demand has outstripped supply. In addition to the measures that the Government are taking on housing, measures are being taken by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning, whom I am pleased to see in the Chamber—[HON. MEMBERS: "Not yet."] Well, he soon will be. I was saying that the measures that he is taking to review access to housing are important, too.

Some constituents of mine have queued for years for housing only to find that they have been pushed to the bottom of the waiting list by people who were not on it at all. In the past six months in High Peak, 45 per cent. of council house allocations have gone to single parents who were not even on the waiting list. I do not say that they got pregnant to get a council house, but the figures show clearly that there is incontrovertible evidence that people who have been waiting on the housing list have found themselves pushed back by others who were not on it. I welcome the fact that the Government intend to look into this aspect of the problem early in the new year.

This is a Budget aimed at recovery, which is above all what the country needs. It is a Budget that will help small businesses, which have been striving in difficult circumstances in our constituencies. They welcome the measures enabling them to export more, to bring in new private sector money and to help them succeed. They know that this is a Budget for jobs and for the long-term interests of the economy. They have been making their welcome for the Budget clear to Conservative Members—and, I am sure, to Opposition Members, although the latter do not want to listen to the good news.

This is a long-term Budget. It is about getting things right in the long term, because that is what matters most. We all know that we face a difficult economic climate, but everyone knows in his heart, even though not everyone voices it, that we could not go on spending or borrowing as much as we were. We all know that higher taxes represented a decision that could not have been avoided. People have nothing but contempt for a party that pretends that there was any alternative. It was easy to pretend that, but in our hearts we all know that the Government got this Budget absolutely right.

9.16 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): On the day Parliament reassembled, 18 October, I published a study on the decline of press reporting of Parliament which showed——

Mr. Patten: Very good it was, too.

Mr. Straw: I am glad to accept the right hon. Gentleman's approbation of that, if nothing else.

The report showed that, while reporting of Parliament was fairly consistent between 1933 and 1988, it has declined by three quarters since 1988. Reports in newspapers such as *The Times* and *The Guardian* and other so-called papers of record take up only 100 lines, compared with between 400 and 800 in the past.

Stung by my criticism of their reporting, some of the journalists responsible said that they had deserted the Chamber because contributions to debate were boring and too characteristic of yah-boo politics. Had some of those journalists sat through this debate, as some of us have, they would have been struck by the high standards of speeches by hon. Members on both sides. Many of them were thoughtful speeches, and with one singular exception, to which I shall come in a moment——

Mr. Patten: Me?

Mr. Straw: The right hon. Gentleman, whatever else he may be, is not a singular exception. As I say, with one singular exception, speeches by Conservative Back Benchers have been surprisingly muted in their support for a Budget which, only five days after its delivery, is being damned by faint praise.

The right hon. Members for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins) and for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) raised an interesting issue to do with the meaning of paragraph 2.07 in the Red Book, and how there has been a change in the definition of funding of the national debt.

The right hon. Gentlemen and I, and everybody else, understood that funding was defined as the sale of debt to the non-banking sector. Through this curious piece of gobbledegook, it is now deemed to include the sale of debt to the banking sector itself. Perhaps in his winding-up speech the Financial Secretary will explain that change of policy and definition.

The right hon. Member for Worthing was correct when he said that this was one of the first fundings of debt that has led to the increase in money supply about which the paragraph boasts.

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman will have read paragraph 2.07 and will have noted that the policy change to which he refers was announced in March.

Mr. Straw: It was obviously announced with so few press notices that not only did I not notice it, which is probably natural, but neither did the right hon. Member for Worthing.

Sir Terence Higgins: I raised the matter at the time of the last Budget, but I am not sure whether I did so in the House.

Mr. Straw: That is what comes of having a non-Treasury Opposition spokesman winding up in the Budget debate.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) made a powerful speech in which he spoke about the wheezes of the Chancellor and their resonance on someone that he once served. I shall deal with the important contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) when I come to wider economic matters.

My hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms Armstong) raised the important issue of the extent and scope of the so-called child care allowance. Perhaps the Financial Secretary will deal with that in his winding-up speech. It appeared that £28 a week would be available as a disregard for virtually everybody on any kind of benefit who had a child care need.

Mr. Dorrell: No.

Mr. Straw: I said that that was the way it appeared. That is certainly not the reality and I am glad to note that the Financial Secretary confirms that. As my hon. Friend and other hon. Members have said, about 90 per cent. of family credit beneficiaries receive the maximum family credit. Therefore, it is impossible for them to have the benefit of any disregard. Will the Financial Secretary confirm that? If, as we suspect, that is correct, how will the benefit help those in greatest need—those who receive the maximum amount of family credit?

Mr. Dorrell: I am afraid that the statistic is not quite right, because fewer than a quarter of lone parents on family credit currently receive the full benefit. We expect the new allowance to help about 150,000 families, including 50,000 lone parents, who are currently on income support.

Mr. Straw: The Financial Secretary confirms, if not the proportion of beneficiaries of family credit who receive the maximum amount, the fact that those who do cannot benefit from the change.

Mr. Dorrell: That is correct.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington) made a good speech and my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Mr. Hill) reminded the House of Samuel Johnson's connection to that great constituency and to the House. I used to wonder when I read "The Life of Samuel Johnson" why he made so many trips to Streatham. I think that Mrs. Thrale was the answer, and the trips seemed to be more than in the course of duty.

My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy) made a powerful speech, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Cann) who, for a long time, was the leader of one of the best Labour councils in the country. The singular exception as a recipient of compliments is the hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry) whose speech was full of pernicious and vacuous cliches.

I wondered how anyone could make a speech composed only of pernicious and backward cliches until I read the biographical notes in "The Times Guide to the House of Commons", to which the hon. Gentleman has acceded. That tells us everything we need to know about the hon. Gentleman and his little speeches. It tells us that he was a public relations consultant to a public relations agency. I would not normally mention this, but it should be known by a wider audience. We are told that, sad to say, the hon. Gentleman was political adviser to John Moore. I am not surprised that he has gone on to make as many mistakes as his former boss.

There will be an opportunity to debate the settlement on local government at a later date, but I wish to make three points about it on this occasion.

I notice that no Minister from the Department of the Environment—apart from the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction, who has just walked in, having changed out of a dinner jacket in five minutes flat—has adorned the Government Front Bench during the debate.

There is no doubt that the so-called settlement announced by the Secretary of State for the Environment on Thursday involves a substantial cut in what the Government planned to spend at this time last year in 1994-95 and 1995-96. I have no idea why the Secretary of State for the Environment should seek to protest about this. Table 5·4 of the Red Book makes it clear that he accepted a cut of £860 million in plans for 1994-95 and £1·5 billion in plans for 1995-96—a three times greater cut than that experienced by any other Department. The Secretary of State's idea of negotiations with the Chief Secretary must be to go into his room holding a white flag and with his hands up. I cannot think of any other tactic that would have produced such a poor result.

I know that the Secretary of State for Education is desperate for me to mention him, and now I do. He should know, as a former Minister at the Department of the Environment, that if that Department is good at one thing it is bad briefs. As to the effect of this year's and last year's settlement on jobs, he was badly briefed by the Department of the Environment and parroted the same sort of claptrap that the Secretary of State came out with on Thursday—that last year's settlement had not led to any loss of jobs. I did not talk about teaching directly but about local authorities as a whole, and I was castigated for implying that there would be a loss of jobs.

The Secretary of State went further last Thursday and claimed that there had been an increase in the number of jobs in Birmingham. I have information from Birmingham city council, which probably knows more about its job numbers than the Secretary of State for the Environment does. During the past year, there has been a decline of 1,800 in the number of people employed in that city.

Across the country during the last year, a number of local authority employees have lost their jobs. Excluding all those who have transferred to the further education sector, where they are no longer employed directly by local government, those who have transferred to the grant-maintained sector and those who have transferred to contractors who are undertaking jobs previously done by local government, the number of people who have lost their jobs in local government exceeds 20,000. It is likely that we when we see the figures from the Local Government Management Board they will be higher.

This time last year, the then Secretary of State, now the Home Secretary, was foolish enough to say that no job losses would arise as a consequence of what he announced last December. Will the Financial Secretary be as foolish as the Home Secretary was this time last year, and offer the same kind of commitment that no job losses will follow as a result of this settlement? In our judgment, there is no doubt that jobs will indeed be lost.

My third point concerns the Government's current policy of controlling the totality of local authority expenditure, including the amounts that authorities raise from their own resources. It is that policy which has caused the current financial crisis in local government. I have never disputed the notion that central Government—with the approval of the House of Commons—have the right to set the amount of grant that local authorities should receive and the manner in which they should receive it, and to cash limit that amount; indeed, I fully support that notion, on which both sides seem to agree. What I dispute is the suggestion that it is right for the Treasury and the House to seek to control what local authorities spend from their own resources, and that authorities should then be accountable to the House and to Ministers rather than to their local electorates.

It should be borne in mind that

> "the present procedures lump together expenditure for which Government has differing degrees of responsibility and this blurs the status of the varous aggregates"

of what central Government pay out by way of grant and what local government raises from its own resources.

> "A further disadvantage is that by counting the total expenditure of local authorities in the planning total, insufficient attention is paid to the grants which central government provides to local authorities".

It is also worth pointing out that

> "Very few other industrial countries plan public spending in this way. For federal states, such as Germany, the United States or Canada, this would conflict with their federal constitutions. But even in other unitary states such as France or the Netherlands the government generally makes budgetary plans only for central government expenditure."

Those three passages are taken from a White Paper entitled "A New Public Expenditure Planning Total", published in July 1988 by the Prime Minister when he was Chief Secretary to the Treasury. For a period during that year, his policy was the same as that of the Labour party: to exclude from the planning total what local authorities spent from their own resources.

Let me ask the Financial Secretary a question. If the policy so eloquently expressed by the present Prime Minister was good enough for him in 1988, why has it now been repudiated? Why are we now in the absurd position whereby central Government, through a plethora of algebraic and other formulae, seek crudely to control the totality of local government spending?

Let me put another important point to the Financial Secretary. There is no doubt that, in any one year, the Government's decisions on standard spending assessments and capping will be highly disruptive to the activities of local authorities, and that they cause jobs to be lost. Evidence increasingly suggests that, over time, such control does not affect the tramline of local government spending. That emerged from an important study conducted by the London School of Economics this time last year.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Central made some important comments about VAT on fuel, which he described as a killer tax that would undoubtedly cause more people to die from hypothermia than would otherwise be the case. On a number of occasions, we have been challenged to say how we would raise the revenue. Several times before the Budget, my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) went out of his way to point out that several billion pounds—not just £1 billion or £2 billion—could be saved by dealing with loopholes and tax avoidance.

The Chancellor looks up. His problem is that he fails to apply himself to detail. We now know that he has not read the Maastricht treaty; nor has he read the appropriate accounts that were issued to the House last Friday. He damn well should, as should the Chief Secretary and the Financial Secretary. Paragraph 171 of the Comptroller and Auditor General's report, on the basis of information provided by the Inland Revenue, estimates the size of the hidden economy. It says:

> "It is not possible to assess accurately the tax loss resulting from this hidden economic activity . . . there may be an annual tax loss of several billion pounds per annum."

Those figures have come not from a press release of the shadow Chancellor, but the appropriation accounts published by the Comptroller and Auditor General with information from the Inland Revenue. Is the Chancellor repudiating what the Inland Revenue has told the Comptroller?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is looking at the latest estimates of the kind of economy covered by black economy work in the home repairs, gardening and window cleaning parts of the economy. His hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) claims to be able to raise £2 billion extra corporation tax from closing loopholes. How much corporation tax is he going to get from off-the-books gardeners and window cleaners?

Mr. Straw: If the Chancellor had bothered to read the appropriation accounts, he would have seen that there is a big table of the amount of revenue of corporation tax that has been lost. It also states that the amount of income tax that has had to be written off has doubled from £883 million in 1991 to £1,694 million in 1992—a loss of £900 million in a single year.

If the Secretary of State had read *The Daily Telegraph*, as I presume that he sometimes does, he would have seen an article on Friday that said:

> "Britain's 'black economy' is now worth up to £48 billion a year with a subsequent loss to the taxpayer of several billion pounds".

Instead of whingeing, the Chancellor should apply himself to sorting out the black economy and retrieving that money.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: That is a quite different set of loopholes from those usually used by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East. The collection of the hon. Member for Blackburn is even tattier than that of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East who usually describes as loopholes his proposals for increasing taxation on successful British business. It is scratching about among uncollected tax that goes with every system when the hon. Member for Blackburn knows perfectly well that this Budget will raise about half a billion pounds each year in closing tax loopholes that he has not identified. That sort of thing cannot explain his total lack of economic policy at any time in his speech.

Mr. Straw: I am sure that the chairman of the Inland Revenue and the Comptroller and Auditor General will be pleased to know in the morning that the Secretary of State describes the 300 pages of that carefully written document as evidence that I have been scrubbing about. It contains the most serious evidence of the extent to which people are fiddling their tax. I have not made it up. It says that there may be an annual tax loss of several billion pounds per annum arising from the black economy and the Secretary of State has done absolutely nothing about that. Even *The Daily Telegraph* does not believe him. That was why it ran a story on Friday about tax evaders who cost Britain billions of pounds.

The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) made a speech that was supportive of the Government in comparison to his previous speeches. Normally, there is no praise whatever for the Government in his speeches and we feel like tossing him a Labour party card. Tonight, there was an occasional half sentence of praise along with a lot of damnation. He said that the United Kingdom needs a clear economic strategy for growth and that we do not have it. The hon. Gentleman, on this as on so many other issues, was exactly right. There was no strategy in the Budget for economic growth; nor was there any strategy for industry.

It has been interesting to see how comments that were favourable to the Budget on the day after are now turning sour. The excellent Mr. Peter Riddell wrote in a studied piece in *The Times* this morning:

> "The Budget is flawed as a long-term strategy . . . The package adds up to an exercise in political survival . . . Mr. Clarke may only be sorting out the errors of the past, but that may not save him, or the Tories."

As we know, the Budget has raised taxation in breach of all the promises that the Chancellor and every other Conservative Member made at the general election. The Budget will increase dependency, and will not reduce it. It does nothing to create a nation at work to replace the nation on benefit created by the Tories. The Budget is based on promises cynically given at the general election and cynically broken ever since. The Budget is proof of two things only: that the Tory party is now a party of high taxation and that the Tory party is a party which will never be trusted again by the British people.

9.40 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): The speech by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) called to mind what was once said about Lord Whitelaw—that the more he blustered, the less he believed it. We have just heard the seventh contribution by Opposition Front-Bench Members to the Budget debate, and I found the experience immensely depressing. Economic policy should lie at the heart of political debate in this House and each year's Budget should lie at the heart of debate about that issue. Yet throughout this Budget debate, Opposition Front-Bench Members have made no serious attempt to address any of the issues.

Of course, it come as no surprise that the Opposition do not embrace the strategy espoused by the Government. What is disappointing is that every speech by Opposition Front-Bench Members has been lightweight, frivolous and dilettante. Their speeches have not sought to address the issues confronting the House. The issues of the Budget affect the lives of millions of people, yet Opposition Front-Bench Members seem concerned more with sound bites than with policy. The debate has been depressing for the quality of their speeches.

Where do the Opposition stand, for example, on inflation? The Government have made their position clear. We have defined our inflation objectives and we have made clear how we intend to attain those objectives. Furthermore, we are able to say that we are attaining them and that inflation is under better control than it has been for a generation. The retail prices index has been at under 2 per cent. throughout the year. The last time that that happened was in 1960. The RPI, minus mortgage interest payments —MIPS—is currently running at about 3 per cent. lower than expected and lower than at any time since 1968.

Not only the performance, but the prospects are good. Earnings are rising at half the rate of the slowest year during the 1980s. That, coupled with good manufacturing productivity, means that for the first time since 1960 unit wage costs have been falling throughout the year. That is the vital bedrock for the future security of the British economy. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) said, we have grown used to the euphemism of "demand management" being used as an excuse to cover for inflation and deficit. The Government have made it clear in the Budget that they do not intend to retreat behind that euphemism any longer, and my right hon. Friend was right to draw attention to the importance of that point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) also drew attention to the importance of ensuring that the Government have a credible counter-inflation policy.

Where stands the Labour party on all those issues? It would be unfair for me to say that Labour Members have said nothing. In March this year, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) delivered this line:

> "We know enough to eschew the notion that inflation can simply be ignored."

The Opposition have learnt that much. Within a year of becoming shadow Chancellor, the hon. Gentleman has learnt that inflation cannot be ignored. I suppose that we should be thankful for small mercies.

Ms Armstrong: The Chancellor told us in his Budget statement that inflation would rise. By how much does the Chief Secretary expect it to rise next year?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Lady will have to make do with the Financial Secretary. The Government published forecasts on Budget day demonstrating that inflation would be well within the 1 per cent. to 4 per cent. target range throughout the forecast period covered in the Budget.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East has said that he eschews the notion that inflation can be simply ignored, but what more does he say about it? Does he endorse the Government's counter-inflation objective? Does he endorse the criteria which were set out as to how that objective will be delivered? If he does not endorse the objective or the criteria, what would he put in their place?

All that we have as a substitute for a policy is what one might call "Brown's Law"—that interest rates should be fixed by the formula of x minus 2 per cent., where x is the prevailing rate of interest. Whatever the circumstances, interest rates—according to the hon. Gentleman—are too high. His calls for reductions in interest rates would be more persuasive if he could think of a single occasion in the past five years when he or any of his hon. Friends have argued for an increase in interest rates. It is always the Opposition's case that they are 2 per cent. too high. That is their case now, as it was right through the late 1980s. We now know that at that time the Opposition were telling us that there should be further cuts when in fact interest rates were not too high but too low.

We do not get much about monetary policy in Labour speeches either in this debate or outside the House. What of fiscal policy? In the Budget, my right hon. and learned Friend made the Government's position crystal clear. The first table of the Red Book sets out my right hon. and learned Friend's plans for the elimination of the current deficit by 1997-98, and the total elimination of the budget deficit by the end of the planning period.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins) expressed some scepticism about the unified Budget procedures. He is less than totally enthusiastic about those new procedures, but I must say to my right hon. Friend that the new procedures have allowed us, in preparing and presenting the Budget, to demonstrate the proper balance which should exist between spending and revenue plans. Table 1.1 of the Red Book allows my right hon. and learned Friend to show how he intends to eliminate the current balance and to set clear plans to eliminate budget deficit altogether. That will be done by reducing the share of national income taken by current spending and by increasing the share of national income accounted for by Government revenues within a reasonable period.

The unified Budget that my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing is sceptical about poses a challenge to the Opposition as well—and a challenge to which, on the strength of their contributions to the debate, every Opposition Member has failed to rise. Do the Opposition agree that we need to plan to eliminate the current deficit?

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): Yes.

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) says yes, so that is something. I must tell the hon. Gentleman that every one of his hon. Friends on the Front Bench sat motionless. They do not know whether they are in favour of eliminating the Budget deficit.

Mr. Straw: When the hon. Gentleman referred to the right hon. Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins) I thought he was about to deal with the right hon. Gentleman's more substantial criticism of the Budget. The right hon. Gentleman said that the Government were planning to take out by way of reducing the PSBR "too much, too soon". Will the Financial Secretary comment on that criticism of the Government's PSBR plans from the right hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Dorrell: I am sure that it was a slip of memory, but the hon. Member for Blackburn did not mention in his speech the subject that was raised by my right hon. Friend. The hon. Gentleman did not express a view as to whether the Government were moving too fast or too slowly in eliminating the budget deficit. He did not set out an alternative strategy to the House, nor did he tell us whether the budget deficit is too high or too low. The hon. Gentleman did not say what should be done about it. All that we have heard from the Opposition is a variety of different ways in which they think that the Government should spend more of the taxpayer's money.

The hon. Gentleman asked me a direct question about job prospects in local government which I will answer. In looking to the future for local government, the important thing is that we should ensure that the opportunity exists for services to be maintained and improved at acceptable cost to council tax payers. That is why, in a year in which the Government, in the central planning of their expenses, have insisted on a zero cash increase, with increases in pay paid for by increases in productivity, we are planning for a 2·3 per cent. increase in local authority expenditure. That will allow local government the opportunity to continue to see services improve without imposing unreasonable costs on council tax payers. That is the right set of objectives to give to local government in the coming year.

Mr. Straw: I am grateful to the Financial Secretary for dealing with part of my question. I raised a more fundamental issue, however: why are the Government now following a policy that is directly opposed to that followed by the Prime Minister when he was Chief Secretary and published in the White Paper in 1988? All the points that the Financial Secretary has just made were known to the Prime Minister then, so why was the policy changed?

Mr. Dorrell: For reasons that were set out clearly when we published the rationale for the new control total last year—namely, that we thought it important to have a more effective control on the total level of public expenditure accounted for by the state in its various forms in order to deliver the reduction in the share of national income accounted for by expenditure set out in table 1.1 of the Red Book—an issue about which the Opposition have eschewed any comment during the debate.

Whenever he is challenged about the Opposition's plans for fiscal policy or particular spending or tax proposals within the fiscal balance, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East produces the same answer. He tells us that growth will solve all the problems—that there will be no difficult choices, just the opportunity for continued soft-focus sound bites. There will be no choices, no rough edges, no difficult decisions to be made.

As the shadow Chancellor puts so much weight on the prospect of growth so fast that it would absolve him from having to make any difficult decisions, we might have expected him at some time during his various utterances to let us have some ideas about how he would generate growth. What did the shadow Chancellor have to say about how growth will be created in the economy? The best that one can say of his utterances is that they are misleading, and most of them are either misunderstandings or plain wrong.

There is no better way of illustrating that than to look at what the shadow Chancellor had to say about investment. Hon. Members on both sides of the House agree about the importance of investment. Despite what the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East said, the Government's record is rather good. If we compare the most recent six years—the six years from 1987 to 1992—with the six years when the Labour party was last in power, we find a 49 per cent. increase in real terms in business investment and a 70 per cent. increase in real terms in investment in plant and machinery. In the 1970s, United Kingdom investment grew at a rate roughly two thirds of the G7 average, whereas in the 1980s it grew at a rate roughly 175 per cent. of the G7 average. The Government's record of promoting and creating the circumstances for growth of investment —*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) may be sceptical about some aspects of it, but he cannot argue with the figures, which show clearly that the investment track record of the Government through the 1980s boosted our investment performance both as compared with our own previous record and as compared with that of our G7 competitors.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): Would the Financial Secretary care to comment on housing investment? What does he think will be the consequences of the 8 per cent. cut in housing investment in the Budget for my constituency, where residents of the Egghill estate are told that they should turn on their taps or open their windows in the middle of December because that cuts down on condensation? Birmingham needs £1·3 billion of housing investment just to do up its housing stock. Where is the housing investment that will enable Birmingham to do that?

Mr. Dorrell: I was talking about business investment, which does not include housing investment. I must tell the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) about housing investment. We intend to deliver—in fact more than deliver—the manifesto commitment that we gave for new housing development. Furthermore, we shall do that by involving the private sector, which is something that the Labour party never counts in any of its calculations for the development of investment or economic activity.

When looking at how one promotes investment, it is important to understand why we saw such an improvement through the 1980s in this country's investment performance. The Government, including my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield, believe that the way to promote investment is by promoting profitability and seeing the opportunity for companies to make profits and achieve a return which attracts new investment in the future. That is why we have created the lowest rate of tax on corporate profits anywhere in the developed world.

We also believe that to attract investment into an economy it is necessary to ensure that the labour market is sufficiently flexible not to frighten off internationally mobile investment projects. It is because we have put in place the incentives and the necessary steps to create that regime that we attracted 40 per cent. of all inward investment into the EC in the late 1980s.

How does that compare with what the Labour party proposed? Although I have said that we have not heard

[Mr. Dorrell]

much from the Labour party about its monetary policy, we have not heard much from it about its fiscal policy. We do, of course, repeatedly hear from it what it proposes to do, for example, on social costs. We heard from the Leader of the Opposition when he went to the TUC meeting in September. He said that he was proud that the Labour party fought the last election on the policy of a national minimum wage, and that it remains a cornerstone of its new deal for low-paid workers.

It may be that, but it will not do much for investment. Again at that meeting, the Leader of the Opposition reiterated his support for the social chapter and furthermore promised a new right for trade unions that did not exist even in the 1970s: that employers would, under a new Labour Government, be legally obliged to recognise trade unions.

I wonder how that will play with those mergers in multinational companies who are trying to attract internationally mobile funds to come and invest in Britain. The reality is that when the Labour party reduces from generality to detail, every one of its details would have the effect of frightening off the investment that it says that it wants.

That is not all. The Labour party says it wants investment, but who are the big investors in Britain? Let us start with the privatised utilities. The Labour party wants to put a windfall tax on them.

Mr. Straw: Lower their prices.

Mr. Dorrell: That is exactly what the Labour party does not want to do. It wants to suspend the regulation and impose a windfall tax to safeguard the high prices so that it can raise extra tax out of what it calls excess profits. By its approach to the utilities, the Labour party would undermine the investment intentions of those privatised utilities.

That is part of a wider strategy, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor said earlier. It is not just the utilities that would face a higher tax if there were a re-elected Labour Government. When the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East wants to raise tax from business, we now know that he calls it a loophole.

I shall tell hon. Members on the Opposition Front Bench about corporation tax. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East says that he wants to end underpayment of corporation tax. In plain English, he wants to put up the rate of corporation tax. He wants to abandon the foreign income dividend scheme. In plain English, he wants to insist on double taxation of profits of international companies based in Britain. He wants to end ACT on scrip dividends.

For the first time—this is an important breakthrough for the Labour party—it is criticisng British companies, not for paying too much in dividends, but for paying too little. The ACT, it says, should be imposed because those companies are artificially depressing their dividends. Through all of those measures, the story is consistent. It is to impose tax on business, blind to the implications of that extra tax burden for the investment plans of British business.

This has been another disappointing day, with no hint from either of the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen on monetary policy or fiscal policy as to where they stand on the supply side changes. The only policy package with any detail sketched in is their commitment to reregulate the labour market—the one policy that would be damaging to economic prospects and investment in business. Every time they face a choice on economic issues they go the wrong way. They are a Jekyll and Hyde Opposition—in favour of investment and against investors, in favour of business and against business men, in favour of wealth and against wealth creation. They can never bring themselves to face choices and make the right choice to deliver the recovery that they say that they want.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATION

Ordered,

That Sir Anthony Durant be discharged from the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and Mr. Anthony Coombs be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

HEALTH

Ordered,

That Mrs. Jacqui Lait be discharged from the Health Committee and Mr. Michael Bates be added to the Committee. —*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

SOCIAL SECURITY

Ordered,

That Mr. David Willetts be discharged from the Social Security Committee and Mr. Bernard Jenkin be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

TRANSPORT

Ordered,

That Mr. Peter Luff be discharged from the Transport Committee and Mr. James Hill be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Fund Management

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.].*

10 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I rise to such an enthusiastic leaving of the audience to call, in this brief Adjournment debate, for a separation of roles between fund management and dealing in currency trading so that fund managers in currency trading are not required to trade in-house where they are at the mercy of the in-house dealers. I ask this so that we can protect the consumer and preserve the integrity of the financial markets.

The particular instance that I wish to outline arises from information brought to my attention by a young man, Evan Souliotis, former manager of the American Express bank international currency fund and its discretionary management programme. The first fund started with $18 million, but when he took it over, it had dwindled to $8 million, and the second was a new fund, which he created, with $2 million at its disposal.

Souliotis found when he took over the fund and began the new fund that, as the manager charged with the responsibility of getting the best deal for the clients of the fund, he not only had to do his dealings in-house but, in a situation that amounted to playing poker, the opponents in the game—the spot dealers in the currency trading room—knew his hand, and knew his expectations from the technical information that he had to produce each day.

Therefore, the dealers had the advantage over the fund manager, and they were dealing with him in a monopoly situation. They did not have to compete for his business: he had to go to them, and they could give him the prices that suited them, rather than the keener prices that would have been obtainable had he been able to deal outside where the spreads were wider.

Furthermore, the dealers could use him to generate profits for themselves. They were required to take two points off every trade for their own trading accounts, a requirement which the customers were not told. In addition, they could hypothetically take points for themselves, and it looked from the history of the fund, the records, as though that had been happening. That was a monopoly in which the fund manager was required to deal through in-house dealers and could not go outside for better prices, and exploitation was possible, theoretically and in practical terms.

We are dealing with huge sums. Let us take a $10 million trade, which is levied two points in and two points out, and add a hypothetical five points each way for the dealer. That is 14 points going astray on the trade, which would generate $10,000 a day in points subtracted from it. That is the equivalent of 22 per cent. interest for that fund over the whole year—all lost to the customers of that fund, and all pretty well untraceable. There are voice tapes, which are kept for two to three months, but they do not show the comparative prices outside. There is also an audit trail, but it is difficult to trace anything—not least, what competitive prices were at the time that a trade was made. In a monopoly, there was no opportunity to go outside—as American Express itself did, when currency trading, in going outside its own dealing room.

The situation was open to exploitation and to the churning of customers' accounts. That churning clearly went on before Souliotis took over, which is why the fund dwindled from $18 million to $8 million.

Having quickly assessed the situation, Souliotis restructured the fund. He lessened its exposure to the markets and cut the number of trades to stop the churning. He also kept a close eye on the dealing room, going in to secure better terms and narrower spreads for his customers. He made himself a nuisance, but the fund's performance improved. Its share price rose month by month and was profitable for the fund's customers over the six months that Souliotis ran it. That profitability, however, was at the expense of the bank, which ceased to make the previous easy profits from churning and points on each trade. Eventually, Souliotis was kept out of the dealing room, and then was fired.

Not unnaturally, Souliotis went to the regulators, and must have stumbled with sheer delight into that thick—in every sense—and dense undergrowth of regulatory structures that we call self-regulation. We should all be grateful for Souliotis's perseverance and for his attempts to bring the situation to light. Rarely do we find out what is happening in the City, particularly in dealing rooms. It is a fairly closed freemasonry, whose secrecy is paralleled by the profits involved in maintaining that secrecy.

We know little of that closed culture other than when we see on our television screens flashing lights and people shouting at each other. The real nature of those dealings is a closed book for most of us. We should be grateful to Souliotis for telling us what happened in this case.

The Securities and Futures Authority agreed that

> "opportunities for such malpractice appear to be many."

It agreed also that the audit trail that is typically produced makes the detection of such abuse altogether more difficult. It added, "Sorry, it's not our business—it's for the Bank of England." The Bank of England adopts a rather Nelsonian attitude to regulation. At first it said, "It's not our business, either." Later it said, "This complaint comes from a disgruntled employee and should be treated as such."

When the former Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak—Mr. Beaumont-Dark—and I took the matter up with the Bank of England, it assured us that it had inquired thoroughly into the matter. However, the bank's solicitors stated:

> "To the best of our client's knowledge no investigation is current or was carried out by the Bank of England."

So much for its thorough inquiry.

That was hardly surprising, for when we met Eddie George, then deputy Governor, he did not appear to me to understand commercial dealing rooms. He had spent a lot of time in the Bank of England's own dealing room, but that must be like a gentleman's club compared with the realities of commercial dealing rooms. Mr. George appeared to believe that such dealing rooms behaved like boy scouts—that one only had to tell them what to do, order them to be good and instruct them to operate at arm's length and they would immediately do so. He seemed to assume that they were honourable people.

I felt some disappointment after treading through this country's regulatory structures. The oversight committees of the United States Congress took a much keener interest in the evidence that came to light and that I was able to

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send them than did our own regulators. The American committees cannot do much, but their interest is considerably greater than it is in this country.

All the regulators—from Andrew Large to Eddie George—agree that the situation is open to abuse. All were clearly embarrassed at being told that abuses could have occurred, but they would rather not know—and would rather not do anything about it.

The issue arises because one manager of two funds has one dealing room. It is possible that that dealing room is a different or peculiar culture. It is equally possible that it is typical of other dealing rooms across the City. It is possible, too, that its practices are common to other markets—gilts, commodities, equities and futures—but I am dealing only with financial markets tonight.

The sums involved are enormous, because the trades are huge. At times of rapid price movements, currencies can shift 200 to 300 points in a short period. It is not difficult, in such a burst of massive trading, to skim off five, 10, 15 or 20 points into treasuries, trading accounts or accounts of friends or of people with whom an organisation might wish to do a special deal. Indeed, Souliotis was told to do exactly that by a senior American Express treasury manager.

That money can be shifted on the points basis pretty well without trace. We think of the City as a network of honourable men whose word is their bond, but since big bang, although the change was already under way, that has not been the nature of the City or our financial institutions. It is not a network of gentlemanly capitalism of the kind that built up the commercial ties of empire. That is the old image and attitude. These are dealers: they are sharpies —barrow boys without barrows, who are living on their wits in a pretty tough jungle. How do we know that they are behaving with the integrity that is clearly required in those markets? How can we tell unless we take the obvious and, to me, essential step of imposing the necessary safeguard of requiring dealings in financial markets to be out of house?

It is fair to say that, when I put that solution to the Bank and the SFA, they gave it very brief consideration but an absolute, final and pretty unequivocal rejection. The reasons for the rejection seemed confused and wrong. It is argued—indeed, the Economic Secretary has advanced the argument to me in a letter—that it would be more expensive to require dealings to be out of house, but that is not so. It would certainly be more competitive, and whose interests are we thinking of? Surely we must think of the interests of the clients—the customers of a fund—and of the fund manager's responsibility to get the best possible deal for them.

To require dealers to be out of house so that a fund manager can have a range of prices at his disposal and can use his knowledge to exploit markets and discover who will give him the best deal is surely more sensible than making him subject to monopoly control by an in-house market whose dealers know his position and can exploit it. He cannot best serve his customers if he is subject to such monopoly control.

If we require dealings to be out of house, it allows a fund manager to use his skills, and it makes dealers work. That is the important point: rather than milking a captive market, dealers would be required to work to get better deals and would have to compete. It is true that the bad, lazy and inefficient dealing rooms might go under, but the good, competitive, able and dynamic dealing rooms would survive and prosper, because they would be giving competitive quotes and fighting for business.

Unless they take that step, the Government are effectively saying that they do not believe in competition, because a requirement to go out of house mobilises competition, for the benefit of the consumer—for the people who invest in funds. Competition must be to their advantage, especially if it removes the monopoly.

What, therefore, is wrong with such a simple, obvious and necessary way of protecting the consumer in the financial markets, and at the same time securing the integrity of those markets? What is wrong with making the City and the dealers mobilise their skills that they constantly tell us they have on behalf of the consumers and clients, those people whose business they want to win for London, rather than merely exploiting a captive market, which is easy to do?

If the Economic Secretary will forgive me, I believe that the main interest of the debate will be to learn what excuses, and how many, he can mobilise to avoid doing that which it is so obviously his duty to do.

10.15 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) is assiduous and persistent, and I congratulate him on securing this Adjournment debate and on the way in which he has pursued the issue. I have no doubt that he is motivated by a keen desire to secure investor protection, fairness in the markets and the best deal for those who use the markets.

I know from long experience in the House and in Committee that the hon. Gentleman has an outstanding record in this regard. Indeed, he has from time to time supported me when I have moved amendments to toughen investor deposit protection laws, so I am conscious of the fact that I owe him one—although I am not sure that I can deliver what he wants this evening. However, I acknowledge the sincerity of his motives, and many of the sentiments that he has expressed.

When the hon. Gentleman raised this issue with me, I was very keen to meet the gentleman to whom he referred. He may know that the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) came to see me, and I listened to what he had to say. The hon. Gentleman may also be aware that, in a former existence, I was an investment fund manager, with the job of passing chits to the share dealing room and the foreign exchange dealing room.

I am therefore aware of the potential for collusion, of the potential for not dealing on the finest terms for investment clients of particular banks and of the extent to which improper practices may arise if there is inadequate supervision or if the integrity of the concern is not held uppermost. I therefore take very seriously the hon. Gentleman's complaints, and I pursued inquiries on a bona fide basis to try to ascertain whether there was any substance in them.

Having looked into the matter very carefully, having written to the hon. Gentleman, and having discussed the matter again with the Governor of the Bank of England only this afternoon, I am personally sure that it would not be the right approach to engage in either the separation of fund management as he suggests or necessarily to embark on audit trail procedures beyond those already provided. I shall explain why.

The hon. Gentleman spoke in some detail about one aspect of the way in which the foreign exchange markets operate in this country. The markets are, of course, one of the many financial sectors in which London has a leading position in the world. London's position has been won by the City being able to provide customers and participants with high-quality and competitively priced services without their fear of being exploited by underhand practices.

Those who use these services have demonstrated their confidence in our markets by the enormous flows across our exchanges every day. The hon. Gentleman may, for example, know that the daily foreign exchange turnover in London alone amounts to something like $300 billion.

That confidence is not misplaced, and the authorities attach the highest importance to maintaining the reputation of all those who operate in the market. That is why, when the hon. Gentleman first brought his concerns to me, I was keen to ensure that his points were properly examined and that the information he was able to provide was made available to the Bank of England so that it could be formally and fully investigated.

That has now been done and, as he knows, the Bank's findings have been put before the Board of Banking Supervision, so that its outside members could judge whether the Bank had done all that it should in this case. The unanimous conclusion was the it had, but, if the hon. Gentleman has any new evidence that he wishes to pass to the Bank, it will of course be considered. I understand that the upshot of that process is that the Governor and the hon. Gentleman have now agreed to differ about the merits of introducing a ban on in-house dealing by banks who manage foreign exchange funds for their customers.

I would just say as an aside about the Governor, Mr. Eddie George, to whom the hon. Gentleman referred, that I can assure him that Mr. George is fully conversant with commercial banks' practices. Few, if any, people I know are more aware of and conversant with what goes on in the commercial banking world. He enjoys my fullest confidence, and that of the rest of my hon. and right hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench.

Before I go any further, I should say that, although the hon. Gentleman first raised the issue as a result of a specific case, he has since been pursuing his concerns as ones of principle. I am sure that he is right to do so, and I should make it clear that anything I say tonight is to be interpreted in the same way. My remarks are not to be taken to refer to one specific bank or any specific funds or individuals.

To return to the central issue, a ban on in-house dealing sounds superficially attractive. It undoubtedly would prevent some dealers from skewing prices against their clients, although there is no conclusive evidence of that happening. It would, however, have other consequences too, which are far less desirable. As in so many walks of life, we have to strike a balance.

I think that we can all agree that banning motor cars would reduce the number of traffic accidents, but the social and economic consequences of doing so would massively outweigh the benefits, so we have a Highway Code instead. Just as banning cars would not stop all road accidents, so a ban on in-house dealing would not remove all possibility of abuse. It would not, for example, rule out collusion with a third party.

An argument that is sometimes heard is that such a ban would force managers to shop around for the best price —the point that the hon. Gentleman made this evening. Perhaps. In the real world, however, all banks need to offer a competitive product to their customers or they will soon start to lose business.

What happens when the in-house dealer can offer the best price to a fund, for example, by obtaining economies of scale and reduced costs by putting together an internal customer's business with dealing for the bank itself? Why should the customer not be able to benefit from that? In cases such as that, the hon. Gentleman's proposal would prevent the customer from receiving the best price in the market. That is a form of investor protection that, in my view, we can well do without.

In all markets, not just financial ones, prices vary with the nature of the transaction. Large deals often receive a different rate from small ones. Wholesale deals, or those with regular counterparties with which a firm has a wider business relationship, may take place on better terms than those which are more generally available.

In the foreign exchange markets, customers are normally quoted two-way prices, with spreads to private customers typically wider than those which banks offer one another. For small transactions, those spreads can be very large—as anyone who has bought currency or travellers' cheques at a bureau de change will readily testify.

For all those reasons, it is misleading to talk objectively about the right price for a particular foreign exchange transaction, and in the absence of such objective information I am far from convinced that the hon. Member has demonstrated that a simple ban on in-house dealing would be in the interests of investors.

I should just mention, with regard to the spreads that he quoted, two pips additional spread on, let us say, a five pip —that is to say, a four basis point spread as opposed to a three basis point spread on a deal—is not unusual as a differential between the basis on which a charge is made to a corporate client and the basis on which money is exchanged on the interbank market.

It is quite normal for the interbank market, where the average amount would be perhaps $5 million or upwards, to be on a three basis points arrangement, but for it to be a four basis points arrangement if it was dealt direct with the customer. That is because there are relationships with other banks in the interbank market; one knows the counterparty; reciprocal business is conducted; and it is not surprising that an additional margin is put on where a fund deals, even if it is an in-house fund concerned.

I believe that, in a free and increasingly international market, financial institutions should be able to compete freely in the type of product that they offer their customers. Some, wishing to attract those who share the hon. Gentleman's concerns, will choose to offer a structure in which no deals are carried out in-house. Others will opt for structures in which all deals are in-house, in the belief that they will tend over time to provide a better and cheaper service. Others will give their managers the freedom to deal either in-house or with third parties, depending on what seems most attractive at the time.

The hon. Gentleman has pointed out that segregation between dealer and fund manager is not a regulatory requirement in these or other financial markets. It is my view, and that of the Bank of England and the financial services regulators, that, so long as those offering such

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products make the basis of the arrangement clear and have the controls to satisfy regulatory requirements, separation of dealing and fund management is unnecessary.

The hon. Gentleman also talked about the need for a clear audit trail. I am still not entirely clear, from his correspondence or from his speech tonight, what he has in mind here. The practices and integrity of dealings in the wholesale currency markets and commodity futures markets are matters for the Bank of England and the Securities and Investments Board. Firms regulated under the Banking and Financial Services Act 1986 must have adequate systems to control their business, including an adequate audit trail. Where these controls are inadequate, the regulators will take appropriate action. They will also investigate any evidence of fraud or malpractice.

As technology improves, firms are increasingly able to record not only the exact time and price of their transactons but the prices that were current elsewhere in the market at that time. But the fact is that, at any moment, there is a range of prices and of sizes in foreign exchange dealings, and there is a limit to what is possible in validating prices to the nearest 100th of 1 per cent. in a market where prices can move by 20 or 30 times that amount every second.

Unnecessary interference with market practices risks driving foreign exchange business—by its very nature, one of the most international of markets—out of London to our competitors overseas. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not advocate that.

This can also be expensive for customers: regulation does not come free. It costs time and money. In fast-moving markets such as foreign exchanges, a requirement to check with a specified number of dealers, for instance, before putting a deal through could easily mean that the price had moved against the customer before the deal could be executed.

To try to find evidence of a best price by looking at brokers' screens can also be spurious. Such prices are often no more than indicative, or are good only for a matter of seconds, and they may not be available once a comprehensive market search has been carried out and the deal comes to be done.

When business such as foreign exchange falls under section 43 of the Financial Services Act 1986, and is thus without the ambit of the Act, it is picked up under the Banking Act and is covered by the so-called grey paper and the London code of conduct. This constitutes an annex to the regulation of the wholesale markets in sterling, foreign exchange and bullion, published by the Bank of England. It sets out the manner in which the bank intends to supervise the London wholesale markets in sterling, foreign exchange and bullion.

Central to the regulatory framework is a list of institutions which act as market makers or brokers or which have been accepted by the Bank as fit and proper. The statutory authority for this regime is section 43 of the Financial Services Act 1986.

The London code of conduct states that managers of participants

> "must ensure that the fiduciary and other obligations imposed on them by the general law are observed . . . As a general rule, deals at non-market rates should not be undertaken."

Any breaches of the code by banks will be "viewed most seriously" by the Bank of England and

> "may be reflected in their assessment of the fitness and propriety of these institutions."

I therefore do not believe that this is an area of unregulated activity. I accept that the nature of the market makes it difficult to fit it into the conduct-of-business rules that apply to investment concerns. Possibly, one could not prevent every transaction that might not be entirely to the benefit of investors.

They may occasionally be disadvantaged, but in such a competitive market, in which the integrity of the banks is at stake and the business they do is up for grabs, some of the largest institutions, which enjoy a high reputation for their activities in London and elsewhere—American Express, for instance—have a much greater self-interest in observing the rules of the London code of conduct.

Based on my dealings with the Bank of England, I am satisfied that the rules are most carefully enforced by everyone, from the Governor down. When necessary, investigations are undertaken and remedial measures are sought and imposed by the Bank of England.

I accept what the hon. Gentleman said about the case in question, and I understand his concerns, but I hope that my remarks will give him some reassurance. My keen assessment is that the Bank is doing a good job in this difficult area. Rules do apply, and, where necessary, lessons have been learnt.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 7 December 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords]*

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the British Waterways Bill *[Lords]* may, notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders or practice of this House, proceed with the Bill in the present Session and the Petition for the Bill shall be deemed to have been deposited and all Standing Orders applicable thereto shall be deemed to have been complied with;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the present Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the last Session;

That as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read for the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That all Petitioners relating to the Bill presented in the last Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill, together with any minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on the Bill, shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the present session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the last Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the last Session.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Intensive Care Baby Cots

1. **Mr. David Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide resources for the immediate purchase of two additional intensive care baby cots in Bolton; and what account she takes of infant mortality levels in allocating funds.

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): The director of public health of Bolton health authority has recommended upgrading and extending the intensive care provision for very sick babies. The health authority is acting on the recommendations and is in discussion with other local health service organisations to see how best to meet the need for access to two additional intensive care cots.

Mr. Young: May I press the Minister further? He will be aware that Bolton has double the national infant mortality rate, and that that trend is increasing. He will also be aware that we in Bolton have 50 per cent. below the recommended number of intensive care beds, and have had for some considerable time. When will those two additional beds be in operation? Babies are currently being transported as far as Liverpool and Leeds, which has been a contributory factor in the death rate. I hope that, at Christmas time, the Government are not going to play Herod.

Dr. Mawhinney: The figures I have for infant mortality in Bolton—as opposed to the figures for England and Wales—do not show a doubling, although I agree that the figures are higher than the national average. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will have been encouraged by my initial reply. The discussions about identifying the two extra intensive care cots which the director of public health said were necessary are being conducted urgently, because everyone understands that those cots need to be provided.

Mr. Thurnham: In view of the links between low birthweight babies and maternal smoking, will my hon. Friend look into the way in which cigarette advertisers have been targeting Bolton? Is that not in breach of the voluntary code?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am aware of my hon. Friend's concerns on those issues because he has related them before to me and to the Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville). My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) is right to point out that the director of public health identified low-weight babies, smoking and teenage pregnancies as three issues on which the concerns in Bolton were different from those in the rest of the country. Consideration of those and other points is proceeding.

Dental Service

2. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the level of dental service provision within the NHS; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We are committed to an effective and accessible national health service dental service. There are now more general dental practitioners and more registered patients in England than ever before.

Mr. Wigley: None the less, is the Minister aware that in many areas the dental services provided by the NHS have collapsed as a direct result of the contract that the Government have mishandled so badly? In my constituency—I accept that it is not in England—not a single NHS dentist is taking on new cases in the Dwyfor district. People are having to travel up to 50 miles to find NHS treatment. Is not that a disgrace? When will the Government honour their pledge that the NHS is safe in their hands?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman's initial statement was wrong. No family health services authority in England is unable to find dental health on the NHS for those patients who want it. I am aware of the problems in the hon. Gentleman's constituency because I have seen the correspondence that he has exchanged with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Health.

I am pleased to see that the hon. Gentleman's local health authority has now received permission to appoint four salaried dentists. I am also pleased that two extra community dentists have been appointed. In addition to the other measures taken locally, those appointments will go some way to meeting the problems that the hon. Gentleman has identified.

Mr. Hicks: Despite what my hon. Friend has said, is he aware that in rural areas, not least south-east Cornwall, there is certainly a fragility in the framework and structure of provision of our dental services? There is unease, which must be corrected so that the service can regain public confidence.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am aware of my hon. Friend's point, not least because he has made it to me several times, as have other hon. Friends from Cornwall. They will know that salaried dentists arrangements have been made in Cornwall. They will also know of the establishment of the peripatetic dental service. I put what my hon. Friend has said in the wider context of an increased number of dentists taking national health service patients—an all-time high —and of an increase of 1·6 million net in the number of patients registered for NHS treatment since 1 July last year, taking the amount now to almost 29 million.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Is not the Minister being unbelievably complacent on this serious issue? Will he treat the issue with the seriousness that it deserves—*[Laughter.]*—a seriousness with which it is obviously not addressed by Conservative Members? Will he tell us why there has been such a lengthy delay in the publication of the Government's oral health strategy, which we were promised a considerable time ago?

What steps are being taken to deal with the health implications of the deregistration of more than half a million dental patients, including many children, in England? What steps is the Minister taking to deal with the concern expressed by both Conservative and Opposition Members about the fact that dental care is rapidly becoming a complete shambles, directly and entirely as a result of deliberate Government policy?

Dr. Mawhinney: What nonsense. A net increase of 1·6 million patients registered for NHS treatment, an all-time high number of dentists delivering NHS treatment and more courses of adult treatment do not add up to a national health service that is coming apart at the seams. The service is being supplemented by 87 salaried dentists and an expansion of the community dental service.

On the hon. Gentleman's first point, we have consulted widely. We have consulted areas that have never before been asked for opinions, such as the local dental committees. We have also taken careful note of the Health Select Committee's report which came out in the summer. The consultation would have been made far easier if the dentists had had any concerted idea of the future that they would like. The Government will produce their report shortly.

Mr. David Nicholson: May I reinforce the concerns expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks)? The matter to which he referred does not affect only rural areas; it is causing considerable problems to my constituents in Taunton itself. Is there not effectively an industrial dispute in the dental service which is causing inconvenience to my constituents? Will my hon. Friend therefore bring forward the Government's conclusions on the Bloomfield report as soon as possible? Numbers of dentists as well as patients are waiting to know what will happen to the dental service.

Dr. Mawhinney: I assure my hon. Friend that we will bring forward the proposals as quickly as we can, precisely for the reasons that he has outlined. I know that my hon. Friend shares my desire that we should spend enough time on the proposals to make them as effective as possible when we bring them forward.

Asthma

3. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures her Department is taking to improve the treatment for asthma.

The Parliamentary under Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): The chronic disease management programme was introduced in July this year. So far, 90 per cent. of general practitioners have been approved to run an organised programme of care of patients with asthma.

Mr. Eastham: Is the Minister aware that the public feel that not enough urgency is given to the desperate condition of asthma, the incidence of which is growing at a terrific rate? Some 3 million people already suffer from asthma and admissions into children's hospitals have doubled during the past 10 years. It is now costing the nation almost £1 billion. The Government cannot expect to leave the voluntary organisations to care for those suffering from this complaint. The Government have to do far more about the problem of asthma.

Mr. Bowis: That is precisely why we have introduced the programme for general practitioners. It is a tribute to them that 90 per cent. of general practitioners have already accepted the challenge. I am pleased to note that the hon. Gentleman's health authority, North Manchester, has added to this by having an open admissions policy for people with severe attacks. That can only be good for the programme as a whole. We are concerned about the subject, we have taken notice and we have taken action. It is up to everybody—health authorities, general practitioners, the voluntary sector and the Government—to take steps to ensure that the disease is kept under control.

Mr. Alan Howarth: What plans does my hon. Friend have to respond to the call from the Asthma Training Centre, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health recently visited in my constituency, for a national standard of training for health professionals, with accredited courses leading to formal qualification? Will my hon. Friend also act jointly with the Department for Education to make sure that schools have a proper policy on asthma, including the training of designated teachers?

Mr. Bowis: I will certainly talk to my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department for Education. My hon. Friend is right: we are looking at the whole question of training. He is aware that, in addition to the English national board's course for nurses in respiratory diseases, we have a specific diploma course, run by the Asthma Training Centre, which brings people up to speed. My hon. Friend recognises that in the CDM—chronic disease management—programme one of the requirements is that doctors qualifying for that payment have trained staff who can fulfil their duties.

Prescription Charges

5. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest figures for the price of prescription charges; and what were the comparable figures for 1979.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): The figures are £4·25 and 49p respectively.

Mr. Skinner: Is not the truth of the matter that the Government have revelled in sadistically attacking the sick and disabled by increasing prescription charges by more than 2,000 per cent? In those same years, the Government have also lined the pockets of the rich with £30 billion. It is not the sick and disabled who have brought the country to its knees but this rotten, lousy, evil Government. They should be made to pay the price—not the sick.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I am afraid that there was cant as well as rant in that question. When the Labour party was in power, three items out of five were charged for; now more are free. Under our stewardship, the NHS has gained an extra £1·6 billion. The Labour party has failed to say what it would do about charges. The proceeds from charges more than pay the health costs of the hon. Gentleman's constituents; they pay them twice over each year. It is a practical commitment to an ever-improving health service, backed by the necessary resources.

Dame Jill Knight: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the one out of five persons who pay for their prescriptions are still getting a very good bargain—paying £4·25 for a prescription when the average cost is between £10 and £11?

Mrs. Bottomley: As ever, my hon. Friend makes an extremely good point. As she knows, one out of five now pay. When Labour was in power, two out of five paid. Pensioners, children and others on low incomes do not pay prescription charges, which are a contribution from those who can afford to pay towards a health service that provides for all.

Mr. Blunkett: Apart from the fact that more than 50 per cent. of prescriptions now cost less than £4·25, perhaps the Secretary of State can confirm that, as part of the Budget settlement, prescription charges are likely to rise, probably to a staggering £5 in the early new year, and that pregnant women and nursing mothers will lose their exemption from those charges?

Does the right hon. Lady agree that the amount of £53 million contrasts sharply with the £70 million which, it has been revealed, has been spent on cars for senior NHS management and staff? That expenditure has risen from £5 million to £24 million for those employed in trusts alone. Is that not a scandalous waste of vital resources that should be devoted to patient care?

Mrs. Bottomley: I hope that the House will note the predictions of the hon. Gentleman, because, once again, they will be shown to be absolutely false. We will announce the prescription arrangements in due course, but the House should note what the hon. Gentleman has predicted. Only recently, he said that the health service needed an extra £435 million. We have announced an extra £1·6 billion for it. The hon. Gentleman's predictions are always wrong and always full of doom and gloom. The House, however, is still waiting for any policies on the NHS from the hon. Gentleman.

With regard to cars for NHS staff, the hon. Gentleman has, once again, done some selective editing, because he did not take into account community nurses, doctors and all those who need transport to deliver health care in the community. No one expects a true reflection of the facts from the hon. Gentleman, but some of us are still awaiting a policy from him.

Mr. Whittingdale: Is my right hon. Friend aware that whereas 82 per cent. of prescriptions are exempt from charges in this country, the figures for Germany and France are 30 per cent. and just 4 per cent. respectively? Does she agree that, by any measure, our record in this area is extremely generous?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is exactly right. We have a health service which is the envy of the world. I have been able to establish that few countries impose fewer charges in their health service than we do.

Winter Deaths

6. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the number of excess winter deaths for England and Wales in 1992.

Mr. Bowis: The figure is 34,845.

Mr. Cunningham: Given the inadequate 50p compensation package on fuel bills, and given that the imposition of VAT will mean that the fuel bill of the average household, particularly those of pensioners, will rise by 89p, does the Minister agree that many more people, including old-age pensioners and those below pensionable age, will find themselves pushing up the figures for winter deaths?

Mr. Bowis: The hon. Gentleman should put the figure of 34,000 in its proper context, because it is out of a total of 558,000 deaths. All the research shows that there is no link between excess winter deaths and poverty, age or anything else. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman was trying, in an oblique way, to thank my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor for his package, which will provide £1·5 billion for supportive fuel measures.

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would also like to reiterate his thanks, which i am sure he meant to give, for the achievements gained under the "keep warm, keep well" campaign, cold weather payments—I do not recall that the Labour party introduced such payments when it was in power—and home insulation grants. All that proves that it is possible to keep warmer under this Government than it was under the Labour Government.

Sir Donald Thompson: Is that estimate of winter deaths more or less than the number of those who were frightened to death by the propaganda of the Opposition?

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend is quite right to point that out. It is also worth noting that, of those winter deaths, hypothermia accounted for just 362. That information should be judged alongside the fact that, in the next 20 years, it is expected that 50 per cent. more people will live past the age of 85, and that, in the past 10 years, there has been a 20 per cent. fall in under-65 deaths. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that, given those facts, life is not just better under the Conservatives—it is longer.

Ms Lynne: Is the Minister aware that there has been a considerable increase in winter deaths due to influenza over the past two to three months compared with the same time last year? The figures come from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. What action will the Government take to make up for the shortfall of influenza vaccine, to prevent any more deaths from influenza?

Mr. Bowis: I can confirm the hon. Lady's point that influenza has been a factor in the excess deaths this year. That is always the case when there are bouts of influenza, as one might expect, in the winter months. I can also confirm that there is no shortage of influenza vaccine. As of today, the supplies are completely up to date, and the expectation is that all future demand this winter can be met.

Mr. Elletson: Is my hon. Friend aware that one of my constituents, a pensioner, died last week from hypothermia? Does he agree that, although his death was tragic and avoidable, it was nothing whatever to do with the extension of VAT to fuel? *[Interruption.]* It has nothing whatever to do with the extension of VAT to fuel, because it has not yet been extended to fuel. Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to congratulate the Chancellor on the many measures in his Budget that will help to keep pensioners warm next winter?

Mr. Bowis: I will pass on my hon. Friend's thanks. He is quite right. Nobody could conceivably have died as a result of VAT on fuel when it has not yet been imposed on fuel. When it is, individuals will be protected by the package of measures to which my hon. Friend and I have referred.

It is also true that we have seen a steady falling in the level of people dying from hypothermia to the very small figures that we have today. That is in no small part a tribute to the Government and all those involved in the voluntary sector in the "keep warm, keep well" campaign, which has now been running for seven years, and which this year has a commitment of £500,000 towards giving that message, and that support and comfort, to the elderly.

Ms Primarolo: Is the Minister aware of the research by Professor Khaw at Cambridge university, which has established a clear link between the increase in winter deaths, in winter, obviously, and fuel poverty? *[Laughter.]* Well, we are told that 34,845 additional deaths in the winter months are linked to fuel poverty. Is he further aware that Dr. Boardman at Oxford university has calculated that, even after the inadequate compensation of VAT on fuel, at least a further 2,500 people will die?

Does the Minister not feel a responsibility for those deaths? What will he do to ensure that the necessary health prevention is undertaken, and proper compensation given for VAT on fuel to prevent those premature deaths?

Mr. Bowis: The compensation has been given. "The Health of the Nation" and the health strategy of the Government are ensuring that old people are regularly checked by their GPs. If the hon. Lady wants to trade research, I suggest that she reads all of it, because the research that I have seen shows that there is no connection between the points that she has made.

There are all sorts of reasons for the excess winter rate of deaths. Some of them are to do with the fact that we have reduced the specific summer reasons for deaths. There are many other elements, such as the natural conditions of a particular country, including humidity, day and night temperatures, even wind speeds. If the hon. Lady wants to help the elderly best, she can join me in advising them to avoid having one room much hotter than another, because a change of temperature can affect circulation, and that is an avoidable factor.

London Health Services

7. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the main criteria for her policy for the location of accident and emergency, neurosciences and oncology services in the Greater London region.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No accident and emergency department will be closed in London, or anywhere else, unless and until it can be shown that proper alternative facilities exist which will secure patient safety and provide quality patient care. As for the specialist services to which my hon. Friend refers, the Government are seeking to reduce the current duplication and fragmentation in London and create a number of world-class centres for treatment, teaching and research.

Sir Michael Neubert: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Oldchurch hospital in my constituency, which is easily accessible to an area with an above-average incidence of illness and deprivation, has served the health needs of the people of Romford and around it to their satisfaction for generations? Is she further aware that there is massive public demand for that hospital to continue as a fully functional district general hospital, and that repeated attempts to remove vital services—the latest being accident and emergency services in respect of which four alarming cases within a month have revealed that patients can expect to wait up to four to six hours in casualty before treatment—are greatly resented and are being actively resisted?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am well aware that my hon. Friend is a great champion not only of his local health service but of Oldchurch hospital in particular. Throughout the country, we must face change in the delivery of health care if we are to have cost-effective improvements that take forward the pioneering medicine that is so important to the citizens of the United Kingdom.

I have looked at the figures for my hon. Friend's area. An extra 1,100 patients were treated last year. A £6·1 million building programme is in place, involving a new theatre, maternity and paediatric block at the local Harold Wood hospital. The area is also doing extremely well under the patients charter—a written constitution of what local people can expect from their health service. My hon. Friend's health authority will be bringing forward further plans. Above all, it must take forward quality improvements for local people.

Ms Abbott: On the question of oncology services, the Secretary of State suggests that there is duplication and excess provision. My constituent, Dr. Spitzer, wrote to me a few days ago about a patient of his whom he sent to the oncology department at Bart's. The consultant recommended that that patient be admitted immediately because his cancer was so far advanced. He was sent home because of a shortage of beds and he died that evening. When will the Secretary of State concede that people are dying because of her policies in London and that more people will die if those policies are pushed through?

Mrs. Bottomley: Only yesterday, the chief executive of the NHS produced his annual report which showed that an extra 1·3 million patients had been treated since the introduction of the reforms. Clearly, when anything goes wrong, it is essential to investigate and learn any lessons. But the average cancer service in London, as the independent review of services in London showed, sees about half the number of patients seen elsewhere. The health service has to be cost effective in the delivery of care. I have explained to the House how we have produced an extra £1·6 billion, and there is an extra £70 million for the hon. Lady's region next year. At the same time, however, we have to find the most efficient way of delivering that care.

Mr. Carrington: Has my right hon. Friend considered the need for a major trauma centre in west London? Does she agree that the ideal location for such a centre would be the Charing Cross hospital, which has magnificent specialty services and is ideally located, with easy access from Heathrow and central London?

Mrs. Bottomley: I well understand my hon. Friend's commitment to his own hospital, which serves his constituents so well. It is the case—independent experts and those in the medical profession are agreed—that the duplication and institutional costs in London are excessive. If we are to take forward the 100 projects in primary care and to have more balanced health provision in London, we must face change. I hope that we shall be able to bring the uncertainty to an end before long and I will certainly note the points that my hon. Friend makes.

Mr. Blunkett: Will the Secretary of State comment on the front page of the London *Evening Standard*, which has a headline about 5,000 fewer nurses and triple the number of men in grey suits? Will she bear in mind the Tomlinson report and the work of the London implementation group; the separate and contradictory proposals for closure and rationalisation under the specialty reviews; and the fact that the internal market is threatening a completely separate set of hospitals such as University College hospital? Given all that, is it not time that the Secretary of State came clean on her proposals for the future of London's health service and made a statement to the House to end the demoralisation and despair among staff and patients in our capital city?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman must be aware that a great number of former nurses have been redesignated as managers because they held senior positions of responsibility. The same applies to Project 2000 nurses. We have now been able to extend Project 2000 throughout the country so that all nurses training are designated as students rather than nurses. Only six weeks ago, I was announcing the abolition of the regions and the substantial slimming down of the layers of authority, and what did the hon. Gentleman say? He complained about redundancies.

The hon. Gentleman simply cannot have it both ways. We want a slim, lean, effective service that has the maximum number of people providing hands-on care. That is our whole commitment in London, where change is necessary. I believe that that should unite us and we shall bring the uncertainty to an end before long.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the increasing pressure on the casualty department at Ealing hospital with much larger numbers coming in for treatment in recent weeks? Will she consider whether extra funding can be provided to meet the enormous pressure on Ealing compared with other hospitals in London?

Mrs. Bottomley: In London in particular, the use of accident and emergency services and its relationship with primary care and GP services is a central factor. My hon. Friend will be aware that 100 primary care projects are under way within the London area in the year ahead. I shall look at the particular factors my hon. Friend describes, and I have some good news for him. The allocations to his region that I am announcing today will include an extra £61 million for next year. That will mean that his region has a total spending of £1·3 billion.

Preventive Health

8. **Ms Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she next plans to meet her EC counterparts to discuss preventive health.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The next meeting of the EC Health Council takes place on 13 December. I have this week written to my EC counterparts to inform them of the health prevention measures which my right hon. and learned Friend's excellent Budget contains.

Ms Quin: Does the Secretary of State agree with the findings in her own Department's report that a ban on tobacco advertising could reduce cigarette smoking by up to 9 per cent. and also save 10,000 lives a year in Britain? In view of this, will she be supporting a ban on tobacco advertising at the EC Council meeting on 13 December?

Mrs. Bottomley: What I am saying clearly to my fellow Ministers, and what my hon. Friend the Minister for Health will be saying at the EC Health Council, is that Britain has had a more substantial fall in the amount of smoking than any other country in the EC except the Netherlands. It is not my view that a statutory ban on tobacco advertising is an appropriate way of achieving change. We know that for every 10 per cent. increase in price there is a 3 to 6 per cent. fall in consumption. When the Labour party was in power, the price of cigarettes went up by about 1 per cent. It has gone up by about 67 per cent. since we have been in power. We believe in achieving results, not pursuing gimmicks.

Mrs. Roe: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the Chancellor of the Exchequer both on increasing the price of a packet of cigarettes by a further 11p in the Budget last week and on committing the Government to a real-terms increase in tobacco taxation in each successive Budget? Will my right hon. Friend be encouraging her EC counterparts to press their Finance Ministers to take similar action?

Mrs. Bottomley: I will most certainly be doing precisely that. I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It seems ironic that those who seem most keen to ban the advertising of cigarettes seem to be those who have their own nationalised industries. I would only ask my hon. Friends to compare the price of cigarettes here with that in Spain, for example, where they sell for 51p a packet. We have a tight package of measures, not only increasing the penalties on those selling cigarettes to under-16s, but having the largest warnings on cigarette packets of any country in the EC. We are meeting our targets for adults and pregnant women; it is the children of smoking parents who cause most concern and we will renew our activities to ensure that they also help us to meet the targets that we set out in "The Health of the Nation".

Chemists, Leicestershire

9. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to help the small chemists in Leicestershire.

Mr. Bowis: The Government have helped small pharmacies by extending the essential small pharmacy scheme and by protecting the income of small pharmacies during the transition to the new arrangements.

Mr. Janner: Is the Minister aware of the great concern felt by small pharmacies in Leicestershire about the fact that they may be forced to close as a result of the Government's new remuneration policy? Does he accept that it is vital for sick people to have local chemists available to them and, if so, will he please review the remuneration policy, especially with regard to the provision of the more expensive drugs?

Mr. Bowis: Well, I am surprised. I thought that the hon. and learned Gentleman was going to say thank you. He wrote to us last July on behalf of small pharmacists in Leicestershire asking us to take account of the fact that the 2,000-prescription threshold for new payments for professional services was too high. We listened, we consulted and we reduced the figure to 1,500. We also recognised the need to safeguard low-volume pharmacies. We recognised their concern about the scheme's requirement of a distance of 2 km from the nearest pharmacy. Again, we listened, we consulted and reduced the distance to 1 km. After all that, I should have thought that the hon. and learned Gentleman could say thank you twice.

Mr. Duncan: In answering the concerns of the hon. and learned Member for Leicestershire, West (Mr. Janner), will my hon. Friend confirm that a substantial proportion of the extra money going to the NHS announced last week will go to the Trent region which includes Leicestershire? If my hon. Friend has the figures, perhaps he would enlighten the House by letting us know what they are.

Mr. Bowis: I am advised that the figure is £94 million extra.

Ms Glenda Jackson: Why should small pharmacists in my constituency thank the Minister, in the light of the fact that the 1,500 threshold means that up to 13 per cent. of small pharmacies may close——

Madam Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Lady please relate her question to Leicestershire?

Ms Jackson: Does the Minister agree that the experience of small pharmacies in Leicestershire is reflected nationwide? Does he further agree that the service provided by small pharmacists, when, upon occasion, prescriptions are delivered to house-bound and elderly pensioners, is something for which they should be remunerated?

Mr. Bowis: I am glad that the hon. Lady has realised that the distance between Leicestershire and London is a little more than 1 km. Nevertheless, she will recognise that the important point is that small pharmacists are being helped by these measures. The 1,500 prescriptions a month means an income of £30,000 and there is also the income from cosmetics and toiletries. However, we acknowledge the difficulty that some people might face, particularly in rural areas, of getting to more distant pharmacies and that is why we have introduced this very welcome scheme. I hope that small pharmacists, who may have a particular geographical reason for helping their local communities, may find it easier to survive and prosper.

GP Fund Holders

10. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioners in Staffordshire have become fund holders; what was the figure in April 1991; and what analysis her Department has made of their performance in relation to patient care.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): From seven fund holders in 1991, there are now 20 fund-holding practices in Staffordshire. By next year, one third of all patients will be covered by a fund-holding practice.

Mr. Fabricant: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his very helpful answer. Is he aware that my GP, Dr. Barry Jones of the Minster practice in Lichfield, is a fund holder? My doctor tells me that, being a fund holder, he has found hospitals to be far more responsive to the benefit of patients, including myself. Precisely what additional funds will be made available to my doctor and other GPs in Staffordshire next year?

Mr. Sackville: I can give my hon. Friend some very good news. The funding for general medical services in the west midlands will increase by 7·3 per cent. That is the sort of very satisfactory outcome that one would expect from this enlightened and responsible Government.

Ms Walley: When will the Government face the facts of what is happening with our NHS? What does the Minister have to say about a constituent of mine in North Staffordshire who has had to wait more than 20 weeks for an out-patient orthopaedic clinic appointment? Will he look into rumours that I have heard, that in North Staffordshire, because of GP fund holding, we now have an orthopaedic clinic especially for the patients of fund-holding GPs? What kind of a two-tier NHS is that? When will we get back to the real basics of real care?

Mr. Sackville: Waiting times are coming down, assisted by the negotiations that fund holders are having with hospitals. It should be quite clear to the Labour party that to take decisions about the services that are offered from bureaucrats and give them to doctors is exactly what should happen. I can only conclude that the Labour party's opposition has nothing to do with patients, is political and, for that reason, is entirely disreputable.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 7 December.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Madden: May I ask the Prime Minister a question of which I have given him notice? Will he explain why only a quarter of the 4,000 refugees from the former Yugoslavia whom Britain agreed to take 12 months ago have arrived? As the British Government have always opposed military intervention to stop aggression and the means of self-defence for the people of Bosnia, does the Prime Minister agree that he and his Government have an overwhelming moral obligation to persuade the United Nations to take appropriate action to ensure that protected areas are protected, that humanitarian relief gets to the people who so desperately need it and, finally, that vulnerable people, including those who need medical aid, receive refuge and the urgent medical attention that they need?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice of the first part of his question.

I understand the genuine concern that the hon. Gentleman expresses, and I know that he has expressed it on occasions in the past. He will be aware that, just over a year ago, we agreed to take up to 1,000 humanitarian cases from the former Yugoslavia. We agreed to do that when the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross judged it to be necessary. It is not necessary at the moment to give a further undertaking because, to date, only 438 cases have been recommended to us for receipt in this country. As the hon. Gentleman will know, in addition to that commitment, we have given more than £150 million worth of assistance to the former Yugoslavia, and our service men, as at the end of last week, have now escorted more than 1,500 aid convoys delivering more than 70,000 tonnes of aid.

Mr. John Townend: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, since the Budget, the forward interest rate has dropped? Is that not an indication that the markets have confidence in the Government's ability to deliver their promises on lower inflation and large reductions in the Budget deficit?

The Prime Minister: It is certainly the case that the markets are indicating greater confidence about the future levels of inflation than we have seen for many years. Certainly, the forward market illustrates that. Inflationary pressures are very subdued at present. We intend to keep them subdued in the future.

Mr. John Smith: Can the Prime Minister explain why the first Budget resolution to be voted on tonight is designed to prevent any debate or vote on VAT on fuel? Why is the Prime Minister so desperate to avoid allowing the House of Commons to vote on that issue?

The Prime Minister: The House of Commons has voted on that issue on more than one occasion in the past. Since we seem to have provided the compensation that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) thought was necessary, I am surprised that the right hon. and learned Gentleman raises the matter.

Mr. John Smith: If the Prime Minister is confident about his so-called compensation package, why can we not debate it and vote on it in this House? Surely the reason why the motion has been tabled is to let Tory Back Benchers off the hook after they promised their constituents that they would vote against it.

The Prime Minister: We shall be interested to see whether the right hon. and learned Gentleman seeks to bring that back in the future, in view of the fact that, from the beginning, his policy has been to have some sort of energy tax and he signed up to that as recently as a few days ago. I reiterate the fact that we have provided compensation which his colleague suggested was necessary.

Mr. John Smith: The Prime Minister is not dealing with the question. Why, in the motion, is the House of Commons to be deprived of an opportunity to debate and vote on VAT? Why does not the Prime Minister have the honesty to admit that he wants to avoid an embarrassing debate and an embarrassing vote on a tax that will remain deeply unpopular with the British people and those Tory Members who vote for it?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has a faulty memory. We voted on the matter and approved it after the Budget in April. All that has changed since then is the generous compensation package, amounting, in the third year, to £1·2 billion to help 15 million people.

Mr. Luff: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the decision of the American company, Southco, to locate a major manufacturing plant in my constituency of Worcester, creating some 200 new jobs in the next few years? Is that not further proof—if proof were needed—that the Government have the right policies to attract inward investment to this country and that the Opposition have the wrong ones?

The Prime Minister: In recent years, this country has certainly received a disproportionate amount of inward investment coming into Europe and from one European country to another. That reflects this country's disinflationary tendency, the many supply-side reforms that we made to free up the market, and the fact that we are not prepared to add to employers' social costs, which would create unemployment. This is the place to invest, to be competitive and to grow, and investors around the world recognise that and are acting on it.

Q2. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 7 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Eastham: A few months ago, the Select Committee on Trade and Industry undertook an inquiry into the aerospace engineering industry. That industry is one of our biggest exporters, contributing £2·7 billion to our balance of payments. The all-party Committee recommended to the House——

Madam Speaker: Order. I really must have a question from the hon. Gentleman now.

Mr. Eastham: Will the Prime Minister look at that report, in which the Committee recommended that special aid be given to the industry over the next 10 years? That would reinforce the industrial base which the Prime Minister is always talking about.

The Prime Minister: I know the hon. Gentleman's long-standing interest in the aerospace industry. Equally, he will know that the Government have done more to assist the aerospace industry in recent years than either any party in the history of this House or other countries across Europe.

Mr. Ward: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the collapse of the GATT round would be a disaster for world trade and that it would affect in particular the EC and third-world countries? Will he do all that he can to get it back on track?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of the GATT round. There have been substantial discussions between the European Community negotiator and Mr. Kantor from the United States in the past 24 hours. They have not yet reached agreement on all the issues. Substantial progress has been made and I hope that they will soon be able to go to Geneva where any outstanding matters can then be solved. I must repeat a point that I have made to the House before: the advantages of a satisfactory agreement in the Uruguay round are profound, not just for the industrialised countries in the north but for countries in the south that need our markets open to them for their future. The consequences of a failure in the GATT round could be damaging, not just for the industrial countries but for everyone. I hope that each country that finds itself unable to agree to any minor part of that agreement will consider the implications for the whole world if the agreement is not signed.

Q3. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 7 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Prime Minister accept that thousands and thousands of second marriages in this country may simply be blown apart by the additional financial pressure caused by Christmas unless the Government act immediately on the recommendations of the Social Security Select Committee on the operation of the Child Support Agency? Will the Prime Minister take personal charge of framing the Government's response to that report—*[Interruption.]*—so that the recommendations can be taken as a whole and acted upon before the House rises for the Christmas recess? *[Interruption.]* The Prime Minister must understand that the bipartisan Opposition support that the Child Support Agency has enjoyed to date will be put at risk, or may even be withdrawn, unless he does that before Christmas.

The Prime Minister: I caught the gist of the hon. Gentleman's question, but I am afraid that, with the disruption immediately in front of him, I did not catch all of it. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security and I welcome the Committee's unequivocal support for the basic principles that underpin the Child Support Act 1991. My right hon. Friend is examining the recommendations that were made by the Select Committee, together with comments and observations made by other people recently. He will reply as soon as he has completed that examination. We will ensure that there is no unnecessary delay.

Q4. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 7 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Greenway: Has my right hon. Friend had a chance to see today's report of the new schools inspectorate which speaks of real improvements in many schools, but says that some primary schools should achieve higher standards and that joined-up writing should be taught to children before the age of eight? Is it not time for some joined-up thinking on education from the Labour party?

The Prime Minister: On the last point, my hon. Friend must not ask for too much. He certainly must not ask Opposition Members to run before they can walk. As Her Majesty's chief inspector said, the report published this morning shows that what he calls "significant dividends" are now flowing from the national curriculum and testing. The report also puts the spotlight on some continuing problems that we are determined to tackle. For example, it is unacceptable for some pupils, particularly those in inner-city schools, to be short changed by an inadequate education. I can assure the House that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education will make full use of his powers to ensure that those children receive an adequate education.

Ms Corston: Is the Prime Minister aware that the miserly 50p a week announced by the Chancellor to assist pensioners with their fuel bills means that a pensioner with gas and electricity will spend 10 weeks' money in one year just paying the VAT on the standing charge? Is not that a further fraud on the British pensioner?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady has neglected to mention that £1·2 billion extra will be available to help 15 million people meet the costs of their fuel. She also neglected to acknowledge that that extra help is built into the base of the pension and is a permanent addition upon which future increases are paid. At the end of the three-year period, a number of pensioners will find full compensation and others will be very nearly to it. That is not a miserly contribution.

Q5. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 7 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gallie: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the technical and cost-effective successes of Jetstream Prestwick in the production of turbo-prop aircraft? Is my right hon. Friend further aware of the problems it faces from a highly subsidised and competitive marketplace which is currently restricted?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is a formidable fighter for Prestwick and for Jetstream. I am aware, of course, of the tradition of success of the Jetstream turbo-prop aircraft. As my hon. Friend knows from his meeting with my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry, both the Department of Trade and Industry and the Scottish Office remain in close touch with Jetstream about the future. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: You must let the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) shout for a minute Madam Speaker—it clears all that is in his brain.

DTI officials are today meeting Jetstream to consider how to pursue its representations on unfair support to manufacturers overseas. I understand that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry will be meeting Jetstream later this month to discuss the up-to-date position.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. What is the procedure regarding a petition which is handed to an hon. Member which affects an hon. Member of another party? Yesterday, the Wyndham Hill action group from Yeovil handed me a petition that had been signed by 4,500 people regarding a Sainsbury's supermarket in Yeovil. Apparently, the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) did not take the petition. Will you assist in this matter, Madam Speaker, by calling the right hon. Gentleman to present his petition on behalf of his constituents?

Madam Speaker: As always, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) seeks to be helpful to the House.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. A few moments ago you heard the Leader of the Opposition claiming that the House was being denied the opportunity to vote on the issue of VAT on domestic fuel. I have just been to the Table Office, where it was confirmed to me that it would have been in order for the Opposition to table an amendment to the Budget resolution which is being tabled by the Government. That amendment could have specified that the issue of VAT on basic fuel should be debated.

I do not know whether that is due to incompetence on the Labour Front Bench or whether they do not want to debate the issue because of the generous compensation package. Will you confirm that it is in order, or would have been in order——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have the gist of the hon. Gentleman's point of order. It is hardly a matter which needs a point of order, and is more a matter of information. It is for the Opposition to use their opportunities and their time to take such action.

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. A report in today's *Lloyd's List* says that informal discussions have taken place with the Department of Transport regarding the setting up of an alternative shipping register. Have you heard from the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to make sure that the proposals are discussed, or whether they have any force?

Madam Speaker: Order. I have had no indication from the Secretary of State that he is seeking to make a statement on that matter.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Double Taxation

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Austria) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Indonesia) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Uzbekistan) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Saudi Arabia) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

Town and Country Planning (Scotland)

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

SCOTTISH GRAND COMMITTEE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 97(1) (Matter relating exclusively to Scotland).

Economy

That the Matter of the economy in Scotland, being a Matter relating exclusively to Scotland, be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

Orders of the Day

WAYS AND MEANS

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [30 November].

AMENDMENT OF THE LAW

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and the public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply, acquisition or importation;

(b) for refunding any amount of tax;

(c) for varying the rate of that tax otherwise than in relation to all supplies, acquisitions and importations; or

(d) for relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description.—*[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

Question again proposed.

Budget Resolutions and Economic Situation

Madam Speaker: I must inform the House that I have seen fit to limit speeches between the hours of 6 and 8 pm to 10 minutes.

It may also be convenient if I announce that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition to the motion on public expenditure which is being debated together with the Budget resolutions.

3.34 pm

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): I am sure that the whole House is grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) for pointing out that the Opposition could tonight have voted on the compensation package that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor has provided. Of course, that would have meant that they would have to surmount a hurdle that their own spokesman had placed in their way. The fact is that he had quantified the amount of compensation required as 50p a week, whereas my right hon. and learned Friend announced a substantially higher figure than that. So, once again, the Opposition would have had to end up voting against what one of their own spokesmen had said was necessary.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman would not want to be any more out of touch at this point than the rest of his speech will demonstrate. He is obviously unaware that the *Sunday People* printed a retraction on Sunday of the statement by the Opposition social security spokesman, and admitted that he never put forward such a figure. My hon. Friend's criticism stands—*[Interruption.]* The statement was not clarified; it was retracted. No such figure was ever given by my hon. Friend.

The Opposition will continue to press the Government for a compensation package that measures up to the total cost of VAT on fuel, not just half the cost.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman should press his hon. Friend not to get himself quoted in the *Sunday People* in the first place as having given a figure that he did not believe in.

The Prime Minister has already brought the House up to date on the position of the general agreement on tariffs and trade negotiations. Over the nine days that remain we shall continue to play an active part wherever possible and especially in the internal European debate. The case, in terms of world trade, growth and employment, for concluding the GATT round urgently remains as strong as ever; and I wholly endorse what the Chancellor said in his impressive speech on the Budget a few days ago.

As discussion of the Budget has proceeded it has emerged that my right hon. and learned Friend had to face two challenges: the borrowing requirement, and the incipient risk of inflationary pressures as the recovery developed.

Nothing would have been more calculated to throw away the competitive edge that we now enjoy than a failure to take the difficult decisions about the deficit—and to take them now. I remind the House of what we included in our manifesto. We said that our aims in the 1990s must be to achieve price stability and to keep firm control over public spending. We went on to say:

> "We will reduce the share of national income taken by the public sector . . . We will see the Budget return towards balance as the economy recovers."

Well, we are less than two years into this Parliament. Headline inflation, at below 2 per cent., is the best since 1959. Since October 1990, interest rate cuts have saved business nearly £12 billion a year. Productivity in the third quarter of 1993 was almost 5 per cent. higher than a year earlier. Industrial production is rising in the United Kingdom but falling in Germany, Japan, France and Italy.

Unemployment has fallen by 137,200 since January. Exports are 3·5 per cent. higher than a year earlier. We have reduced our spending plans by £10 billion compared with those of the March Budget. Public expenditure is expected to fall as a share of national income, with the Budget returning to balance in the second half of the decade.

At the next election we shall defend our management of the economy against this clearly emerging background. We shall certainly honour our manifesto policies, which claimed that we would reduce taxes as fast as we prudently could.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security revealed our willingness to face some of the most testing decisions confronting all democratic Governments. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) took longer to ask his questions than my right hon. Friend took to make his statement. It was abundantly clear to all in the Chamber that my right hon. Friend had actually answered all the hon. Gentleman's questions before they were asked, and that the Labour party had no answer to any of the questions in the first place.

It is worse and more cynical than that. The Labour party knows that there is a need to find answers to these questions. It knows that so clearly that it has set up a commission—the Commission on Social Justice. The question in the minds of the observers of that commission is whether it exists to find answers or merely to delay the need for any answers that would reveal what the Labour party would do. The Labour party knows that there is a problem. It knows, too, something of the nature of the only

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answers that exist to the problems. It knows, also, what left-wing Governments in Europe are having to do when they face up to these particular answers.

I remind the House that Holland has ended the link between social security benefits and the average wage. Spain has reduced unemployment benefit. Greece, Portugal and Spain are encouraging private pensions. As for the ultimate society in the minds of many Labour Members, the cradle-to-grave welfare state of Sweden, in facing up to the same sort of question that we in this Government have to face, it has frozen at 1992 levels the base amount used to calculate most social security benefits. The state old-age pension has been reduced by 2 per cent. The pension age for Swedish men and women is to be raised from 65 to 66 in just three years' time.

The Labour party is up to its old tricks in trying to give the impression that there are alternative answers to these difficult issues. No one does that better than the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who argues the case, as he always does, with the exaggerations for which he has become well known. His arguments are so over the top that he has become the little boy who cried "wolf" once too often. He has lost all credibility. Indeed, one could say that he has converted the science of the terminological inexactitude into a near-terminal disease for the Labour party.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): What would the President of the Board of Trade say to someone in his age group who worked for 20 or 25 years in one firm and was made redundant through no fault of his own, but finds, from 1996 onwards, that as a result of the redundancy package that one hopes he gets he will receive unemployment benefit under its new name for only six months.? Thereafter, it is likely that he will not receive any income from the state because of the sums involved in his redundancy package. Despite the examples from abroad that the right hon. Gentleman has cited, does he not recognise how unjust that is, particularly bearing in mind the national insurance contributions that that person has made over the years? That person feels cheated, and with every possible justification.

Mr. Heseltine: The key to that long intervention is the sub clause,

"because of the sums involved".

The hon. Gentleman is telling the House that the person concerned has a sufficiently large redundancy sum, paid for presumably by a scheme to which he subscribed, to make it reasonable that he should make some contribution to his personal position. One could go a great deal further than the hon. Gentleman did. Some redundancy packages are extremely generous. The sums involved enable people to provide for their circumstances. The fact is that it is reasonable and will become unavoidable in left-wing as well as right-wing societies to consider the means of the person who is receiving benefits of that sort.

The underlying strength of our economy has helped our companies to win in the international market place. We are now predicting a current account deficit of £9·5 billion for the year, compared with £17·5 billion in March. Our cost competitiveness is now some 20 per cent. better than it was prior to our withdrawal from the exchange rate mechanism and is expected to remain close to that level throughout 1994. Consequently, export volumes are growing strongly and they are forecast to grow by a further 5 per cent. in 1994.

Our non-EC export volumes rose by no less than 14 per cent. in the year to October and that figure includes some remarkable and spectacular performances in difficult markets. In 1993, our exports to China have more than doubled, those to Korea are up by nearly one third, and those to Japan are up by one fifth.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Is the President of the Board of Trade aware that one of the United Kingdom's most cost-competitive products is the Jetstream aircraft? Is he also aware that in the past week a number of hon. Members from Ayrshire met with the Minister of Industry, who is supposed to be responsible for the aerospace industry, and gave him a large number of examples of unfair competition in Brazil, France, Sweden and elsewhere where the aircraft that compete with Jetstream have been subsidised? Is the Secretary of State aware that the Minister has done nothing about that, he has not raised it with the European Union, he has not raised it through GATT, he showed no interest in raising the matter and showed little knowledge about the Jetstream operation? That is why hon. Members from Ayrshire are frustrated, as you, Madam Speaker, saw earlier.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman does his constituents no service by misrepresenting the situation. We are waiting for further details of the suggestions from Jetstream. The hon. Gentleman knows, as does the whole House, that the exports from the aerospace industry are one of our most successful sectors due in no small part to the role that the Government play across the world in helping British Aerospace and the other companies that sell in times of tough markets.

On behalf of not only British Aerospace but of all our companies, the Government are determined to help them to win in the market. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor indicated that clearly when he announced £200 million in increased cover for the Export Credits Guarantee Department in addition to the £3 billion already being provided. It is interesting to note that that increase is higher than the anticipated growth in world trade, again reflecting the United Kingdom's improved export performance. In the programme of the ECGD, we have cut premiums generally, and, specifically in the Budget, we cut them in key markets such as Mexico, India and Turkey. ECGD credits will be exempt from the proposed insurance premium tax.

Across the board, the Chancellor set out in a remarkable speech the scale and breadth of the Government's priorities. The Opposition amendment characteristically talks of cutting key public services. The Department of Health has received a real terms increase of 1·4 per cent. and the new total is a massive 64 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1979. In education, a crucial area for our future competitiveness, our plans allow for a 19 per cent. increase in the number of students in further education and sixth form colleges from 1993-94 to 1996-97.

We intend to maintain the proportion of young people in higher education at its current record level of almost one in three. The House will remember that the figure was one in eight in 1979. Spending on higher and further education is set to rise by 3 per cent. and 3·5 per cent. respectively in real terms over the period 1993-94 to 1996-97.

The Chancellor announced a new apprenticeship scheme that will enable about 40,000 young people a year to achieve NVQ3, the vocational A-level. The £40 a week allowance for childcare expenses for families on a variety of benefits will enable many more people, especially women, to take advantage of numerous training and employment opportunities that are now available. The introduction of a job seeker's allowance, the reduction in employer's national insurance contributions and the introduction of help for low-paid families needing child care will all help people who are seeking jobs.

The recent White Paper on science, engineering and technology produced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster placed great stress on wealth creation and on developing a strong partnership between industry, academia and Government. I can now make two further announcements that will build on that.

First, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I have decided to introduce a new £16 million joint environmental technology best practice programme. The five-year programme will make the best environmental technology and techniques more widely known to potential users and suppliers. Within a strong emphasis on reducing and eliminating waste and pollution at source, it will show that improved environmental performance can go hand in hand with improved industrial competitiveness.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): Can the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the money is new money and not simply an exchange for the closure of Warren Springs?

Mr. Heseltine: The closure of Warren Springs saved a considerable amount, and I am glad to have been able to save that money because it has enabled us to build a stronger organisation out of the former Warren Springs and Atomic Energy Authority. The closure has saved us needing to construct a new building and it has enabled us to dispose of the site. That is a classic example of the prudent husbandry of taxpayers' resources.

Secondly, I am glad to announce that my Department and the Science and Engineering Research Council are launching a new £10 million LINK programme on surface engineering, an important manufacturing technology which underpins virtually all industrial sectors.

The Opposition's amendment suggests that the Government have betrayed their election pledges on transport. Here again, I am afraid, the breadth of my right hon. and learned Friend's Budget has eluded the Opposition. Spending on trunk roads and motorways in England will average more than £2 billion a year over the next three financial years. For Great Britain as a whole, we plan to invest £6·7 billion. That is an increase of almost £500 million over the figure included in our manifesto.

British Rail investment will be more than £1 billion next year, which is 20 per cent. more than the 1980s average. In addition, almost £250 million will be invested by the private sector in the Heathrow Express and in preparing for the £500 million renewal of the west coast main line.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Three pence was added to the cost of a litre of petrol. Can my right hon. Friend tell us whether our right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor expected fuel companies to raise the price of petrol by 5p or more a litre? Does my right hon. Friend believe that there may be a cartel in operation? Is there not a case for investigation by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend should realise two things. First, the companies have moved the price of petrol one way or another in the light of market forces. That is a decision that must rest with them. Secondly, my hon. Friend cannot expect me, in view of my particular responsibilities, to comment on the prospect of an inquiry into those particular companies.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman comment on the fact that when I went to Lille two years ago, I saw the beginning of the construction of Euro-Lille and that when I went back a few days ago, I saw that the £5 billion investment was almost completed. This year, when I went past Ashford where it was said, two years ago, we would have an international station, I saw nothing but a couple of dump trucks.

Mr. Heseltine: I cannot answer for the hon. Gentleman's journeys, wherever they may take him. All I know, in terms that I have made clear to the House, is that British Rail investment will be more than £1 billion next year, which is 20 per cent. more than the 1980s average. That sounds like a considerable increase, which the Opposition should welcome.

The fact is that public sector capital spending is now 20 per cent. higher in real terms than the 1980s average. In addition, the privatised industries are investing more than £10 billion a year. The water industry is playing a key role with a forecast spend of £29 billion over the next 10 years. That is in marked contrast, as the House will remember, to the massive cut of 20 per cent. under the previous Labour Government.

Nothing more clearly illustrates the difference between the Government's policies and those of the Opposition. The Government have set the nationalised industries free of the dead hand of the state and given them the confidence to undertake massive investment outside public sector constraints. The moment that that happens the Opposition lose interest in what is happening to those industries. If an industry is not in the public sector, to them it is of little consequence.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, when the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) visited Lille in France, he found that unemployment was rising there, whereas here it is falling? Perhaps that fact reflects the different levels of the respective Governments' attitudes towards public expenditure.

Mr. Heseltine: It would have been too much to expect the hon. Member for Falkirk, East to have learned a lesson from what has happened under a Labour Government in France. It would have been inconvenient for him to come back here and see the problems that a Conservative Government have to sort out, just as the Conservative Government in France is having to sort out the problems as a result of what a Labour Government did there.

No Conservative Member argues that the effects of public expenditure increases or programmes are conclusive in themselves. To the Labour party, public service tends to

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equate only with spending money. To the Government, it is about providing a quality service and identifying responsibility. That is why the Prime Minister has given such attention to the new deal for British people enshrined in their rights under the citizens charter. The charter is increasingly recognised by the British public and business as a vehicle for real improvements.

The sneer on the faces of Opposition Members is fascinating. Once again, they are out of touch. If the charter mark does not matter, why on earth was the Labour-controlled Leicester city council spending its local taxes to bring its employees to London in October to receive their charter mark award from the Prime Minister? Why did Labour-controlled Ipswich enter its homes department for an award? Why on earth was the London borough of Lewisham—not exactly a card-carrying member of the Centre for Policy Studies—proudly displaying its charter mark at the office of its refuse and cleaning services? Once again, our ideas, our formulation and our determination have Labour authorities queuing up to join the club.

If there is a theme to link our agenda—in social services, education, the health service and capital investment—it is that it is an agenda for change. It is an agenda for change dominated by the political party elected in 1979. Let us be clear: there is a continuing debate about the way forward, new challenges and new opportunities. But whether one looks at this country or across the entire democratic world, the debate about the way forward for our societies is conducted within the right wing of politics. That is where the ideas of tomorrow are being found.

We hear a great deal about the problem for the Tories of 14 years in government. That is not the problem. The problem is what 14 years in opposition have done to the Labour party.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heseltine: I was about to say that we have to ask the old question about whether one would buy a second-hand motor car from such a lot. Then the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) rose to his feet and the answer came readily to mind.

Mr. Hain: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heseltine: I will now.

Mr. Hain: Does the right hon. Gentleman consider it a triumph for his presidency that his budget in three years' time will be a third of what it is this year?

Mr. Heseltine: Absolutely. My budget has been going down because we have been cutting out the losses of the subsidised nationalised industries.

I was tempted to ask the question whether one would buy a second-hand motor car from that lot. That is the wrong question. The right question is whether one would buy a brand-new motor car from the Labour party, even if it had a five-year warranty. We know the answer that the electorate always gives: not under any circumstances, especially if it had a five-year warranty.

Another sector that is critical to the health of our economy is that of small businesses.

> "Small businesses are not just important in terms of employment. A healthy and profitable small business sector will be investing, it will be exporting, it will be contributing revenue to the Exchequer. It will also be stimulating innovation and competition throughout the economy."

Mr. Heseltine: I am waiting for the interruptions, because the House will have already recognised those words of the Leader of the Opposition. *[Interruption.]* I am mildly surprised that the cheers of approval for those words came from the Conservative Benches.

The Leader of the Opposition recently said those words at a Labour conference for small businesses. The right hon. and learned Gentleman, having devoted some three years to an attempt to soften up the City of London, without any sort of success, has now decided to turn his attention to pastures new.

The conference was organised, in common with the great rally of the election, with all the flourish of the modern Labour party. All the apparatus of modern communications was brought to bear: a conference was organised, handouts were given and press releases were issued.

The Leader of the Opposition was anxious to hear from small business people anywhere; so anxious was he that people were given a telephone number to ring. If any problems were encountered in getting through on the telephone, the right hon. and learned Gentleman gave people a fax number. In this modern telecommunications world one might call that belt-and-braces socialism.

Hon. Members should picture the scene. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is slumped in his armchair at Walworth road surrounded by his shadow Cabinet, waiting for the telephone to ring. At last there is a phone call and the caller's inquiry is relayed by a secretary, who says, "There's a bloke on the phone who wants to know what we are going to do about the deficit." The Leader of the Opposition turns to the shadow Chancellor and says, "What's the answer to that, shadow Chancellor?" The hon. Gentleman says, "Tell him what I said in the House of Commons last week—we won't start from here."

The next caller wants to know what the modern Labour party really thinks of business men. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has been quoted with the answer, when he said that they are

> "stinking, lousy, thieving, incompetent scum."

I was tempted to believe that that was an exaggeration, but I read it in *The Sun* so it cannot be a lie.

Then the next caller asks what the Labour party, following its leader's extensive exposure to the City of London, now thinks about those who work there. According to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), they are champagne drinkers living

> "at the expense of many people who can ill afford it."

Nothing so reveals the gap between the Labour party's prejudices and today's reality.

In 1991, nearly 4 million private-sector pensions were being paid for from investments managed in the City. Countless citizens insure their lives, homes, pensions and health through the City. There are now more than 9 million shareholders, three times the number in 1979, who are able to trade their investments through the City. The City produces £19 billion in invisible earnings, and yet all that the Labour party can do is to dismiss Europe's largest financial market as one made up of champagne drinkers living "at the expense of many people who can ill afford it."—[*Official Report*, 2 December 1993; Vol. 233, c. 1201.]

There are some facts about small businesses on which we can all agree.

Mr. Connarty: The right hon. Gentleman will recall that when he came to my constituency in December last year I wrote to ask him to meet small business men who had suffered badly from the collapse of Lilley and he refused to meet them. Those business men turned up to talk to him at the Inchyra Grange hotel at Grangemouth about the £200,000 loss that they had suffered. Why have the Government done nothing about bankruptcies and the fact that sub-contracting small businesses lose out every time when a large firm goes to the wall? I wrote to the hon. Gentleman to ask why the Government did nothing to protect people so vital to our economy.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman should welcome the fact that there are nearly 1 million more small businesses today than there were in 1979. There has been a tremendous explosion in small businesses, as the House knows. There are now some 2·7 million small firms, 96 per cent. of which employ fewer than 20 people. For those firms, the Budget contained an excellent package of measures.

The enterprise investment scheme will allow eligible investors to take an active interest in the firms in which they invest, and to be paid for their time. The prospect of venture capital trusts and the extension of capital gains tax roll-over relief for gains invested in unquoted companies will help the search for equity.

The relaxation of audit requirements will help to lift the administrative burden. The agreement to look at the recommendations of the pay-as-you-earn and national insurance working party promises to help reduce further the administrative complexities that bedevil smaller businesses.

The increase in the threshold of VAT to £45,000 will enable about 75,000 more traders to choose whether they register for VAT. Smaller employers will be entitled to full reimbursement of statutory sick pay after four weeks instead of the current six. Thresholds will be raised to allow even more smaller employers to benefit. They will also benefit from the reductions announced in employers' national insurance contributions.

The threshold for smaller companies' rates of corporation tax will be raised by 20 per cent. to £300,000 a year. Eighy five of the 118 winners of this year's Queen's award for exports were smaller firms. The changes to export credit guarantees will help small as well as larger exporters. The business rate poundage will rise next year by only 1·8 per cent. thanks to our success in the battle against inflation.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my right hon. Friend accept that Conservative Members very much approve of everything that is being done for small businesses? But will he also give as much encouragement, and ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to help as well, to improvements in research and development, because it is by new technologies that we will be able to compete effectively in the global markets and ensure that we manage to improve the balance of payments, which has come as a result of the recovery since, as my right hon. Friend has said, we left the exchange rate mechanism?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend will be well aware of the recent White Paper of our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in which he made clear the Government's view that the £6 billion public sector research and development programme had to have a considerable pressure to look after the interests of the wealth-creating community. That is something that I very much welcome.

All the changes that I have listed come on top of the increase announced in the March Budget to the loan guarantee scheme. The number of loans guaranteed was about 40 per cent. higher in the first six months of 1993 than was forecast before the changes were announced, and the value in lending in that period, at £55 million, was higher than for the whole of 1992-93.

I can tell the House today that I have decided to increase my Department's budget for smaller businesses by £8 million. The House is familiar with our plans to bring together training and enterprise councils, chambers of commerce, local authorities, enterprise agencies, central Government Departments and private sector organisations in the business link organisation.

To enable the TECs to continue to play a key strategic role in organising the provision of business support services, I am pleased to announce that I have increased their budgets to nearly £33 million. The first business links have opened in Birmingham, Leicester and Congleton. My aim is a national network within two to three years. I am increasing start-up funding by £14 million.

I intend to trial a new consultancy brokerage service from January for introduction nationwide early in 1995. That will open up to public access the considerable wealth of data and project management experience that has been accumulated on United Kingdom business consultants for the enterprise initiative consultancy scheme.

Increased funding will ensure that consultancy support for small and medium-sized firms will continue beyond the life of the present consultancy scheme in the form of a flexible consultancy and diagnostic service. I shall be publishing a prospectus and guidelines for the service in January.

My Department will provide extra funding to business links to support the appointment of innovation and technology counsellors who will work with firms and help them to identify local, national and international sources of technical help. We also intend to restructure the design services that we provide to industry to bring them closer to companies. That package of new services will further enhance the business link movement, providing businesses with high-quality support tailored to their individual requirements.

The House will know of the warm welcome for the Chancellor's announcement that my Department is producing a consultative document setting out options to address the problem of late payment—including legislation and a national standard.

We have heard the views of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who has told us that this is not a Budget for business, not a Budget for industry and not a Budget for employment. A month ago the Labour party held a conference on

> "Helping Small Businesses to Succeed".

The conference was further entitled "Into the Growth Corridor". Labour invited three organisations to set out their views—the CBI, the Forum of Private Business and the Federation of Small Businesses.

[Mr. Heseltine]

Having heard the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East give his view on the relevance of the Budget for industry, it seemed to me that it would not be unreasonable to examine those self-same organisations' views on the Budget. After all, if they were good enough in the eyes of the Labour party to advise it on its entire strategy for small businesses, they ought to be able to form a reasonable judgment about a Budget. The CBI had this to say:

> "The Budget should provide a sound basis for continued non-inflationary recovery".

The Federation of Small Businesses said:

> "We could not have expected more".

The Forum of Small Businesses said:

> "This Budget is a great encouragement to us all".

It is, indeed, a great encouragement to us all. So far from entering the "growth corridor", the Labour party is once again in the slow lane, overtaken by events and overwhelmed by the arguments.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East set out his alternative approach in the *Daily Mirror:*

> "I'd scrap VAT on fuel, go for jobs, stop tax cheats and invest to rebuild Britain."

That, he claims, is his economic strategy. I think that my right hon. and hon. Friends will prefer the words of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn):

> "I do not think that members of Labour's Front Bench would have even two ideas about what to do with the economy if they came to power . . . a series of soundbites glued together and called an economic policy is not an economic policy."—[*Official Report*, 20 May 1993; Vol. 225, c. 420.]

I never thought to hear myself say it, but the right hon. Member for Chesterfield was right. He is welcome in our Lobby tonight.

I commend the Budget to the House.

4.12 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): Before turning to the Budget, let me echo the earlier satement of the President of the Board of Trade in relation to the importance of GATT. I entirely endorse the right hon. Gentleman's argument about the importance of ensuring that, over the next seven days, everything possible is done to meet the deadline. There should be no illusion that on this occasion a fresh deadline can be set. GATT is an issue of importance not only to Europe and to America but to the third world which requires access to their markets. If there is something offensive about the spectacle of the past 48 days, it is 100 nations gathered in Geneva while the two big blocs slog it out in Brussels without the participation of the third world. I very much hope that, if the United States chooses to make a sticking point of airbus, there will be no concessions from Europe that will put in jeopardy any part of the production of that project or detract from its importance.

The President of the Board of Trade has just opened the last day of the Budget debate. I must say that I preferred to today's reading of the brief the rather more lively speech that he made in our debate a fortnight ago, when he gave us one of his diverting impressions of a conference speech —half Winter Gardens, half old-time music hall; nothing at all to do with the running of Government. The high point of that act—because "act" is a more appropriate word than "speech"—was the tearing up of a socialist manifesto. I had hoped for a sequel today. He has disappointed me. After Tuesday's Budget, I should have thought the most appropriate highlight to conclude the Budget debate would have been tearing up the Conservative manifesto, but the Chancellor did that last Tuesday.

I heard the Chancellor being interviewed on Sunday. He was asked whether, by the end of the Parliament, income tax and other taxes would have gone up or down. He replied,

> "I do not have a clue".

I congratulate the Chancellor on his candour and express my appreciation that he has served so long at the Treasury without allowing his forecast to be affected in any way by Treasury jargon. However, that is not what members of his party said at the last election when they were asked about tax.

When the Prime Minister was asked whether national insurance would go up he did not say,

> "I do not have a clue."

He did not say what the President of the Board of Trade has just said—that they would reduce taxes as rapidly as was prudent to do so. He said,

> "I have no plans to raise the level of national insurance".

When he was asked whether he would extend the scope of VAT, he did not say,

> "I do not have a clue."

He said,

> "We have no plans and no need to extend the scope of VAT.".

When, only a few days before polling day, he was asked whether public spending would go down if they were elected, he did not say,

> "I do not have a clue. Ask me after polling day."

He said,

> "You can rule out any prospect of that.".

I find it strange that the Minister at the Department of Trade and Industry responsible for deregulation should have complained that sales of Tipp-Ex have been constrained by some local authorities cataloguing it as a dangerous fluid. Smith square must be ankle deep in Tipp-Ex by now, as the Conservatives blank out the promises that they made before the last election. The Red Book tries another tactic to blank out the DTI Budget; it is not so much Tipp-Ex as heavy overprint.

At first glance, I was much impressed by the President's skills as a negotiator with his colleagues at the Treasury. The Budget of his Department over the previous Red Book shot up by £1 billion. Then I noticed footnote 4. Under the present Government, I have learnt that it always pays to read the footnotes. Footnote 4 tells me that the figures for his Department now include the nuclear levy collected by the electricity companies and paid direct to Nuclear Electric without passing through his bank account. Strip away that nuclear levy and we strip away the entire £1 billion increase.

In real terms, the spending on industry of the Department of Trade and Industry will not increase, but will fall over the next three years by 12 per cent. in real terms. I have to say frankly and generously to the President that I have not had time to adjust the calculations for the extra £16 million over five years that he has just announced for energy conservation, but they will not materially alter the figures that I have just given the House. That does not include the total elimination of support for public sector industries for which the President is the nominal sponsor, such as the Post Office. The Red Book sets a new profit target for the Post Office for 1994-95. That profit target is now three times larger than when it was first announced in 1991. Let us not pretend that the new profit target set by the

Chancellor last Tuesday—it was not mentioned in the Budget speech, but it is in the Red Book—is the result of careful research on the business plan of the Post Office.

We rang up the Post Office on the day of the Budget when we saw the Red Book and asked about the increase in the profit target. At the other end of the line there was a silence followed by the reply, "I have a brief on the impact of the Budget on the Post Office, but it says nothing about an increase in the profit targets. I shall have to get back to you." It was Thursday before they got back to us. There can be only one conclusion: nobody at the Post Office knew about the increase until Tuesday's Budget. That increase reflects not the ability of the Post Office to pay an increased profit, but the need of the Chancellor for the extra cash from that industry. In considering the Budget let us leave aside that increased profit from the Post Office. We might as well leave it aside, because, obviously, the President has agreed to the demand for an increase in the profit level; without an agreement he would not get a penny.

If we compare the President's budget with that of the other Departments on the same page in the Red Book, we find that next year, out of 18 Whitehall Departments, the Department of Trade and Industry will come in at 17th in the spending league. It is saved from bottom place in the Government's spending priorities only by the Department of National Heritage. Given the Government's propensity to close factories and to reopen them as museums of industrial archaeology, not even that placing may be safe.

There is a simple way to demonstrate the Government's relative priorities for industry. Fifteen years ago, for every £1 spent by the Government backing industry, 43p was spent supporting farmers. Next year, for every £1 spent backing industry, £2 will be spent to support farmers. That is a candid statement of the relative priorities of the Conservative party.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman totally ignores the very large increases in export credit guarantees. He totally ignores the fact that British Steel is now profitable in the private sector while it was loss making in the public sector.

Mr. Cook: I do not ignore the point about that industry in the private sector. The figures that I am quoting are about departmental ministerial spend and not about public corporations. Nor do I ignore the Export Credits Guarantee Department changes. If the President cares to consult the Red Book, he will discover that even after the changes in the ECGD, the Red Book sets a higher profit level for the whole of the ECGD. Even in the Budget, the Government propose to make more profit from export credit while Governments in the rest of Europe use export credit to support exports rather than to support their own finances.

The President has helpfully brought us to the point that the real competition is not with other Whitehall Departments, but with other countries in Europe. In that respect, the President finds himself at the bottom of the league again. The President provides less support per head to industry than any other European country. Italy provides three times as much while France and Holland provide twice as much. Germany and Spain provide half as much again.

Why do we provide the weakest support for industry? Is it because we have the strongest industry? Why is it that every one of the countries that I have mentioned runs a surplus in manufactured trade with us? Every one of them has seen a large increase in manufacturing output during the lifetime of this Government. Every one of them has seen bigger growth in manufacturing investment over the same period.

We have the weakest industrial base, but it receives less help from our Government. If it is not going to receive any help from the President, what help will it receive from the Chancellor? What industry wanted from the Chancellor was help with investment. That was the single major preoccupation of the submissions made by industry to the Chancellor before his Budget. Those submissions were made by the Confederation of British Industry, the Engineering Employers Federation and the Machine Tool Technologies Association. They all urged the Chancellor to extend capital allowances to encourage investment. They all got the problem right.

The real reason why we should worry about the future of our industry is that we are not investing in that future. If we compare investment in Britain with the other advanced nations of the world, Britain comes in sixth out of the seven members of G7 and 23rd out of the 24 members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. We can forget Japan where investment is double our level. On the latest figures, Britain is investing less than Turkey, Portugal and Ireland.

The Conservatives used to boast about an economic miracle. They are a little more coy about referring to it now. The illusion of that economic miracle was always very simple. Over the Conservatives' period in office, they have increased the proportion of the economy going into consumption by 5 per cent., mainly at the expense of investment which, over the same period, has decreased by 3 per cent. The objective of any economic strategy for Britain to recover must be to reverse the trend that the Conservatives have encouraged of people consuming now rather than investing for the future. That must be the test of a Budget.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): In the light of what the hon. Gentleman has said, does he agree with the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), who said last Wednesday that he was proud of the economic achievements of the last Labour Government?

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman merely underlines my point. Manufacturing investment under the previous Labour Government was 10 per cent. higher in absolute terms and it was actually 50 per cent. higher than the proportion of GDP, and that in circumstances of great economic difficulty. If the Government had maintained the level of investment in manufacturing under the previous Labour Government, manufacturing capacity would now be 30 per cent. greater. That is the point that the hon. Gentleman can find as the best intervention to make in defence of the Government.

Mr. Richards: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No. The hon. Gentleman has had his chance.

On that test, reinforced by the hon. Gentleman's intervention, the Government get nil points for their Budget. There is nothing in the Budget to help industry to invest. Industry did not receive capital allowances to support spending investment. Instead it received a £700 million bill for sick pay. That is how the Budget went about helping industry.

[Mr. Cook]

Not only do the Government offer no help to industry to invest; they do not even lead by example. How can they expect industry to take a long-term view and invest in the future when they see the Government taking the short-term view and cutting public investment in the short term? I know—the President of the Board of Trade reminded us—that the Chancellor announced some projects that will go ahead with private finance. We know them well—we have heard their go-ahead announced in every Budget over the past five years. The extension of the docklands light railway was first announced in 1989. I have no doubt that we will hear it announced again next year, when Tory Back-Bench Members will cheer. But the cheering on Tuesday masked the fact that, in the meantime, the investment programmes for which the Government are directly responsible were being cut.

Spending on housing investment is down £500 million as a result of the Budget. As a public spending decision, it is spectacularly inept. We must consider its context. It is a cut in the context of a record number of construction workers who are unemployed. My apologies, Madam Deputy Speaker, it just slipped out—a record number of construction workers who are job-seeking, and a record number of homeless families, no doubt shortly to be given a respray by the copywriters and be renamed "home seekers".

On top of that, the Chancellor himself, in the very speech in which he goes ahead and cuts his construction contracts, tells us that construction prices have fallen by a quarter. In this context, one does not have to be a Keynesian to recognise that this is the time to boost recovery by putting people back into jobs building the homes that people need; one just needs to be mean. All that one needs to do is recognise that a housing programme at present would be at a bargain-basement price. Surely, whatever other failings the Government have, they are mean enough to see that that makes common sense when construction prices are cheap.

It is not as though Government investment is running out of control. General Government investment has never been lower as a percentage of GDP. It is half the level it was when the Government came to office and it is a third of the level of the peak in the mid-1970s. For a decade and a half Britain has been saddled with a Government who have neglected the public assets of Britain. That is why tens of thousands of commuters had to get out of their tube trains last week and stumble along the tunnel, because of a fault in cabling that is so old that it should be in an industrial museum. That is why at the weekend we had the national humiliation of learning that modern and sophisticated French locomotives cannot run comfortably on British railways because the track has not been modernised for 70 years. Yet the Government cut the transport budget because they want to cut the deficit.

The Chancellor and his colleagues are right to be preoccupied by the deficit. The Government have the best possible reason to be preoccupied by the deficit—the best possible reason being that they created the deficit. That is an impressive achievement: the biggest Government deficit in history. It is bigger than it was when the previous Labour Government had to call in the IMF and bigger even than in 1941, when half the GDP was being channelled through the Government's war effort. That is the Government's achievement.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): As the hon. Gentleman is the first Opposition Front-Bench spokesman to mention the deficit during this Budget debate, I have tried to keep a running total of the spending claims that he has made in the past 10 minutes. How many billion pounds would he propose to add to the spending plans that I announced in the Budget?

Mr. Cook: I should be interested to hear the Chancellor's estimate of my spending commitments because I am not aware that I have made a spending commitment in the past 20 minutes—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. and learned Gentleman cannot evade the fact that he has cut the housing budget by pretending that it is opposed by a Labour commitment to increase spending. Why, when he could be getting those houses cheaper and putting people into houses, is he not prepared to put people back into work?

Mr. Richards: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No. Let me finish responding to the Chancellor first, because the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary deserve some attention being paid to the deficit, now that they have commenced this exchange.

The Government achieved the deficit. Indeed, we have it from the fascinating, interesting information of Mr. Bill Robinson, adviser to the Chancellor's predecessor, where the deficit came from. He sets out entertainingly in a pamphlet how the deficit mushroomed under the Government's policies: £22 billion from the extra costs of unemployment as a result of their economic strategy; £20 billion as a result of the tax cuts of 1988, which they now find that they cannot afford; and £4 billion as a result of the introduction of the poll tax, which has left us with a permanently lower level of income from taxation.

The Government must explain how they have managed the nation's finances and policies so incompetently that they have given Britain a record deficit. Last week, they announced that they wanted to introduce an objective test of capacity to work. With such a record, they should be thankful that they are not subject to an objective test for capacity to work; otherwise, their Benches would be empty.

Mr. Cash: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, however much some Conservative Members have criticised the Government for their economic policies on the exchange rate mechanism, we utterly condemn the manner in which he and all Opposition Members supported those policies and the move towards economic and monetary union? Should not he, too, accept some of the blame?

Mr. Cook: The Opposition are sufficiently grateful for the hon. Gentleman's interventions over the past year to allow him that attempt to work his passage back to the Front Bench.

Having given us the worst deficit on record in the past half a century, the Treasury's stroke of genius now is to propose the record reduction in demand in the past half a century: £8·5 billion taken out in tax; and £3·5 billion taken out in reduced spending. That is a total annual deflation of £12 billion, and more the year after.

The theory—or what passes for an economic theory on the part of the Government—is that the animal spirits of the business men will be so released when they are freed from the oppressive weight of public spending that they will bound forward eagerly and expand the output of spin dryers, video recorders and CD players to fill up the hole that the Chancellor has blown in the economy.

However, one awkward fact does not fit that theory: who will buy all that extra output? It will not be those who work in the public sector, because they will receive no net increase in their purchasing power for three years. A fifth of the total work force who, for the rest of the Parliament, will not have an extra pound to add to demand in the economy, will not buy many spin dryers, video recorders or CD players. Nor will they be bought by people surviving on invalidity benefit. Having listened to Ministers in the past seven days, I have noticed a curious mental block in their speeches when they discuss invalidity benefit. For the past seven days, they have described cuts in invalidity benefit as cuts in Government spending. The end effect on the economy of the impact of a cut in invalidity benefit is not a cut in Government spending but a cut in the private spending of people who must subsist on invalidity benefit. They never did buy many CD players, but now they will be unable to replace the washing machine or renew the kettle if it has a dangerous flex.

Taxpayers will not block up the hole in that purchasing power. I must warn Conservative Back Benchers that something has gone terribly wrong with their Government. Opposition Members are accustomed to seeing the people whom we represent being clobbered to give tax handouts to the very rich. What distinguishes this Budget from others is that the people whom Conservative Members represent have been clobbered just as much this time. For once, the married, mortgaged, motoring middle classes must face the biggest burden of this century's biggest tax bill. From next April they will need every penny they have to spare to pay the equivalent of 5p on the standard rate of income tax. Their problem is that there will not be enough pennies to go round. They will face a reduction in their net disposable income. Yet the Red Book predicts an increase in consumer expenditure of 2¼ per cent.

That is the economics of Paul Daniels. It beggars belief that a nation that has seen its income cut will respond by increasing its spending. After all, it need only look at the Government. The Government have just said that nothing is more important than eliminating the Government deficit and then they have the nerve to expect everybody else to expand their private deficit in order to keep the economy afloat. If they do not do that, where will British industry sell all that extra output?

When the Chancellor was telling the Cabinet about the Budget arithmetic last Tuesday, did the President tell the Chancellor that if he went to any meeting of industrialists he would find that their main complaint about managing a company in Britain is that demand goes up and down far faster and farther than any manufacturing process can adjust to cope with it? Did he remind the Chancellor that the Confederation of British Industry industrial trends survey revealed that for three years uncertainty over demand has been the chief constraint on investment? Did he even ask the Chancellor whether engineering the biggest drop in demand for half a century was a smart move?

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): Will the hon. Gentleman accept that over the past year there have been large reductions in interest rates and, consequently, large reductions in mortgage repayments? Will he accept that, therefore, a large section of the community have had large increases in their disposable income because the monthly outgoing on their mortgage has dropped dramatically?

Mr. Cook: I shall give the hon. Gentleman three figures to take away and think about. The Red Book predicts that inflation next year will be about 3½ per cent. It also predicts that the increase in earnings will be 4 per cent. The hon. Gentleman will see that there is less than 1 per cent. of disposable income left between income increases and inflation increases. If he looks at the Government's proposals for tax increases, he will see that from next April the people in middle-income groups who vote for him face an increased tax bill of 3 to 4 per cent. of their income. They face a serious drop in disposable income.

The hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) has anticipated a point that I was coming to. I am hardly surprised that many commentators, peering down the hole that the Chancellor has just quarried in the economy, have concluded that there is another cut in interest rates coming. There had better be another cut in interest rates to boost demand. If the Chancellor cannot produce one, when the tax increases bite next April, there will be a serious danger of the economy tumbling down a black hole.

Mr. Heseltine: I am listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman. It is apparent that he has taken no account of the point behind the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington that there have been substantial reductions in the costs of interest to ordinary home owners, which, of course, have an effect on the availability of their real disposable income. In industrial terms alone, interest rate cuts have reduced industrial costs by £12 billion in a year. Patently, none of that has had any effect on the mind of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Cook: I am astonished that the President should refer to the benefits to the housing market in this week, which began only yesterday with a declaration in a new survey by building societies that the number of home owners stuck in the negative equity trap has increased by one fifth. If the President seriously imagines that those extra people caught in negative equity will rush out and increase their spending to make good the loss of demand, he is not living in the real world.

I do not have the slightest doubt that, if we fail to obtain interest rate cuts and we find the economy tumbling down that black hole in April, we will hear the Chief Secretary congratulating the Government on having had the courage to take the painful decision to jump into that hole. The Government have shown courage and I remind my hon. Friends of the courage that they have shown.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Gentleman has set out the first economic policy that we have heard from the Opposition Front Bench. Plainly, he is in favour of increasing public spending. Plainly, he would make no increases in taxation. Plainly, he would agree with the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) that big reductions should be made in interest rates to boost demand.

If the hon. Gentleman held my position, what would he say to the gentleman from the International Monetary Fund

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

when he turned up and berated the hon. Gentleman for following the type of economic policies which used to get Latin American banana republics into trouble?

Mr. Cook: The Chancellor presides over a bigger Government deficit than there was when the IMF came in under Labour. [HON. MEMBERS: "That is not true."] It is true. The Government's financial deficit as a proportion of GDP is bigger than it was in 1975. Members of the Treasury team cannot distinguish between the Government's financial deficit and the public sector borrowing requirement. The financial deficit as a proportion of GDP is higher than it was in 1975. If hon. Gentlemen have not grasped that elementary distinction, they should go back to the Treasury and learn more of the job.

I will now speak about the courage that the Government have shown.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I am not giving way again—I have given way repeatedly.

The Government have shown courage to take the painful decision to take on the unemployed, who will be now given only half the time to seek a job before they lose benefit. That is at a time when in towns which are represented by Opposition Members there are 25, 30 or 40 people seeking a job for every vacancy.

We all know of constituents who have applied over 100 times for a job. No Opposition Member would not have welcomed a Budget that gave those people hope of a job in place of benefit. None of us will not greet with anger a Budget that cuts their benefit without offering that job.

The Government have shown courage to take on people who are on low wages. Some 180,000 will enter into taxation for the first time because the Government have failed to increase the tax threshold. By definition, people on the lowest incomes—incomes of £100 a week—will now be carried over the tax threshold because the Government would rather tax them than have the courage to impose higher taxes on the well-off.

Mr. Riddick *rose*——

Mr. Cook: The Government have also had the courage to take on the hospital porter and the school janitor.

Mr. Riddick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Is the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) inclined to give way or not?

Mr. Cook: I have given way a number of times, and I have made it clear that I am moving to the conclusion of my speech.

Madam Deputy Speaker: In that case, the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) must remain quiet.

Mr. Riddick: The hon. Gentleman is afraid of me.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman's suggestion that I am afraid of him makes almost credible the statements which we have heard from the Chancellor during the debate.

The Government have shown the courage to take on the hospital porter and the school janitor, whose pay will be frozen for three years. Of course, they tell us that the pay of some people in the public sector will go up. They say that not everyone will have their pay frozen, and that it is just the overall total which has been frozen.

The problem is that we all know who will find a way round the freeze. People such as the chief executives of trust hospitals have seen their pay rise by 9 per cent. The problem with a pay freeze is that the powerful and the well paid will most likely get round it, while the powerless and the poor run up against it. That is the courage that the Chancellor showed on Tuesday.

However, if one group of people last week showed more courage than the Chancellor, it was the Government Back Benchers who had the courage to cheer the right hon. and learned Gentleman's speech. When the right hon. and learned Gentleman produced a fall in the disposable income next year, they cheered it. When he produced a public spending plan which would leave their local authorities with less to spend for every pupil at school, they cheered it. When he produced a tax bill which will take £10 a week from each of their constituents who are on an average income, they cheered it.

When the right hon. and learned Gentleman graded the tax bill so that from next April anyone on a Member of Parliament's pay will lose over £70 a month, Conservative Members still cheered it. I warn them that their constituents will not cheer next April when the bills fail to be paid. They will want to know why their Member of Parliament cheered. Their constituents may remember that that was not what was promised at the general election, and they may not forget that at the next election. They may decide to borrow one of the stirring phrases used by the Chancellor, and say that "the time has come" to sort out the Conservative Government once and for all, and to do it by throwing out the Tory party which they can never trust again.

4.46 pm

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): The Budget must be regarded as one of the most difficult in recent years. The Chancellor was beset by suggestions and requests for more expenditure, lower taxes and to correct the deficit—none of which was reconcilable.

However, the Budget produced by my right hon. and learned Friend has much to commend it to my constituents in Dover. Undoubtedly the most significant feature of the Budget was the relief for pensioners and others in relation to VAT on fuel. To help some 15 million people was beyond the wildest dreams of any hon. Member. No one went on radio or television, and no one suggested in the House that 15 million people would be helped by proposals which amount to £1,200 million. The most that anyone suggested was around £500 million to £700 million.

That generosity caught out the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) who suggested that 50p a week would do the business and would help pensioners. [HON. MEMBERS: "No, he did not."] Oh yes he did. Even Mr. Nelson's retraction, or half-retraction, in *The People* last Sunday admitted that the hon. Gentleman said that 50p a week would do the business. The hon. Gentleman was caught by a question that suggested that the figure of 50p a week came from a leak. In fact, the whole basis of Mr. Nelson's article is incorrect.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): Has the hon. Gentleman read the article?

Mr. Shaw: I have read it, and it is quite clear that Mr. Nelson's article is based on an incorrect leak—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There are too many seated interventions.

Mr. Shaw: The article was based on an incorrect leak which suggested that 50p a week was the Government's proposal, when 50p a week went only to one group. Other groups are receiving 70p a week, and even more in some cases. In total, the help amounts to over £1 for all groups eventually.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shaw: I am afraid that I am a bit short of time, and other hon. Members want to speak.

Mr. Nelson tried to help the hon. Member for Garscadden, but sadly the hon. Gentleman is stuck with an article in *The People* which has him clearly listed as supporting 50p a week. The Government have taken that to task.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I am glad that I have come in at this point. I will make it clear to the hon. Gentleman that at no time did I suggest that 50p was acceptable compensation for the VAT package. Mr. Nelson, while running past me a number of possibilities, suggested that 50p might be put on in the Budget. He has agreed with me that at no time did I suggest that that was adequate or acceptable.

The hon. Gentleman may not want to believe me, and he may not want to believe the rather robust words of Mr. Nelson in the cutting that the hon. Gentleman has. I would suggest to him that that merely reflects on the hon. Gentleman's integrity if that is his position.

Mr. Shaw: I respect the attempt of the hon. Gentleman, but nowhere do I find a suggestion that a range of alternatives was discussed or that the hon. Gentleman came up with a figure other than 50p. The hon. Gentleman stuck to 50p, and not even Mr. Nelson suggested last week that the hon. Gentleman talked of 70p or £1. Only the figure of 50p is admitted.

Mr. Dewar: I will try to stay within parliamentary order. The hon. Gentleman is being disingenuous. The article makes clear that at no time did I suggest that 50p would be acceptable. We know that the Chancellor was told that by Mr. Nelson, and the hon. Gentleman has my word for it that no such suggestion was made. If the hon. Gentleman refuses to accept that, he is making some unpleasant assumptions about my honesty which I resent greatly.

Mr. Shaw: The article by Mr. Nelson which sought to correct or amplify the previous week's article did not in any place suggest that the hon. Gentleman suggested that 70p a week should go on. Nowhere does the document suggest that the hon. Gentleman advanced a figure higher than 50p a week. That confirms that the hon. Gentleman proposed a figure of 50p a week——

Mr. Connarty: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shaw: No, I must move on because others want to speak. I have already given way twice to a Front-Bench spokesman, and Back Benchers cannot give way more than that. The fact is that the article clearly mentions only one figure: 50p a week.

The Government have come through the recession and have restored economic growth. Our expenditure on welfare has come through intact as well. We have maintained social security expenditure—many would argue almost too generously, because it is alleged that some benefits go to those who are abusing the system. We have maintained health and education expenditure. Those are major achievements which are not mirrored in other countries.

More importantly, to help the long-term unemployed we have introduced a job seeker's allowance to assist people back into work. We have produced proposals for child care to help lower-paid families get into work. We have also produced a number of small business measures which, I hope, will result in more job creation as economic growth returns.

The Chancellor has also avoided a rate increase in income tax—again, a major achievement at a difficult time. The structure of the income tax system ensures that there is still a strong incentive to work under it.

Capital gains tax has been tightened up in a number of ways, but I am saddened by the fact that this opportunity was not taken to look again at its rate with a view to reducing it. Many of us believe that the 40 per cent. rate acts as a disincentive to risk investment. I believe that when the economy has recovered to the extent it is likely to under this Government, future Budgets should reduce capital gains tax rates further. That will help more risk investment and risk taking in the economy.

I am pleased that the Budget anticipates that public expenditure will fall from 45 per cent. of GDP to 42·5 per cent. in the years ahead. That is possible only because economic growth has returned to a considerable degree, and all the tough policies carried out by this Government in recent years are beginning to pay off. We are beginning to earn the dividend due to those who husband their resources carefully through difficult periods—and we have certainly gone through a difficult time, not just because of our recession but because of a serious and deep worldwide recession.

Let us nail the myth of cuts in public expenditure. Our opponents love to make great play of alleged cuts; the reality is quite different. In cash terms, public expenditure is increasing, and even in real terms many Departments will enjoy an increase next year. That is a tribute to the way in which the Government have managed the economy, and it is not mirrored in other countries.

An area of public expenditure that has been increasing in recent years is public sector pay. The public sector payroll now costs about £85 billion a year. This enormous amount has gone on increasing relentlessly because the terms and conditions of service of our public sector employees are among the best in the country. They have good pensions, good hours of work, and consequently public sector costs have been vast and rapidly increasing.

[Mr. Shaw]

Average pay in the public sector, at £321 a week, is higher than average pay in the private sector, at £316 a week. This situation contradicts most people's impressions, and we cannot go on with it. We often read about company directors allegedly receiving large pay increases, but even taking them into account public sector pay is higher than private sector pay.

We need restraint in the next few years, which is why it is only right to support the Government's policy of restraining the total public sector pay bill so that it exhibits no real growth.

The social security uprating will mean that by the end of the century our social security expenditure will be close to, or at, £100 billion a year. That is an enormous bill: about one third of all public expenditure. This uprating has been one of the best ever for pensioners and others, but it could not be afforded if we did not tighten up on certain benefits and on fraud and abuse. It is only right that unemployment benefit should be replaced by a job seeker's allowance. It is only right, too, to make the new unemployment benefit more focused and more liable to encourage people back into work.

It is also right that invalidity benefit—everyone accepts that it is misused by small or possibly larger numbers of people—should be replaced by a much more tightly focused benefit. I have been told about a man working on a building site in Spain who claims invalidity benefit in this country, for instance. Hence, the current system must be improved so that we can stop similar examples recurring in future.

I commend the adoption of resource-based accounting for expenditure. All too often Members of Parliament complain that school buildings or health service buildings are not being properly maintained. That is because Governments of all political persuasions have failed to make proper provision in the accounts for depreciation and for the replacement of these assets. I am pleased that the Government have finally grasped the nettle and adopted a proper accounting system. As a chartered accountant, I find it all the more remarkable that it is a lawyer in the Treasury who has at long last adopted this system.

I have been saddened not to hear any serious policies advanced by the Opposition during the Budget debate. Indeed, the Labour party seems short on ideas of a serious nature. We have heard plenty of ideas for new taxes, but none that would raise a sensible amount of money—[HON. MEMBERS: "Nonsense."] To be sure, the Labour party has come out with lots of ideas in recent weeks, proposing numerous taxes in various documents—a transport tax, a green fuel tax, and so on. There was also a travel tax involving aircraft.

I heard the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) interviewed on the "Today" programme the other day, when he came up with three ideas for raising more revenue. Even the BBC, without necessarily having the Treasury figures to hand, was able to put it to the hon. Gentleman that those three ideas would raise no more than £1 billion, and probably no more than a few hundred million pounds. Suddenly, the hon. Gentleman was lost for a sound bite.

The fact is that Labour has not come up with any proposals for dealing with a £50 billion deficit. We have, and the Red Book shows how to get rid of the deficit by the end of the decade.

In conclusion, there is much in the Budget to commend it to my constituents. It will benefit not only my constituents in Dover and Deal, but the whole country and it will help us move successfully towards the new millennium.

4.59 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) repeated the story about my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). My hon. Friend has explained the matter several times during these debates, and his explanation has been believed by hon. Members. It is a reflection on the hon. Gentleman that he did not follow them, rather than anything else.

The President of the Board of Trade spoke about new legislation to deal with late payments. We look forward to that with great interest, as this is a serious matter for many small and large businesses. However, when I think of late payments, I am reminded that the Public Accounts Committee took the Property Services Agency to task, not because the PSA was not paying promptly, but because it was not paying at all until it was paid itself, even if that meant a delay of 90 or 120 days, or even longer. That was outside Treasury rules for payment. I hope that the Treasury will ensure that Departments at least retain their respect for legislation when it is introduced, and that they will conform with Acts of Parliament.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said in his Budget statement:

> "This Government will never take part in any attempt to dismantle the welfare state."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1993; Vol. 233, c. 927.]

It all depends on what is meant by "the welfare state". Some provisions go back to the early years of this century.

In the 1930s we had old-age pensions, the dole and children's tax allowances, but all were grossly inadequate. Some people wish to return to such levels of provision —I do not say that that is the Chancellor's view. Some people think of the welfare state as the 1930s provision, plus a watered-down version of the national health service.

Beveridge realised that the basis of the welfare state was essentially low levels of unemployment. That is the foundation of a welfare state. Achieve that and we have a civilised nation. That was the kernel of his idea. Therefore, the major problem of our time is not the Budget deficit —that is just a symptom—but the idle 4 million people who are ready and willing to work. I am speaking not of the 2·8 million who qualify for benefit, but of the 4 million who are ready and willing to work.

What work is available? There is work if we convince lenders that investment is worth while. When I talk about investment, I am thinking of investment that produces a return within a measurable period. We have a number of opportunities. Many businesses have serious cash flow difficulties but nevertheless can convince a bank manager or other lender that they present a sensible investment opportunity. We can borrow, if we consider such investments—for example, roads. Some roads are crumbling because they are not being repaired in time. When a road is allowed to crumble, it eventually reaches such a state that it must be remade. That costs many times the cost of repairing it. The Government do not understand that our roads are reaching that state, so they fail to get investment to repair them.

If our roads were surveyed and the investment sought, it could produce a saving against which we could borrow sensibly. A number of our hospitals are decaying. Roofs have fallen in, and from time to time other dilapidation occurs. Everybody knows about the condition of London Underground. All these provide possibilities for initiating work. Construction firms have workers available and the ability to undertake that sort of effort. A worthwhile return can be achieved.

Industrial incentives are most important. Last year, the former Chancellor rightly introduced 40 per cent. investment allowances, for one year only. I praised that at the time. I hoped that the figure would be raised to 60 per cent. this year. Even 70 per cent. or 100 per cent. would not be out of the question. They merely defer the sum that the Chancellor will get in subsequent payments. Meanwhile, plant and machinery are put in place which enable production—the essential basis for an economy which has insufficient opportunities to produce the goods to reduce our balance of payments in the long term.

Even if it means making a gift in order to get that investment, let it be reinvested in plant and machinery. I called for that then, and I call for it now. Unfortunately, far from moving in that direction, the Government are doing the opposite and moving from 40 per cent. to 25 per cent. investment allowances. That is no incentive. Please let us never use the term "investment allowance" to mean investment incentive. There is no investment incentive at the rate of 25 per cent., because plant and machinery are not worth 75 per cent. at the end of the year. They are worth rather less, so that rate is an investment disincentive.

Several problems and opportunities face the Chancellor. The Government have been calling on the private sector to redress the balance of the public sector. Sometimes that has not worked out too well—for example, in the West Midlands health authority, the Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board for Rural Wales.

The private sector was brought in because of its understanding of certain techniques. I welcomed that. It is right to bring in such people, but most important of all is to give them the understanding that they are dealing with public money and are responsible for its expenditure. To employ model girls on a Sunday afternoon to investigate whether they will be suitable, as the WDA did, is no way to bring private sector expertise into public life.

The Chancellor talked about joint ventures with public capital and private capital working happily together. He mentioned the docklands light railway. It has been mentioned in almost every one of the last half-dozen Budgets. It seems to be a constant theme. Bring in the private sector to redress the balance of the public sector. Bring in an air traffic control centre for Scotland. Bring in the west coast main line. Bring in six new prisons.

This is just dreaming and hoping for something in future. Now we hear of electronic motorway charging to be introduced some time next century. That is not part of a Budget, even an expanded Budget that includes income and expenditure. We should remove these layers of dreams and deal with the practical realities facing us at all times. There has been a bit of a mockery of some spending proposals—dreamed up, I suggest, by some advertising agency.

All that fits in with the nonsense about the attempt to examine the Budget deficit to the end of this century. The Budget deficit at the end of the century will interest many of my constituents, but I have little confidence in the Budget judgments for the year ahead, let alone in talk about Budget judgments to 1998-99. I prefer a more realistic approach to what is happening here and now to the unemployed and to our production capacity, which is further decreasing because of our failure to invest properly and to bring about the necessary investment incentives.

We have a public sector pay freeze. There is not to be a private sector pay freeze. The House must understand that. The public sector pay freeze will take place at the same time as the private sector increases pay year by year. Therefore, we shall see one of two things, or perhaps a mixture of both. Unemployment in the public sector and cuts in services will lead not only to especial dangers of unemployment in the public sector, to a fall in standards of provision of services in the way we are used to and cuts in those services, but to further demoralisation in the public sector.

The public service used to describe just what it was: service to the public. When I was a little younger, some people were idealistic enough to devote their lives to serving the public and felt that they were doing something valuable. They were not out to make fortunes for themselves but looked on the public good as one of the main aims of their lives. That led to real advantages for us all, because of the consequent standards of public service, which in turn created advantages to the whole community.

Plenty of overseas visitors ask how we are able to achieve high standards of public service apparently without fraud and corruption, which are their major problems. I tell them that that was achieved over 140 years, and that it is crucial that we do not accept any changes that may lead to a reduction in our standards in public service.

Those who seek efficiency in the public service, as I do, must remember that the greatest cause of inefficiency is fraud and corruption. The morale of our public service employees is the cause of that efficiency and we must not underestimate that. We must have a high respect for the public service, as it is important.

There are 180 countries in the world community, and 150 years ago we had our position roughly right—that standards in the public service were to be maintained, to which I owe my position. The Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee is a member of the Opposition. That could never have been done today. Nobody devising the constitution would dream of appointing a member of the Opposition as Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee with a right to investigate the Government. Those standards have been maintained for 150 years, and I hope that they will be maintained for many centuries to come.

It is important that we understand that such standards can be rapidly eroded. There are already signs of erosion, such as the Welsh Development Agency, the Wessex health authority in two days' time, and a number of other areas in which people have not taken the trouble to work out what is expected from the public services. There are 1,500 quangos of one kind or another to which people are appointed and not assessed for what they are.

The Opposition have no say in who is appointed—a practice that I deeply deplore. Somebody should consider some of those appointments, drawing attention to the rights of the public to ensure that public service is understood and

[Mr. Robert Sheldon]

recognised. One does not behave with public service money in the same way as one would deal with money in a private company. There are different standards that are vital to efficiency as well as morality on which the public service depends.

The right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) began the idea of taxation in advance. The whole point of it is that it is limiting. Spending must be determined a long time in advance and devised, because plans must be made, contracts have to be put out and so on. The only way to control the economy is through taxation, because some parts can take effect as soon as the Chancellor sits down after his Budget speech. If one begins to pre-empt decisions on taxation, it limits the rights of the Chancellor.

The Government used to boast in the 1980s about eliminating taxes and about reducing taxation. Now we are to have two new taxes at once—air passenger tax and insurance premium tax, and nobody doubts that those will be raised in due course. There was an opportunity to take into account what the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Lawson, used to talk about—truth in taxation. He used to bore us stiff night after night, but he was really talking about the personal allowances that must always be increased in line with inflation. He was so convinced of that, that when the Rooker-Wise amendment was moved, he supported it, and it was enshrined in legislation. We accepted it, because at least it in assured the establishment of a sensible way in which to proceed. Nobody doubts that.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The right hon. Gentleman opposed it at the time.

Mr. Sheldon: I opposed it at the time for obvious Treasury reasons, as everyone knows. Nevertheless, it was a sensible way in which to proceed, and it was proven to be so, because it was continued.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) pointed out in his usual brilliant speech, the cheers came from the Tory Benches when the Rooker-Wise amendment was denied. Cheers at the Budget would never have happened previously. The Iain Macleod dictum was that cheers for the Budget led to misery by the summer, but many others made that point long before him, as I did. I am happy to see it called the Macleod dictum because it gives it a greater respectability. He would have been a great Chancellor. He was a man for whom I had enormous respect, and I was honoured to be one of the three Opposition Members able to put my name on the plate that was presented to his widow.

We are dependent on a sufficient number of people in the House who understand taxation policies and who are able to convince the Chancellor of them. It was the Chancellor's first Budget, from which I hope that he will learn and perhaps remedy some of its aspects that are wrong.

5.16 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I was one of those hon. Members who cheered the Budget, as the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said, and I shall explain why.

I think that the Budget will go down as the most important of this Parliament. I have spoken in every Budget debate since I was elected to the House, and the problems that the Chancellor faced in making this year's Budget judgment were the most difficult. On the one hand, it was imperative to take further action to deal with the debt, which was rising by about £1 billion a month and which, even after the former Chancellor's tax package, was to be £30 billion a year by 1997-98. That would have increased the total borrowing in that six-year period by no less than £233 billion. Even at the current low interest rates, that would cost about £16 billion a year in additional debt charges.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The hon. Gentleman welcomes the Budget, as he has said in the past week, but will he cast his mind back to the previous Parliament and remind the House whether he cheered the 1988 Budget?

Mr. Townend: I certainly cheered during the 1981 Budget, and as I develop my argument I shall explain that the Budget is more comparable to that of 1981 than that of 1988.

The other task that was facing the Chancellor was to be careful not to tighten the fiscal stance to such an extent as to weaken the recovery, which in many parts of the country and in many industries is still fragile.

Apart from the effect of the recovery, there are only two ways to reduce a deficit—to cut spending or put up taxes. In the previous Budget, the Government introduced a package of tax increases and in that debate I criticised them for not cutting expenditure. As a result of that Budget, public spending will rise this year by 5·34 per cent. while inflation, excluding mortgage interest, is 3 per cent.

In the previous Budget debate, on March 17, I suggested that the debt be dealt with by a balanced package of tax increases and spending cuts. As the summer progressed, reports from Downing street made it look as though the Government did not have the stomach to cut spending. All the indicators given then were that the best that we could expect was for the Government to stick to the control totals. I was therefore naturally delighted when my right hon. and learned Friend announced his plans progressively to eliminate the deficit by the end of the decade, and to balance that by a package.

Under the Budget, there will be expenditure cuts over the next three years of £10·3 billion, and tax increases of £12·7 billion. If we add those sums to the package proposed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), we see that the tax increases are at least double the spending cuts. The taxpayer is still shouldering the major burden of reducing the deficit, although the Government have at least now made a start in cutting expenditure.

Clearly the Government have listened to the Confederation of British Industry, to the Institute of Directors, to private industry and to Conservative Members; we have a balanced package.

I was delighted when my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary said last Wednesday that we were the party of low taxes. The Government's overriding priority should now be progressively to reverse the tax increases as and when we can. That would kill the accusations peddled rather unconvincingly by the Labour party that Labour is now the party of low taxation and that we are now the party of high taxes.

To achieve that aim, the attack on public spending, which has now started relatively modestly, must be intensified. The Government should first concentrate on eliminating waste and inefficiency, and on cutting costs. There is enormous scope for that throughout the public sector, especially in local government. I strongly welcome the freezing at current cash levels of running costs, which now amount to no less than £20 billion a year, until 1996-97.

The public sector has not benefited from the productivity explosion in manufacturing and financial services. The manpower savings from the information technology revolution have never been achieved as fully in the public sector as elsewhere. Manpower levels always seem to be more bloated in the public sector than they are in the private sector.

If one needs an illustration of that, one need only look at the industries that we have privatised. British Telecom now has 37,000 fewer people, it is producing a more efficient service, and it has become one of the leading telecommunications companies in the world. Only last year, the British Airports Authority, another leading international player which has been asked to operate airports overseas, cut its work force by 19·5 per cent. Our energy industry is making equal advances. Last year, PowerGen cut its work force by almost 20 per cent. Compared with that, the Government's squeeze on running costs is modest.

I suggest that, over the next few years, the Government should progressively increase the squeeze on overheads. Surely we do not need as many civil servants as soldiers. Just as private industry has successfully taken out whole layers of management, so should the public civil service. During the recession, every company, whether large, medium or small, has had to cut its overheads to survive. That has been painful but necessary, and I believe that the public sector must now accept the same pain. The Government should set manpower targets for reductions in every area.

I often think that the whole culture of Government is against reducing expenditure. What civil servant would ever come forward with suggestions to reduce the size of his empire, the size of his budget or his manpower? Indeed, what Minister would ever come forward with such suggestions?

One point that has always intrigued me as a mere Back Bencher concerns the many people elected to Parliament who come from local government and who are committed to reducing expenditure. When they are promoted to the Treasury, they do an absolutely first-class job as junior Ministers, and are convinced of the need to control spending. They are then promoted to large-spending Departments as Secretaries of State and we all say, "Jolly good. Harry will really squeeze spending." Within three months, those same people are back at the Treasury asking for more money.

Market testing, if pursued with vigour, will undoubtedly save many millions of pounds, provided that we can overcome the resistance. There is enormous scope for savings in local government, as we all know. I strongly welcome the Government applying pressure by increasing the grant this year by only 1·5 per cent.

However, no Department—even Departments that are politically sensitive—is exempt from the need to be efficient and to avoid waste. There is scope for increasing efficiency in the Department of Health just as there is in the Ministry of Defence, and in the Home Office just as there is in the Department for Education.

What is important is that, when we identify savings and then achieve those savings, the bulk of money saved should not stay within the Department to increase the service and thus push up expenditure again. It should go back to the Treasury, to help to reduce the deficit and enable us to return more quickly to our policy of reducing taxes.

I strongly support the social security reforms and the efforts of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security to reduce fraud, waste and abuse, and to bring the Department's ever-expanding budget under control. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) said, it will be impossible to finance such growth year after year.

There are a couple of other areas at which the Government have not looked, but at which they should look next year. One is overseas aid. In view of the problems with our deficit, I am surprised that we are again increasing our spending on overseas aid.

There is nothing wrong with overseas aid in principle, but I believe that, when we have a large budget deficit and a large balance of payments problem, it is strange economics to borrow from the foreigner—whom we have to repay with interest—and then to give money to the foreigner. We spend £2·3 billion a year, and I believe that we could save about £500 million of that until the budget is balanced.

For historical reasons, we spend far more per head on health, on education and on law and order in Scotland, in Wales and in Northern Ireland. I accept that there is a good argument for spending more on law and order in Northern Ireland, but I believe that it is an anachronism that we spend 30 per cent. more per person on health in Scotland than is the case in England. That is not only anachronistic, but illogical and unfair. We should progressively bring spending down to the level of the rest of the United Kingdom.

I have one small point in support of the Government's policy of deregulation. A cut of 10 per cent. in the total number of inspectors would show that we were at last beginning to accept that, if we are to survive in the European Union, we must develop a European attitude to implementing regulations.

Having listened to several days of debate on the Budget, I am amazed by the Labour party's policy. Labour Members attacked us for increasing taxes and for reducing spending. If we do not reduce spending, and if we do not put up taxes, the budget deficit will inexorably rise year after year to such a level that our whole economy will be in a state of collapse.

Is that what the Labour party wants? I know that Labour's answer is that it would not start from here, but we are here, and Labour's arguments will not wash with the general public. Labour is suggesting the economics of the illiterate.

I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his package to help people, especially old-age pensioners, with the VAT on domestic fuel. I find it incredible that Opposition Members can criticise the package for its size. At £1·25 billion, the Chancellor is repaying 44 per cent. of

[Mr. Townend]

what he expects the total income to be. Indeed, it could be argued that, if we are giving back such a high proportion, we should never have introduced the tax in the first place, but should have raised the money in another way.

My right hon. and learned Friend cannot be criticised for not being generous. I am especially pleased that the help will not be restricted to pensioners on income support. I represent a constituency with a higher than average number of old people, who will very much welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's proposals.

Every Conservative Chancellor, if he wishes to get the cheers of his hon. Friends, should include a package to help industry and business. The Chancellor has not failed us this year. I am delighted that we have a wide package that encourages the flow of capital into small firms, reduces the burden of corporation tax on small firms, gives capital gains tax relief to retiring entrepreneurs, gives help with the uniform business rate, and gives help to exporters.

I am glad that, at long last, the Government will look at the problem that has increasingly hit many small firms over recent years—the late payment of debt. I will be interested to hear his proposals. I hope that they will include some form of statutory interest. Like my colleague and fellow accountant, the hon. Member for Dover, I strongly support the move to resource accounting.

If I may, I wish to give the Chancellor a little advice for the future. As the House knows, for many years I have been chairman of my family's company in the drinks industry. I am pleased that the Chancellor has accepted the problems facing the industry as a result of the enormous rise in cross-channel imports of alcoholic liquors since the implementation of the single market. Those liquors are purchased on the continent, where duty levels are much lower than in this country, particularly on wine. The duty on wine in France is practically non-existent.

I welcome the Chancellor's decision not to increase the duty on spirits and beer. Having accepted that argument, it seems illogical to increase the duty on wine, however small the increase, because that will increase the differential. That cross-channel trade, both legal and, regrettably, increasingly illegal, is building up rapidly. There have been many incidents in my own town of people selling alcohol from vans outside factories. If nothing is done, thousands of jobs will be lost in retailing, wholesaling and distribution, and many businesses will close.

We are in the European Union, and it is the Government's duty to ensure that British commerce and industry have a level playing field. In this case, we clearly do not have one. The problem will not go away; the Government must look seriously at the problem over the next year, and come up with a long-term policy to deal with it.

To solve the problem will cost a lot of money. It is already a problem because of the very low rate of duties in France. If we take into account the loss of duty and the loss of corporation tax on the loss of profits—next year, we will also have to take into account the cost of the increase in unemployment—the present cost to the Treasury is estimated at £500 million. That figure will increase in the next year when we take into account the cost of the increase in unemployment.

The solution will be expensive. We will have to move towards harmonisation of duties over the long term. The money will have to be found elsewhere, perhaps by an increase in the general rate of value-added tax or a tax on cross-channel ferries similar to the new airport tax. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Dover will not support me on the latter suggestion. I was disappointed with the ending of indexation for losses on capital gains. I do not understand the rationale for ending indexation on losses while keeping indexation for profits. Indexation is fair, but it certainly complicates the filling in of tax returns. In a future Budget, the Chancellor might look at a way of simplifying capital gains tax—if he cannot find the money to abolish it—by doing away with all indexation, but reducing the rate to 15 or 20 per cent.

I would chide my right hon. and learned Friend on one small point. He quite strongly made the point that the recovery started in 1992, before we were blown out of the exchange rate mechanism. I see the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) nodding his head. Those of us in the big wide world outside in business realised in the summer of 1992—whatever the situation at the beginning of 1992—that the excessively high interest rates and the uncompetitive pound were beginning to crucify British industry. If we had not come out of the ERM, I am sure not only that our fragile recovery would have ground to a halt but that we would have faced a serious slump.

If proof is needed, we have only to look at what has happened in Europe, where the recession has got deeper —especially in France, which maintained relatively high interest rates in order to keep the franc in line with the deutschmark. I hope that the Chancellor is not trying to re-write history as a prelude to taking us back into the ERM.

It is a tough and brave Budget, which has been welcomed by industry, small business and the market as the level of long-term interest rates has declined. The Chancellor has identified the most urgent problem—the deficit—and has set out a programme which will see us through to clear water if we stick to it. I congratulate and compliment him on his revenue raising. It is innovative, elegant and, at times, hardly able to be seen—particularly the airport tax, which is an absolute winner. I am amazed that it will raise so much money with so little pain.

The Chancellor has given help to pensioners and single mothers. He has started to cut spending, and he has helped business. In future years, the Budget will be compared to the 1981 Budget brought in by the noble Lord Howe.That was also a tough Budget. It was highly criticised by the Opposition at the time, but it laid the foundation for our 1983 election victory. This Budget will have the same impact.

Once the deficit is down, we can return to cutting taxes and fulfilling our election pledges and our Conservative philosophy. I congratulate the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary on their efforts and courage. I am sure that I speak for all my Back-Bench colleagues when I say that we will give 100 per cent. support to get the Budget and Finance Bill through the House. It will signal the start of our party's recovery.

5.35 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) has taken the gloss of the Chancellor's boast. He has told us that he is an enthusiast of the Budget because of its high taxes and its boost to unemployment. That is not what the Chancellor hoped would be the overall comment on the Budget, but it may be the consequence of it.

It was interesting that the Chancellor was praised for the introduction of new taxes. I have sat through Budget speeches during the past few years and heard his predecessors announcing with pride that they have abolished another tax. The Chancellor has not only stopped abolishing taxes but has introduced two at a time, which suggests a sharp U-turn in the Government's policy and approach to taxes.

I do not often quote my own speeches, but in the Budget debate on 16 March I said:

> "The Budget is a tax-raising Budget designed to tax, tax and tax again—it will tax this year, tax next year and tax even more the year after."—[*Official Report*, 16 March 1993; Vol. 221, c. 204.]

That referred to the previous Budget, not this one, but it seems to me that the Chancellor has adopted the trend with enthusiasm. He says that he has not a clue whether he will follow it through in subsequent Budgets.

With the two Budgets together, the Chancellor has completed the biggest tax increase in a single year in British history, and has introduced a raft of new taxes. That is astonishing for a Government re-elected on a pledge to cut taxes. I understand that the total package is the equivalent of 9p on the standard rate of income tax in a single year.

The Chancellor has also sought to re-establish a classic Conservative economic policy that has led to disasters in the past. The intellectual base of that policy is highly suspect. We may have the beginning of a recovery—I hope we do and that it is sustainable—but I make no apology for being a Keynesian. I am not convinced that it makes good sense to cut spending and increase taxes when economic activity is depressed. I am sure that the Chancellor will acknowledge that the signs of recovery that we have do not suggest that we are out of the woods.

Mr. John Townend: If the hon. Gentleman's party would not increase taxes and would not cut spending, it would not reduce the deficit. What would it do when the markets decided that £50 billion a year was too much to absorb? It would have to put up interest rates, and if it did that, it would reduce economic activity.

Mr. Bruce: The hon. Gentleman's intervention is premature. I will deal with that matter during my speech.

The Chancellor specifically excused the tax increases in the Budget on the ground that lower interest rates increase consumer purchasing power. That may be true for some, although the tax changes will reduce that power. I suggest, however, that many will not spend the money released but will save it because they are so worried about negative equity. The right hon. and learned Gentleman did not address that problem.

The Government and their Back Benchers also always ignore the fact that a cut in interest rates leads to a substantial cut in income for many millions of people, especially retired people who rely on the yield from their savings to live. The Chancellor acknowledged that with the introduction of the pensioners bond, but we know that it is limited to a sum of £5,000 and we are not yet aware of the interest rate to be set. It represents a modest contribution towards cushioning those people from the effects of lower and potentially even lower interest rates. I agree with the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) that the Chancellor has gambled on the fact that he will be able to lower interest rates further as a condition for enabling the Budget not to be so deflationary as to knock recovery on the head.

The Chancellor has not addressed the problem of investment or our trade deficit. With much of our industry working at capacity but without clear confidence, the economy is fragile and a time lag is operating against whatever consumer spending comes back into the economy to feed United Kingdom production. We know from the past that reduced capacity sucks in imports, which aggravates our trade deficit.

I believe that there is a strong case for cutting taxes in a recession and directing investment into infrastructure projects, which would directly stimulate the economy, lower unemployment, and consequent social security spending, and improve competitiveness rather than reduce our balance of trade. I am afraid that the hon. Member for Bridlington did not acknowledge the costs of unemployment and its contribution to the public deficit.

The trouble is that the Government have restricted their options. We are still paying for the cost of sorting out the poll tax and for Nigel Lawson's unjustified tax cuts. I would be interested to know how many hon. Members have met people who spontaneously tell them that the country is suffering as a direct result of Nigel Lawson. That is said to me every day, mostly by people who voted for the Government. They appreciate that those tax cuts were unjustified and that now we are all having to pay for them.

The Budget is designed to sort out the mess of the Government's own creation and it does nothing to meet the long-term needs of the British economy. I welcome the measures for small businesses, such as they are. I also hope that the Chancellor will address the problems caused by late payment. I am sorry that the Government have rejected out of hand the offer of my right hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) to provide his slot for a private Member's Bill to introduce one to deal with that problem. Such a Bill must, ultimately, be introduced.

Given that retail sales are weak—in November they increased by 0·1 per cent.—once consumers confront the full impact of the tax increases, it is likely that current spending expectations will be halted or even reversed. To what extent has the Chancellor taken that into account?

The increase of 1 per cent. in national insurance contributions will take money from people at source as will the freezing of personal allowances and the reduction in mortgage relief. When people come to spend their money, however, the imposition of VAT on fuel will cut their spending power as will tax on petrol and insurance. All those measures are likely to dampen consumer activity and could lead to the recovery being snuffed out before it has got going.

I want to set the record straight on the green taxes of the Liberal Democrats. We have advocated a shift from taxes on wealth creation to taxes on pollution. The essential importance of that shift is that the revenue from taxes on pollution would be simultaneously reinvested in tackling poverty, hardship and investing in anti-pollution and recycling technology. Any surplus would be given back in tax reductions. We have suggested that we could reduce the overall rate of VAT by 1 per cent.

Were a carbon tax to be introduced, it should coincide with compensation for rural areas. The revenue gained should also be spent on measures designed to tackle fuel poverty, promote fuel efficiency and on developments to

[Mr. Bruce]

reduce carbon dioxide ouputs. No such package has been offered by the Government. On the contrary, as a result of their VAT proposals, they have been forced to give back half of the yield to head off a political revolt. That money has been given back because of the political protest that followed the Budget in March. I suggest to the Chancellor that a penny on income tax would have been much more efficient in yield terms.

Where are the Government's green initiatives, which they have tried to use as a justification for the imposition of VAT on fuel? Is the betrayal of Warren Spring Laboratory a green initiative? Is going ahead with THORP a green initiative? Is failing to invest anything like enough in public transport a green initiative? The Government cannot try to justify simply creaming off taxes for revenue purposes without a cultural shift. They have not achieved that and what they have done is neither politically justified nor honest.

I represent a constituency in the north-east of Scotland and the extra tax on petrol represents an unavoidable cost for many people. Higher fuel bills will be avoidable only at the risk of ill health or hypothermia. If we were provided with assistance to increase fuel efficiency—I am not talking about the small details that the President of the Board of Trade has announced—and to improve public transport links at lower cost, the tax increases might be acceptable. Those increases are, however, already far greater than the total package of taxes that we proposed should be introduced over five years. The Government have ignored the balanced approach. They have offered no package of environmental measures and, therefore, we will not support that extra tax burden.

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): Another part of Scotland that will suffer greatly is the highlands and islands, which is equivalent to the size of Belgium and is one of the most sparsely populated areas of Europe. The local people will now face huge increased costs as a result of the tax on petrol and the imposition of VAT. The Chancellor said that the take-off tax at airports would benefit the islands, but I believe that it will only benefit planes with fewer than 20 passengers. Out of 1 million passengers, only 20,000 will benefit.

Mr. Bruce: My hon. Friend has made a potent intervention on behalf of her community and others in the highlands and islands. What my hon. Friend has said is a reason not for not introducing certain measures, but for ensuring that proper account is taken of the needs of such communities. The Chancellor said that the airport tax would not cover inter-island services, but it will affect the much more vital link between the islands and the mainland. That tax will represent an extra cost for living on an island, which is expensive enough as it is. It demonstrates the Government's inability to adopt a balanced approach and to show some sensitivity and understanding for people in the highlands and islands.

In March, I vigorously opposed the abolition of allowances for exploration wells, which was introduced by the previous Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont). I was part of a delegation that the Financial Secretary received which argued against that and which suggested what the consequences might be, particularly because the transitional relief was inadequate.

This time last year, the oil price was nearly $20 a barrel; recently it dropped below $14. That has put intense pressure on North sea production. The Government's timing could not have been worse, because, as we face the pressure that their decision has caused, the exploration side of the industry has taken a beating. I told the Financial Secretary that job losses would be widespread. In my own constituency Vetco-Gray has announced the redundancies, before the year end, of more than 100 long-serving engineers as a direct result of the downturn in exploration activity. The downturn in exploration threatens future investment and the overall production potential of the North sea. In the first three quarters of 1992, 63 exploration wells were started. In the first three quarters of this year, that number was down to 30. That is a direct consequence of the Government's policy. It is an extremely damaging development, which we warned that the Government would follow——

Mr. Dorrell: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I am sure that he would not want to mislead the House on what has been happening on ENA wells this year. Will he confirm that, although the figures that he has quoted for the total number of wells this year are broadly right, the pattern has been of a figure of roughly 10 per cent. in the first quarter, that it fell away sharply during the summer and that the most recent figures for September and October show that that level of activity has increased sharply?

Mr. Bruce: I have no problem. I want to see activity in the North sea. But the reality is that at the moment the year-on-year total shows a sharp reduction. It is too early to say what the net effect is. One must never take one or two months as an indication of a long-term trend. I can tell the Financial Secretary what I am told by people in the industry: there is a real anxiety that the combined effect of the tax changes and the fall in the oil price has serious implications for the North sea.

On behalf of my area and the city of Aberdeen, I have to say that there is some masking of that effect by an ironic twist of restructuring. Many of the oil companies faced with a squeeze on their costs are reducing their total number of employees but increasing the number of people located in Aberdeen, because it is cheaper for them to do so. I welcome that as a development, but am not led into a false sense of security that that does not conceal the underlying anxiety and weakening of confidence in North sea investment.

Mr. Salmond: I reinforce what the hon. Gentleman has just said and draw attention to the fact that the only petroleum revenue tax concession announced in the Budget is a concession specifically designed for one pipeline system—the CATS system—which takes gas from the central North sea and deposits it in Tayside. Many of the other pipeline infrastructures such as the Forties system will not be entitled to the new taxation relief. Does not that quite remarkably illustrate that, in virtually everything that the Financial Secretary has done, he has shown a determination to be as anti-Scottish as possible?

Mr. Bruce: The hon. Gentleman has made his own point. My point of concern is that the Government have not helped by creating a more unfriendly tax regime towards the industry at a time when the industry needs some recognition of the difficulties that it has to face. Many of us are worried at the implications of that. I know that there is a compensating benefit from exchange rates, but the net yield of oil production from the North sea is more than $4 billion a year down on the current year compared with last year.

I shall draw my remarks to a close by saying that the Budget lacks any indication of a long-term strategy that will achieve what Britain needs: an ability to pay our way in the world. I wholly accept and agree with the need to secure a GATT agreement. Because of the net effect of increased trade, the GATT agreement is absolutely vital for all sectors of the world. Although it has many complications, and not every side of it is wholly beneficial, I hope that I can at least reinforce the all-party agreement that we are wholly supporting the Government and Sir Leon Brittan in his efforts to ensure that we get an agreement in time.

I believe that the Government have not addressed our long-term needs. Only if the country can pay its way in the world can we pay for what I describe as social justice in the broadest sense to ensure that all our citizens can participate in the benefits of being a successful economy. In my view, it is intolerable that the Government should widen social divisions by using their failure and the failure of their economic policy as an excuse to cut essential benefits.

If the economy performs well but offers fewer well-paid jobs, we must find other ways of distributing wealth. The Government show no strategy for achieving that necessary economy performance. They simply believe in eliminating budget deficits by cutting benefits and hoping that reduced Government activity will automatically be replaced by private activity. That has not worked in the past and there is no evidence to suggest that it will in the future.

Far from laying the foundations for success, there is a real danger that we are launched on a spiral of diminishing returns, punctuated, I regret to say, only by periodic tax cuts and spending sprees that we cannot afford, to kid people into re-electing a Tory Government. Britain needs vision, not blind ideology. I am afraid that we have blindness from the Government, and the Liberal Democrat party is determined to ensure that more imaginative policies are put before the electorate at the next election than either of the two other parties have yet come forward with.

5.54 pm

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): It is traditinal for Government Back-Benchers to shout "hooray" and for the Opposition to shout "yah-boo" when the Chancellor sits down having made his Budget speech. My right hon. and learned Friend received the traditional reception when he sat down last Tuesday.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) who is to my left—I use the sense geographically—is correct to say that I bow to no one in my support for tradition, and whether supported with "hoorahs" and "hoorays", or with words, I wish to add my congratulations to my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor.

I do not wish to commend only his performance last Tuesday, but those of our Front Bench colleagues who have led for the Government during the course of the Budget debate. The way that they have addressed the economic issues contrasts markedly with that which we have seen presented by the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen. My right hon. and hon. Friends have tackled the matters before us with clarity and intellectual rigour. My hon. Friend the Financial Secretary, in his winding-up speech last night, most aptly described the Opposition's sorry performances.

I shall refer to a few parts of the Chancellor's Budget speech to demonstrate why I can support the Budget wholeheartedly and why my constituents in Harborough—and, I dare say, others in Leicestershire—find this Budget of assistance to them. I refer now to the section dealing with business taxation.

First, I welcome the new benefits to be provided for export credit. It is to be noted that my right hon. and learned Friend is making an extra £200 million-worth of export credit cover available for 1996-97 and to cut export credit premiums for certain important developing markets. That is very welcome. Perhaps more important for my constituency are the measures that are being introduced to smooth the way for small businesses and their development. You, Madam Speaker, will have noticed that, at column 934 of *Hansard* for 30 November 1993, my right hon. and learned Friend sets out those measures designed to assist small businesses.

One of the major complaints that I have received from business men and business women in my constituency is about the excessive regulation of their businesses. I am delighted to see that my right hon. and learned Friend is increasing the battle to deregulate. I hope that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will encourage his Ministers, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), who is his Under-Secretary, to get on and do that job as quickly as possible and introduce regulations for destruction, because over-regulation has been crushing the growth of small businesses, particularly those in my constituency.

I am also pleased to see the introduction of simplified assessment proposals for personal tax. I am sure that that will be of great assistance to the small business men and business women in my constituency. I welcome the VAT threshold increase. It was raised to £45,000 with effect from last Wednesday and that will allow, we are told, up to 75,000 more traders to opt out of VAT altogether. I know that a fair proportion of those will be in my constituency.

Another measure that I welcome is the relaxation of the statutory audit rules for my business constituents. It is proposed that there will be a relaxation for the smallest companies to present audited accounts. That, too, will greatly assist those in commerce and industry in my constituency.

There are proposals, too, in connection with capital gains tax—a subject to which I shall return. In so far as we have a capital gains tax regime, what my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor has done in his proposals at column 935 is to be welcomed. Again, in so far as we have a capital gains tax regime, I welcome the proposals for the venture capital trust and for the enterprise investment scheme.

Finally, I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's remarks about late payment at columns 933 to 936. Perhaps I am a late convert to the need for the statutory introduction of interest on late payments. I have always been a supporter of encouragement rather than statutory

[Mr. Edward Garnier]

regulation in these matters. I should therefore have hoped that the business community would use moral pressure and publicity to make it unacceptable for big purchasers from small suppliers to be late in paying their bills. I trust that the announcement that legislative measures are to be introduced will of itself encourage big businesses to pay their debts to small businesses that much more quickly.

I hope, too, that we shall see a move away from another habit that seems to be developing whereby large businesses call for an order of particular goods—textiles, say—but invite, even require, the manufacturer to warehouse them, drawing on the order only when it suits them. Thus the small manufacturer has to act not only as the big customer's banker but as his warehouseman, storing goods free of charge. I hope that the late payment announcement in the Budget will go some way to encourage the larger businesses to behave more responsibly to their smaller brethren.

All the measures that my right hon. and learned Friend has introduced, together with the low interest rates and low inflation that we are enjoying, will do much to encourage business—especially small business—in Leicestershire and in my constituency. I was pleased to hear my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade say just a few moments ago that one of the first business links offices is to be in Leicester. That, too, will be of great assistance to my constituents.

I should not wish the House simply to accept my word as a loyal Back Bencher supporting the Government: the Budget has been accepted as good by people other than those who sit on the Conservative Benches. Let me refer the House to what was written by the leader writer of the *Leicester Mercury* on Wednesday 1 December, the day after the Budget:

> "Leicestershire, with its thousands of smaller businesses, stands to gain more than most counties from the Budget proposals. Raising the VAT threshold and allowing many companies to avoid the expense of a formal audit will help smaller firms stay alive. More help with export credits and an enterprise investment scheme is likely to boost external private investment in small companies.
>
> All that is good news for local firms and good news for the local economy. There is now even more reason to be optimistic about the way this area is pulling out of the recession."

The *Leicester Mercury* is not noted for its slavish support of the Government and I find it especially encouraging that the leader writer of that august journal has found it in himself to congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor on his Budget proposals as they affect our county—although I am sure that it is not to be inferred from the leader writer's remark that

> "Leicestershire, with its thousands of smaller businesses, stands to gain more than most counties"

that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary played an undue part in the construction of the Budget speech simply because he represents a Leicestershire constituency.

Let me refer to the Budget proposals which my right hon. and learned Friend did not make, and which I should have liked him to make, in connection with the reform of the capital gains tax system. In my view, the capital gains tax system should ideally be removed in its entirety. If that is too much to ask for, the rate of capital gains tax should be drastically reduced.

I say that for three reasons. First, capital gains tax is a voluntary tax. It is easy to avoid. It is also easy to evade —although I must admit that I have never tried it myself. It is also extremely difficult for the Treasury to manage flows from capital gains as they depend on the whim of the investor. I do not need to lecture the House about the lessons of the Laffer curve. We all know that, with a zero rate of tax, receivables will be nil—not surprisingly—and that, with a rate of tax of 100 per cent., receivables will also be nil—again, not surprisingly. The maximum tax received arises at a rate nearer to zero than to 100 per cent. That must be especially true of a voluntary tax. At 40 per cent., there is a major incentive to avoid paying tax, and also to evade. A cut to 25 per cent. or even lower would actually result in an increase in receipts for the Treasury.

Secondly, the current system, whereby the capital gains tax rate is high but is compensated for by a whole lot of tax schemes such as personal equity plans and the business expansion scheme—I appreciate that the latter is to be phased out—creates many distortions in the economy. A 40 per cent. tax rate creates a major disincentive to investors to change their investment. They get locked in. That makes the economy less efficient and investments less mobile. After 10 years of comparatively low income tax rates, there is a much wider distribution of capital, and that lack of mobility is therefore an increasing problem for the economy as a whole.

I suggest that tax reasons are seldom good reasons for making an investment but such schemes are driving investments. I am thinking particularly of the BES—although that is being phased out—but also of PEPs, because they, too, drive people towards the equity market. That may be good, but they should not be driven there simply for tax reasons.

Another problem is the increasing amount of capital being tied up in PEPs, TESSAs and tax-free national savings. If a married couple had made the full investment allowed in all those schemes, they would now have in excess of £100,000. If they continued to make the full investment and there was reasonable performance—say, 10 per cent. a year—from the PEP, that household would have some £400,000 tied up in such schemes in five years' time. That is a large amount of capital, which will be free of both capital gains and income tax.

Such schemes also create a major distortion in the economy. PEPs have to be managed by professional managers. The individual investor is severely limited in the way in which he can influence investment decisions. The investment managers may become rich as a result but the Government are denied tax receipts and that inhibits the efficiency of the economy. I appreciate that it is now politically difficult to get rid of PEPs, and I freely admit that I have benefited from the scheme myself. A decrease in the marginal rate of capital gains tax—to, say, 25 per cent.—would result in investors not bothering with PEPs in the future. It would also result in greater revenue receipts for the Treasury.

Thirdly, proceeds from capital gains tax are at present very small. The figures on page 128 of the Red Book show that the outturn for 1992-93 was £1 billion—half what it was in 1989. If I heard my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) correctly yesterday evening, he suggested that the figure was something over £2 billion not so long ago. Perhaps my right hon. Friend said 1979, in which case I stand corrected. The Government's capital gains tax receipts have gone down markedly in the past few years and they are not expected to increase at all in 1993-94 —the forecast in the Red Book is £1 billion—and the forecast for 1994-95 is only £1·3 billion.

Those are three reasons for suggesting that the Government should look closely at capital gains tax in the near future. I am reinforced in my suggestions by the fact that some of my right hon. Friends have made similar remarks during the debate, and I trust that, in due course, the Government will review the matter. Having said that, I am very pleased with the Budget that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor produced last Tuesday. The Budget is, as my right hon. and learned Friend said,

> "a no-nonsense Budget which deals directly and firmly with the main challenges facing the country today."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1993; Vol. 223, c. 938.]

I trust that it is, and I shall be joining those of my hon. Friends who welcomed it with cheers in translating those cheers into action in the Lobby.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Before I call the next Member to speak, may I remind the House that Madam Speaker has ordained that between the hours of 6 pm and 8 pm there should be a limit of 10 minutes on speeches.

6.9 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): The Chancellor came to the Budget with a number of advantages. He was not the previous Chancellor, who, as we all know, became discredited because he did not resign when Britain left the ERM. He was not, and is not, burdened with ideological fixations or with any great economic track record or expertise. Above all, he had a clear political strategy. The first element was to get the Tories elected, and the second was, if possible, to get himself made Prime Minister.

It was a political Budget which was cleverly and skilfully presented. It temporarily united the Conservative party, although I never expected to see the Conservatives vote for tax increases on the scale that we had last Tuesday. It temporarily satisfied the markets. I suspect, however, that it will not play so well with the British people.

The problem with the Budget was that it was a memory-free zone. The £50 billion PSBR deficit was mentioned as though it were an act of God, a problem from which all decent major countries are suffering, but in reality it is a consequence of economic mismanagement over a decade.

The Lawson-Thatcher boom of 1986-88, with its monetary splurge and tax cuts, put the economy out of control.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): The hon. Gentleman supported Lawson's boom.

Mr. Radice: No, I did not. If the hon. Gentleman remembers, the Treasury Select Committee said that the 1988 Budget was a dangerous Budget. Both the hon. Gentleman and I signed that report.

It was followed by the Major-Lamont squeeze of 1989-90 which pursued a one-club policy of high interest rates which clobbered business and the housing market. It was followed by a recession with 10 quarters of falling manufacturing output. Of course that had a direct impact on the PSBR because it increased unemployment and therefore produced an increased social security budget and a reduced tax take. Lastly, we had the fiscal irresponsibility of the Government in 1991-92 when they went in for tax bribes and spending promises in the run-up to the general election. So the Government were responsible for the £50 billion PSBR which the country is now having to tackle.

The second interesting feature of the Budget was that the Chancellor never mentioned the size of the tax increase. It is the biggest tax increase since the war. We have had two Budgets in 1993, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition reminded us, and it has been estimated by Goldman Sachs that the tax increase over a three-year period will amount to something approaching £17 billion—that is based on the two Red Books. That figure was confirmed to me by Treasury officials this morning in our Treasury Select Committee hearing. It will have a major impact on the public.

The Institute of Fiscal Studies has estimated that, on average, every household will pay £9 extra a week, or £460 a year, in taxation. That does not take into account local taxes which are likely to rise as a result of local authority spending cuts and the impact of some of the benefit changes and cuts in benefits.

I turn now to the long-term prospects for the economy. The danger of the Budget is that, by hitting consumers with tax increases, it could choke off the fragile recovery. That is why most of the panel of independent forecasters were not in favour of further tax increases.

One could argue that taxing consumption will switch output into investments and exports. That is the most respectable argument for the course that the Chancellor has taken, but the problem is that markets in Europe and elsewhere are depressed. If we clobber consumption with tax hikes, the danger is that consumer confidence will be undermined and therefore the recovery will be choked off.

If we are to achieve a sustained growth, not only must we keep up demand, but we have to improve supply. That is not simply a question of deregulation, as the Government sometimes suggest. The real commanding heights of the economy are the application of new ideas and knowledge to production and products, the level of investment behind every employee, and the skills of employees through education and training. However, those are long-term issues which give the Government no short-term political advantages. We have a short-term Government with a short-term ideology and political judgment.

Unfortunately for Britain, the 1980s are the years which the locusts ate. North sea oil revenues could have gone into manufacturing investment, research and development and education and training, but unfortunately they did not. There is little to suggest from the Budget or the Red Book that the Government are now giving priority to those areas.

Treasury officials have confirmed to me the real cuts in the money going to training and to infrastructure projects. It is true that there is a short-term, one-year increase in the money to science, but there is a decline in subsequent years. I welcome, as everyone must, the increased money for higher education, but the increases in the education budget are devoted entirely to higher education; there are no increases for other aspects of education which are so vital to the economy.

I should like to sum up my very short speech by saying that the Chancellor's Budget is socially repugnant for what it has done to benefits, particularly unemployment benefit. It ignores, or largely ignores, the long-term problems of the economy, and I believe and predict that it will prove politically disastrous for the Chancellor and his party as the British people come to understand that, contrary to the

[Mr. Radice]

Government's promises of the last election, they are being asked to pay through the nose for the appalling failure of the Administration over a number of years.

6.16 pm

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Heaping more praise on my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor for his Budget at this stage in the proceedings is rather like throwing fivers on a bonfire to keep it alight. We do not have many fivers left after the Budget, so that my right hon. and learned Friend will have to take for granted my praise for what he has done.

Many elderly people in my constituency will be grateful for what my right hon. and learned Friend has done to relieve VAT on fuel. That leads me straight into the issue on which I would like to concentrate. I am sure that the Government are under no illusion that the Budget has done away with the problem of VAT.

Let us take a quick survey of the idiosyncrasies of our national position on VAT over the past few years. First, for reasons best not discussed now, we have VAT on some things and not on others. As far as I can see, the reasons are broadly sentimental, but I shall leave that aside. I shall not go on too long about the poll tax but will simply say that with one stroke of the hand the rate of VAT has increased from 15 to 17·5 per cent.—a volatile tax.

The other week we found ourselves in the Lobby late at night voting on VAT on orange juice. One begins to ask what sort of regime we have. Then we have the entirely spurious defence of VAT on printed matter under inflated slogans such as, "This is a tax on knowledge." That is absolute rubbish. Education dictates the quality of what people read, and the other argument is crude and materialistic. In countries such as France where there is VAT on printed matter, there is no noticeable difference in the quality and volume of reading. It is cultural rubbish and a distorted argument.

Finally, there is the problem with heating. Let us not go over all that again. However, what has happened? As we do not have a rational system on VAT with a lower rate on everything, we end up with 17·5 per cent. which is too much for old people who are near the poverty line. That is partly due to the deviousness of such things as the poll tax.

As we are in this ridiculous situation, we have to throw in massive sums. We throw massive sums into the system indiscriminately to rich and poor alike. Thereby we build yet another contradiction into a situation which Members on both sides of the House secretly accept is unsustainable. That situation relates to universal benefits. We have added to the universal benefit anomaly by trying to salvage the damaging impact of VAT on heating which has arisen from our ridiculous system of VAT. This problem will not go away. One of these days, this country will have to mature into a rational system of VAT on everything, but at a lower level.

One of the difficulties lies in our political system. We have a rather simplistic adversarial system. At each election, we are forced up against a wall and the Government and the Opposition claim that they will not do certain things. I hope that the debate will continue in public because we must try to confront the public with the truth in respect not only of VAT, but of universal benefits. I suspect that, given a free hand and in a politically neutral atmosphere—if such a thing could be said to exist—the Opposition and the Government would do all sorts of things to concentrate benefits where they were most needed.

I hope that it is clear to most right hon. and hon. Members that our policy—by that I mean the policy of this House—on the NHS is unsustainable. That policy is the same in all parties, and it is that every person in this country, no matter what their income or wealth, will receive totally free of charge all the treatment that they require, no matter what the cost of that treatment. That is my understanding of the Government's and the Opposition's policy, and that policy is totally unsustainable in these demographic and technological times. We are all aware of that, but no one says it publicly.

However, the public are beginning to understand. Doctors and consultants are also beginning to understand. The citizens charter states that doctors and consultants should carry out certain operations within certain time limits. Some of those people have told me that they understand what the Government are doing in their reforms which they believe are necessary but that they cannot deliver. They believe that no Government will ever be able to give them the money to deliver. Doctors and consultants are aware of the demographic problems.

Such debates must be kept going because the public are aware of things about which no one in this House is prepared to speak. For example, it is ridiculous that my children receive free meals under the NHS. That is unsustainable and it cannot and will not continue. It is only a matter of time before it ends. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade referred to the Commission for Social Justice. That is a good thing, provided that it comes up with honest rather than tired political solutions.

There has also been a de facto conspiracy of silence on mortgage tax relief. I am glad to say that that conspiracy of silence has now been broken. The Chancellor has done the right and obvious thing. Clearly, we cannot drop the whole thing tomorrow, although that should be done, as that would force the housing market down in this country which is far too over-dependent on the state of the housing market. As a result of that over-dependency, the situation becomes more fragile and my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor cannot do what he, I and the Treasury would like to do, which is to scrap the whole thing tomorrow.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor has done the sensible thing. However, I stress that the problem will not go away. We have a deformed culture and the press simply states, "Goody, goody. It looks as though house prices will go up." What an extraordinary thing to say. I am not sure whether there are such headlines in other countries. However, the respectable press in this country states that the trend in house prices is up once more. That means bigger mortgages and bigger commitments for everyone, involving a bigger slice of people's budgets. That is another deformation of national investment patterns.

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Walden: I will give way in a moment.

It is extraordinary that more than 90 per cent. of business expansion schemes were devoted to property. That illustrates beautifully the profound cultural deformations in our economy.

Mr. Budgen: It is all very well for my hon. Friend to attack the hand that feeds him, but does not he agree that the newspapers reflect the view of a large section of the population in this country that nothing is better than rising house prices? It is politically fashionable now to be rather rude about Lord Lawson, but when he was booming up the housing market, the Conservatives and Lord Lawson were extremely popular.

Mr. Walden: I will let my hon. Friend's remarks stand by themselves. I normally regard him as a highly responsible commentator on economic matters. His remarks owe more to his impish side than to his responsible side.

Another problem to which I want to draw attention and which will not go away relates to hypothecation. That term arises among people who know more about economics than I do and it is arising in a positive sense when explaining where the money is going. I would like to see that term used in another sense. We should say, "Look folks, we're going to be hard up for many years to come and we all know the cuts that the Budget predicates. Therefore, we are going to have to make choices."

Among those choices, we must confront the problem of universal benefits. However, it is so difficult, so sensitive and so raw simply to take away from people what they have been falsely promised for all these years that we must give them something in return. I hope that we shall reach the stage at which our politics will have so evolved that we can say to people, "Look, this cannot go on. We have to cut it, and probably for the middle and upper income brackets. This or that—perhaps child benefit—will have to go, but in return we are going to do something useful with the money."

I was glad to hear that the Commission for Social Justice is talking about taxing child benefit and also setting up nurseries. I suggested that years ago. I am glad to see that the Labour party——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but there has been a slight technical hitch with the clock. However, I inform the hon. Gentleman that his time is up.

6.27 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) mentioned the air passenger duty which is to be introduced towards the end of 1994. It may be a relatively small part of the Budget —just a detail—which we will be tackling at greater length in Standing Committee, but I refer to the point now because of its importance to my constituents, and because the Chancellor made special play of it in his Budget speech.

When the Chancellor introduced the air passenger duty, he went out of his way to say:

> "most flights between the Scottish islands will not bear tax."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1993; Vol. 233, c. 932.]

At the time, I thought that it was a thoughtful touch on the Chancellor's part to remember the special needs and circumstances of the Scottish islands. After all, air travel to the Scottish islands is not a luxury like holiday travel. It is not a business man's perk. Instead, it is an essential lifeline which connects remote communities on the far peripheries of the European land mass with the facilities and services which only urban centres can provide. Medical facilities are a good example, because, at some time, many islanders will have to be flown to mainland hospitals to receive the acute medical care which island medical facilities cannot provide.

Those air connections among the islands—and, more important, between the islands and the mainland—are not luxuries for tourists: they are a social and economic necessity, and a crucial communication link with the outside world. That is why it was welcome that the Chancellor mentioned the special case of the islands, and apparently went out of his way to adjust the tax to exclude the Scottish islands.

But we know what the Chancellor has said about promises made on a rainy night in Dudley, so it is always worth checking the small print. That is when one finds that the exemption has nothing to do with the Scottish islands per se, but rather is to do with small passenger aircraft —coincidentally, I am sure, aircraft used for executive travel, and carrying fewer than 20 passengers. That means that most flights to and from the Scottish islands will not be exempt, and that the overwhelming majority of passengers who use aircraft within, and to and from, the Scottish islands will have to pay the £5 tax.

Moreover, the structure of the exemption means that the permitted exemptions within Scottish island air travel are so anomalous or so absurd that it is hard to believe that the Treasury has really thought the matter through. For example, there are some flights between Shetland and Edinburgh, and between Orkney and Glasgow, for which different planes are used on different days. On some days, if one takes the flight that uses a Jetstream 31, which carries fewer than 20 passengers, one will not pay the tax. However, if one happens to be on the plane on the wrong day, when an ATP or a Shorts aircraft is used which carries more than 20 passengers, one will end up paying the tax. So much for fiscal neutrality, when one is encouraged by the tax system to take a certain flight on a certain day.

There are more serious absurdities than that. For example, the Loganair flight from the island of Barra, in my constituency, to Glasgow will be changed from a twin-engined aircraft, which is presently employed, to a Shorts aircraft next year not because the route has become more economically viable or because it is carrying more passengers but simply for technical reasons to do with the company. That means that that flight will be subject to the tax.

It must be remembered that the island of Barra is five to six hours' ferry sailing time from the mainland. The population is only a couple of thousand. Barra does not even have an airfield or a landing strip. Planes actually land on the beach—on the sand. But passengers are going to have to pay the same £5 tax as holidaymakers going to Majorca or business men using the Manchester-to-London shuttle.

The anomalies are endless. For example, a foreign millionaire flying on a chartered Jetstream to his Hebridean estate for a weekend's salmon fishing will be exempt, but an islander taking a regular scheduled flight to Glasgow to visit, say, an elderly parent in hospital will have to pay the tax.

That tax and its effects upon the Scottish islands are not fair or logical. I urge the Chancellor, to whom I have already written on the matter, to review the exemption and amend it during proceedings on the Finance Bill, so that it exempts all regular scheduled flights going to, from and within the remote Scottish islands. It would cost him considerably less than £1 million to do that. That is a large

[Mr. Calum Macdonald]

sum for island communities to have to give the Treasury, but it is surely not a difficult sum for a Government who are budgeting for expenditure of about £290 billion next year. I hope that, during proceedings on the Finance Bill, the Chancellor will be able to take that point on board and fulfil the spirit of the promise that he apparently made during his Budget speech.

6.35 pm

Mr. Hartley Booth (Finchley): I am grateful to be called, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand that it is some years since Finchley contributed on Treasury matters in the House.

Like many of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I welcome the Budget, because it is good for business and good for pensioners, and looks to the future. What a contrast between the long-term policies for the future that we have been enunciating and the long-term decline of socialism.

The Opposition have been trying to find major criticisms of our Budget throughout the past week. We heard from the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) this afternoon that it is not a Budget for investment. The Opposition have even called it a Budget for non-investment. That is wrong. We have heard that it is a Budget for £22 billion of capital spending—for example, £1·25 billion on apprenticeships, as announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

The underlying point about investment that the Labour party never picks up is that, in these difficult times, we have been able to maintain the low corporate taxes that have made our country the mecca for international investment. Of course we will attract investment through the Budget. The Budget is as close to non-investment as my hon. Friend the much-loved Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is to Weight Watchers.

As for fair criticism, Opposition Members cynically say in front of the media that there is only 50p for the elderly. As a fair man, I waited and waited to hear the other points —about the extra pension, the fact that the 50p was on top of inflation this year and next year, how cold weather payments would rise above inflation, about energy saving and the guaranteed income proposal. Did I hear any of that? Not at all.

Nothing comes from Opposition Members when they describe our taxation proposals and our help for the elderly. At Walworth road, a group of chiefs sit around during the day and lie awake at night worrying how they can next cause anxiety for the elderly. They say that we have not done enough in the Budget. Of course it is not enough. Have any Government in the world ever done enough? No Government at this stage of their life could have done enough. We have a duty to the public to go on doing enough for another three years. When we seek generosity from the Opposition, we have a mortuary of silence.

The key to this excellent Budget is not just the way in which it looks ahead to 1999, when we balance the books, and to 2020, when some of the social security proposals will have an effect. It is not only a Budget for looking ahead but a Budget for initiatives. Post Office employees have been encouraged to spot fraud, employers have been encouraged to look after their employees' health, and job seekers have been encouraged to use extra initiative in seeking jobs.

There is scope for much more work, and I encourage the Government to do more under their name of initiative. They could take a leaf out of the book of Nissan, Unilever or some local authorities to motivate staff. We still employ 4 million people on the public payroll, and they should be motivated to spot fraud, abuse, good ideas and waste. I do not suggest that the Cabinet Office be taken over by works councils, nor that permanent secretaries should dress in boiler suits, but all public sector workers should come forward with ideas and be given an incentive to do so.

To better use the nation's inheritance and reduce the cost of housing, we could use some of the 750,000 empty homes. Ministers have already heard my suggestions and may be tired of them, but we could use the unused stock of homes, particularly for the homeless. That idea would also assist the Budget deficit.

The efficiency that has been the hallmark of much of the Budget should work through to savings in the Ministry of Defence, where civil servants now number 147,000 to run an Army only two thirds that size. I am assured that that matter is under review and will be dealt with, and the Budget has been the precursor.

On health, I hope that we shall hear how regional bureaucracy will be cut dramatically. It will be no bad thing if some of the regions are removed.

Although the Red Book says little about privatisation —the first page suggests that receipts from privatisation will be reduced dramatically—I hope that the Adam Smith Institute forecast that receipts from privatisation can total £5 billion a year will continue.

I also hope that the Treasury will go forward in its fight in Europe against too much expenditure by the Goliath across the channel. The Chancellor should consider the £5 billion fraud by the European Community, to which we contribute, and use that fact as a lever against other waste.

The European Community currently spends £4 billion on tobacco subsidy, much of which is for black tobacco that nobody wants to smoke. The European Community is supporting high-nicotine tobacco, much of which is stored and then wasted. I hope that the Government will use that fact as a tactic to reduce the amount that we spend on the European Community.

The Law Society revenue committee has approached me about a technicality on capital allowance rules and, as the Minister knows, I am making representations on its behalf.

Business men from Finchley came 50-strong to see me the other day. They said that the late payment of debt was one of their principal problems. They were glad that we were grappling with the problem, but they said that small businesses were weak and could not attack the big debtors. They said that it was no good simply putting up their hands and saying, "Please, we have the law on our side" against big debtors. But they need automatic assistance and arbitration after an agreed period of 90 days. I hope that that will result from the consultation paper.

All that is for the future. The Budget lays a foundation for sustainable economic growth by harnessing the aspirations, initiatives and talents of the British people.

6.44 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): In the week before the Budget two significant events happened. First, Mr. Roger Levitt, founder of the Levitt group that crashed in 1990, was found guilty of a fraud involving £20 million. Sentencing him, Mr. Justice Laws—a decent sort of chappie, so I am reliably informed—told Mr. Levitt to go home, have a good night's sleep and, when he woke up in the morning, to be nice to his wife and kind to animals. The judge said that the upsetting incident was best forgotten. After all, had not Mr. Levitt given some of the funds that he had misappropriated to charity?

Mr. Levitt was a product of the insatiable greed of the 1980s—greed that was fostered by successive Tory Chancellors and eventually epitomised in the Gadarene swine Budget of 1988 presented by Lord Lawson. I shall show later that the 1993 Budget is the bitter price that the nation has had to pay for the obscene, hideous mistakes of the 1988 Budget. I merely observe here that the asinine economic ignoramuses on the Tory Benches cheered the fraudulent 1988 Budget to the echo.

The second event to which I referred took place on the Wednesday before the Budget, when London's underground system collapsed, leaving 20,000 passengers crawling through tunnels wondering whether they would ever see the light of God or day again. That incident, too, arose out of the philosophy behind the 1988 Budget.

Lord Lawson may have been—indeed, certainly was—a putrid Tory economist, but he understood only too well Bertrand Russell's philosophical theory of the "undistributed middle". That says that if one has £2 billion to give away and one devotes it all to tax cuts, the same £2 billion cannot be used at the same time for investment in London's underground system.

The second Budget of 1993 was predicated on three simple economic fallacies. The first is the notion that there is merit in seeking to balance the budget although, to be fair, the concept of a balanced budget now takes into account what is termed

> "the golden rule of public finance",

which means net public sector capital spending. Even so, that is not so much back to basics as back to the 19th century, with the Chancellor playing the unlikely role of Gladstone in Hush Puppies. However, perhaps one should not fret too much over that. A promise by the Chancellor to produce a balanced Budget in 1999 is clearly not a promise at all but rather an expression of the wish fulfilment economics of his Freudian dreams.

The second fallacy for which the Chancellor has fallen is the idea, sedulously spread by the forces of Hades, that welfare spending in Britain is out of control. An examination of the facts by John Hills and his team from the London School of Economics shows that to be not so much a big idea as the latest big Tory lie. The study that the LSE team carried out for the Rowntree Trust concluded:

> "Over the medium term Britain's welfare spending has been a stable share of national income, below its equivalent in most European countries."

The authors of the study added:

> "The 'demographic time bomb' has been exaggerated. Upward pressures on spending from the ageing population, SERPS, and higher basic pension entitlements will continue. But even if benefit levels become income-linked, the total net effects on public finances over the next 50 years would add up to about 5 per cent. of GDP—no more than the increase mainly due to the recession over the past three years."

The third fallacy lies in the Chancellor's naive belief that the fragile recovery of a deeply depressed economy will benefit from huge tax increases and public expenditure cuts.

Until he presented this Budget the Chancellor seemed like a genial sort of bloke, who liked nothing better than to have a pint of beer and get as far away as he could from his dreadful colleagues who drank gin and tonics in the Smoking Room. However, I noticed that there was no smile and no mercy on his face as he stood at the Dispatch Box on Tuesday, hammering the British public with tax after tax.

If we move through the forecast period from this year to year three, the total increase in tax announced in the two Budgets of 1993 amounts to £17 billion, or the equivalent of a staggering 11p in the pound on income tax. Such increases suggest that the Conservative manifesto at the previous election was written by that well-known firm of Westminster and City accountants, now under investigation by the Serious Fraud Office, called Levitt, Major, Nadir, Clarke and Co.

If psychologists studying the species homo sapiens had been present in the Chamber when the Budget was presented, they would have witnessed an amazing spectacle. When the Chancellor announced that he had no intention of scrapping VAT on fuel, Tory Members smiled, and one of them is smiling now. When he said that everyone who insures his car will be taxed, they applauded. When he added that tomorrow anyone who insures their house will be taxed, they cheered. When he declared that every owner-occupier would pay more tax and that mortgage relief would be reduced, Tory Members, who hitherto had been property-owning democrats, jumped up from their seats and excitedly waved their Order Papers. Apparently, the tension was rising in the Chamber. When the Chancellor announced that everyone would pay more income tax as allowances were frozen and that 500,000 people who had not paid any income tax at all would now do so, Tory Members stamped and shouted, designating the Chancellor as the greatest tax collector since Napoleon. The imposition of taxes on holidays, wine, petrol and cigarettes had them on their feet, their faces wreathed in smiles with tears coursing down their cheeks as they chanted, "Tax, tax, tax. Tax the working class. Tax the middle class. Tax them all."

On reflection, perhaps even the Chancellor and the smug, smiling hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans), sitting behind the Minister, can see that the pain for the majority of people in this Budget is inversely proportionate to the pleasure for the privileged few who benefited from the Tory Budgets of the 1980s.

From 1986 to 1989 we had tax reductions of £20 billion. That has now been offset by £20 billion increases in tax over the next three years. However, we have not gone back to square one. We have moved to more indirect taxation, a wider tax base and lower marginal rates. The overall tax burden has increased and, because of the lower marginal rates, since 1986 the tax burden has shifted from the rich to the poor—perhaps that is another reason for a smile from the hon. Member for Ribble Valley.

Nevertheless, the two Budgets this year marked a significant change in policy. Data provided by Chris Giles and Steven Webb of the Institute for Fiscal Studies shows

[Mr. Brian Sedgemore]

that by far the biggest burden of the tax changes falls on the middle class. All the commentators and pundits seem to have missed the fact that the targeting of the middle class by the Chancellor, using his Armalite rifle, represents a fundamental shift in British politics. In the post-war years, government in Britain under all political parties has been a compact, an agreement between the establishment and the middle classes. While expressing sympathy for the poor, the middle classes, particularly if they were readers of *The Guardian,* have been content to see a redistribution of income from the working classes to themselves through mortgage tax relief, pension schemes, student grants and other aspects of the second welfare state.

Now that the overpowering voice of the middle class has been silenced by a Tory Chancellor, there will have to be a new political settlement. The politics of the 1990s will be about the nature of that new settlement. In any other advanced western country an assault such as this on the middle classes by a Chancellor would produce a revolution. It will be interesting to see if there is more to the middle classes in Britain than chatter.

Some of the cuts in public expenditure were real. Those affecting the unemployed and the sick can be described, fairly, as vicious, and of a type that could have come only from a Chancellor who is blue in tooth and claw. Overall, the public expenditure plans, like the balanced budget, are a figment of the Chancellor's imagination. In future years the cuts will be brought about simply by not topping up departmental expenditure from the reserve. They are misleading because of the scale of the reserve set aside to supplement departmental budgets in recent years.

The plans have been presented in such a way as to make parliamentary scrutiny impossible. More than anything else, the public expenditure plans show that this was a Budget presented by a huckster who perhaps fits the mediocrity of our times and the paucity of thought among Conservative Members, who made fools of themselves by cheering what, in time, will be seen as a Budget to perdition.

6.55 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): It was a perfectly legitimate, if somewhat exaggerated exercise, for the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) to concentrate on the impact of the increased taxation. It is true that there has been a considerable increase in taxation, albeit that the pain is delayed and that the increases have taken place largely by the freezing of allowances and the reductions in various forms of tax relief to which the hon. Gentleman referred. The hon. Member made taxation the theme of his speech, but I wish to make interest rates the theme of my speech. In 10 minutes one can deal with only one subject.

Much of the cause of our present state relates to interest rates. Sadly, at the end of 1985 the most important, most intelligent and most successful Tory economist and politician changed his mind. In 1985, Lord Lawson, as he now is, decided that the highly successful policy that had been worked out by the Tories between 1975 and 1985 was to be abandoned. He ceased to be a monetarist in any sense and he successfully used his reputation to engineer an extremely popular boom. It was so popular that it was not politically correct at the time even to mention that it was happening.

The money supply expanded substantially, as can be seen from page 11 of the Red Book from last March. It went up from about 11 per cent. to about 18 per cent. Interest rates have an important part to play in the catastrophically excessive squeeze that was imposed by those who wished to give our economic sovereignty to the Bundesbank between 1990 and 1992. Again, that can be seen clearly from the graph in the Red Book because broad money fell from about 17 per cent. to about 4 per cent. during that period.

I suggest that interest rates provide much of the key to how the Chancellor hopes to revive Tory fortunes and the economy. It is true that the middle class, in the not so distant future, will find that taxation has gone up. How will that be balanced? The Chancellor hopes that he is in for a long period of low interest rates. He hopes that the savings ratio will fall and that growth rates will continue at a high level. On page 35 of the recent Red Book it says, significantly—and I agree with this—that a stronger housing market would help underpin consumer recovery. So it would. Those who were caught in the squeeze of the ERM now find themselves in the terrible difficulty of negative equity. Two million people are caught in negative equity. That is disturbing for them, but they are also less efficient economically because they cannot move from one house to another when they are caught in such a bind.

It is plain that low interest rates will be important to the Chancellor's strategy during the next couple of years. Low interest rates are always popular. If low interest rates balance higher taxation, and cause a reduction in the savings ratio, if they are also useful in reducing the Government's debt burden, and if they stimulate greater activity, they will also stimulate house prices. The Chancellor would then become as popular as Lord Lawson was between 1986 and 1988.

It would then be difficult, when it became necessary to increase interest rates, for the Chancellor to say that he is the man who will increase interest rates. That is why my right hon. and learned Friend should not be so dismissive of those—including Lord Lawson, with a voice of some repentance—who say that it is necessary now to give some further status and enhanced power to the Bank of England.

Two things have been done in recent months. First, the Bank has taken to issuing its own inflation report. That is not very important, because it tells the country only what has been done in the past because of the time-lag in monetary policy.

I commend the Chancellor on the second point. It is a long way from the arrogance of Lord Lawson, who told the country crudely that he was the man who put up interest rates and the man who takes them down, and that the Governor of the Bank of England was no more than a mechanic pulling his forelock to Lord Lawson. I commend the present Chancellor for allowing the Governor of the Bank of England to announce the last reduction in interest rates. I hope that that trend will continue, although probably it does not matter much whether it is done by greater transparency or by some change in the statute which governs the Bank of England.

We have had three Tory booms, including those of Mr. Barber and Mr. Lawson. Each has been applauded by all persons who are politically correct. Each has been supported by those who say that they are vehemently against inflation. It is plain that another boom would be equally applauded by large sections of the middle class.

When the time comes for the next major increase in interest rates, it would be better if responsibility was seen not to devolve entirely upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer. We can never have a completely independent Bank of England. There is much to be said for making it plain that the Bank of England has a special status and is not merely the dogsbody of the Treasury. The Bank should have some independent status and perhaps even some right of independent action.

7.4 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The Chancellor of the Exchequer was applauded when he finished his speech, not only from the Government Back Benches but by the business world. I take the view that, when a Chancellor who presides over a budget deficit of £50 billion is applauded, there is something wrong. A little more thought convinced me rapidly that a lot of the applause was due to his presentation and that, since that was the case, the applause would not last long. The right hon. and learned Gentleman should take some comfort from that, because it would mean that at least he was doing something about the deficit.

As the Chancellor knows, I dislike large public deficits and the happiest Budgets which I have experienced were those in which we were repaying public debt rather than borrowing a lot more. I am only sorry that it was not possible for that to be continued. The Chancellor set himself the target of a nil deficit by the end of the century. I do not believe that that can be done much quicker, and I presume that he is looking beyond that. We could return to the happy days when we were repaying the public sector debt. If we were to manage that, the interest which would be saved would leave rich benefits, not so much to the present generation of politicians, but to their successors and to their children and grandchildren.

A departure from balanced budgets has occurred, with the excuse being that money is going into capital infrastructure which will pay rich dividends. That is not something that I favour. I take the sharper view that we should be trying always to balance one year with another, or certainly balance the budget over a small number of years.

If the Chancellor does what he has said, he will be engaged in long-term thinking with a vengeance. He stated in the Budget that he was looking to restructure pensions, and to bring the retirement age of everyone up to 65 years. That serves the feminists right, because it is the inevitable result of trying to demand equality in all things.

The alternative to bringing our high deficits under control is to have the horrifying spectacle of high interest rates and high inflation which would shackle industry and erode the savings of our people and the incentive of those people to work. I do not believe that the twin monsters of high interest rates and inflation will ever be slain. However, the Chancellor's vision, if fulfilled, may keep them on a very short chain and that is to be welcomed.

The Chancellor has a difficult road from here to there because the demands of the public purse will not diminish, although they will increase at a slower rate than formerly. To finance those demands, we must increase revenue which, at the same time, must be diminished as a percentage of GDP. It is very difficult to do that, for it can be done only if the economy expands rapidly.

In common with much of the industrialised world, we have the ticking time-bomb of the aging population which will place heavy demands on our resources in the coming years. Anything that can be done to ensure a prosperous economy is to be welcomed. The effort to ensure the prompt payment of bills to small firms is particularly welcome. Small firms suffer grievously from slow payment, not only from equally small firms but from larger firms.

We will have prosperity only if there is greater investment in this country—especially in manufacturing industry—and greater emphasis is placed on exports. Given the present malaise in Europe, we should build on our success in overseas markets rather than concentrating too much on the stagnant European market. The Chancellor highlighted the success of our exports outside Europe which he said have risen by 14 per cent. That is too good a chance to miss.

The Chancellor did not extend the scope of VAT in the Budget. I presume that he will avoid a vote on the fuel tax in the Finance Bill, although there is no doubt that Opposition Members will do their best to ensure that a vote is forced. I am glad that the Chancellor did not extend VAT. I would far sooner see him increase the rate on the items to which VAT applies at present. Those rates could be reduced more easily when the situation permitted, rather than removing VAT from another class of expenditure completely.

The Chancellor made clear his views on taxing spending rather than income. Taxing spending is only right up to a point. I believe that there comes a time when the total sums raised and the rates charged become so oppressive that they are seen as unjust and harsh, bearing too heavily on people with low incomes. Reaching that point means taking away with one hand and giving back with the other, not to mention losing out on the bureaucracy and the process of transferring the money. Clearly that should be avoided.

I was also disappointed that the Chancellor did not restore the 40 per cent. capital allowance that we enjoyed for a short time earlier this year. It is necessary if we are to have increased investment, which is what we really need.

One must admit that mortgage interest tax relief is likely to have distorted the economy to some extent, but its good effect was that it helped many people to buy their own homes instead of renting. The change will bring into the Exchequer £970 million in a full year. Moreover, the changes to the married couple's allowance, adding up to another £1 billion in a full year, will make life extremely difficult for young couples buying a house. They will find their pockets hit hard in future. The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), who pointed out that the middle classes were being hit hard by this Budget, was correct.

Our party has made it clear on a number of occasions that we are disappointed by the failure to give the shipping industry, not least the shipbuilding industry, a boost. The latter has many spin-offs in many directions—especially engineering, and especially in our Province.

Motor vehicle duties have been mentioned by many hon. Members and we are likely to hear more about them before this evening is over. They hit rural dwellers hard

[Mr. William Ross]

because in such areas a motor car is not a luxury; it is a necessity. Some families have several motor vehicles because the whole working population of a rural area simply has to get to work, and the only way to do so is by car. The increases will be a heavy burden on the budgets of such households.

It is nonsensical to claim that there have been no income tax rises. In three successive Budgets tax allowances have been frozen, costing people a great deal of money and representing a real increase in tax. But the increase is carefully concealed. I would be far happier if the Government were more honest and if the Chancellor bunged a few pence on income tax. Then at least folk would know where they were and they would be spared the annoyance. It is impossible to hide these things. Many people outside this place can count as well as those inside it can and they know perfectly well that they are being clobbered right across the board. If people knew how much they had to pay and the reasons for it, they might be more willing to swallow their bitter medicine.

The whole Budget adds up to a massive increase in taxation. It may get the deficit down, but the Chancellor will become increasingly unpopular over the next few months. I only hope that he has left himself enough room to reduce interest rates when the recovery starts to flag in the spring or early summer.

7.13 pm

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): I apologise to the House, because certain commitments elsewhere kept me from hearing much of today's debate and will take me away again after I finish speaking. I did, however, have the privilege—if that is the word—of sitting through yesterday's debate in its entirety. Perhaps I am naive, but it would be nice to hear something to the effect that the Labour party had some vague grasp of what is happening in the real world. The world of gloom and doom that its members inhabit is certainly not the same as mine.

Unemployment, for instance, has fallen in most months this year. In my constituency it fell last month by 9·4 per cent.—the biggest fall in the west midlands. I know that my press release about that received unusually little attention in the local media, which may have contributed to the Opposition's ignorance, but then good news is always less welcome than bad.

It would also be nice to see some sign of Labour's future economic policy and strategy. It is not often that I find myself agreeing with the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), but I did agree with what he said on 20 May in this House:

> "I do not think that members of Labour's Front Bench would have even two ideas of what to do with the economy if they came to power . . . a series of soundbites glued together and called an economic policy is not an economic policy."—*[Official Report,* 20 May 1993; Vol. 225, c. 420.]

Like all my colleagues who have spoken thus far, I have no hesitation in giving a warm welcome to the well-structured package that my right hon. and learned Friend announced last week. I derive particular pleasure from the many measures designed to help small businesses which, as Conservative Members well know, are vital to our strategy of reducing unemployment and for future economic prosperity. The long-term impact of many of these measures cannot be overestimated.

I would, however, like to raise certain issues with my right hon. and learned Friend. For example, I urge him to assure himself that the continued increase in VAT thresholds for small businesses is the universal benefit that it is often claimed to be. I know that many builders in my constituency are deeply worried about the ability of smaller builders—one-man bands—to undercut them on price because they are not registered for VAT. The Chancellor will need to look at that carefully. Are we confident that this recurring measure is bringing in the benefits that we believe it does?

My right hon. and learned Friend will not be surprised to hear me say, speaking as one who has the privilege voluntarily to advise the Small Independent Brewers Association, that I am disappointed that he has not seen fit to introduce a sliding scale of duty for the products of the smaller brewers, who bring so much pleasure and delight to our palates and our social lives. I hope that he will look at that, too, in future Budgets.The Chancellor will also know that I have had the privilege for a number of years of advising the Chamber of Shipping, and I share the disappointment expressed by the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) at the lack of any treatment to assist the British shipping industry to achieve the parity that it deserves with its European competitors.

We can unreservedly welcome many of the expenditure measures in this Budget. Many Conservative Members will know of my enthusiasm for the railways, so I particularly welcome the funding by the Department of National Heritage for the new motive power depot of the national railway museum at York. More seriously, I am delighted that it has proved possible to persuade the Treasury to look more favourably on private funding for the west coast main line upgrading, which is so essential to the economic prosperity of the west midlands.

I must add a word of gratitude for the protection of the overseas aid budget. I hope that in years to come we will be able to move further towards our 0·7 per cent. commitment, but in a difficult year I am just grateful for what has been achieved.

There is indeed a great deal of good news lurking in the Budget bundle, as it is called. The predicted horrors, maliciously nurtured by the Labour party, have been comprehensively disproved. We should recognise, though, the alarm, despair and despondency that the scare stories caused among many of my elderly and vulnerable constituents. For that reason alone we should deplore Labour's tactics in nurturing people's fears.

I am pleased that the Budget compensated all pensioners for the VAT on fuel. I am also pleased about the childcare allowance for families and single parents on family credit. I am delighted that we have maintained our commitment to increase in real terms expenditure on the national health service. These are all the hallmarks of a Government who, contrary to Labour's jibes, understand that effective welfare is the litmus test of a decent society.

This does not mean that we can avoid thinking about the future of the welfare state. Yearly increases of the order of 3 per cent. in the social security budget are clearly not affordable. But here I find myself in agreement with the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore): I do not think that we need to panic. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation study to which the hon. Gentleman referred pointed out that there is a degree of exaggeration about demographic effects to come:

> "Over the medium term Britain's welfare spending has been a stable share of national income".

It is a shame that the hon. Gentleman read only the summary of the report; there is often other interesting information in a report's main body. Had he turned to page 6, he would have seen the same report refer to making the welfare state capable of responding to challenges posed by

> "massive changes to labour markets and family structures"

which are leading in turn to greatly raised demands on the welfare state. The hon. Gentleman would also have found on page 21 of the same report a warm endorsement of the welfare state's redistributive effect in our society. It states:

> "The welfare state does much more than redistribute between rich and poor in a single year, although it clearly does this relatively successfully once one takes into account the taxes which pay for it."

We are all clear, or should be, of the need to address the future structure of the welfare state. My proposition is that we have time to consider how we can improve the system and make it work better. I suggest two vital considerations that my right hon. Friends should bear in mind as they consider what future structure the welfare state, or the welfare society as we should now call it, should have.

First, it is essential that we pay full consideration to the impact on pensioners, particularly single pensioners with modest savings or private pensions. I know of the resentment felt by many pensioners in my constituency of Worcester about the impact those modest savings or private pension schemes can have on their eligibility for benefits. They ask me whether this is a reward for the thrift that the Government so often seem to encourage them to practise. They are concerned about lower interest rates which are good for business and mortgage holders, but not always good for them. They have been adversely affected by the move to the council tax. They have been concerned about the rumours spread by the Opposition about sub-post office closures and the removal of other benefits. They are unnerved.

The Budget has made an excellent start on reassuring precisely that group of pensioners that they need have no such fears. I welcome the VAT compensation package, the extension of the home insulation scheme, the new investment vehicle for pensioners and the Chancellor's ringing declaration on the future of the basic pension that it

> "is, and will remain, a cornerstone of the welfare state. The Government are committed to it and to retaining its value."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1993; Vol. 233, c. 927.]

Future Budgets must ensure that the excellent progress made in this Budget is continued.

The second criterion that I should like to see applied to future Budgets is the continuing simplification of and improvement in the welfare state. This Budget has made a good start by merging four benefits into two. Simplification is always welcome. Apart from anything else, there is the reduction in running costs that that is likely to imply for the Departments concerned. On the question of incapacity benefit, speaking as patron of my local myalgic encephalomyelitis support group, I hope that the objective medical test will make full allowance for those whose illness takes a fluctuating pattern, so may be able to pass the test one day, but fail it the next. This is an important consideration in the future of that benefit.

We have made progress with simplification, but we should go further. In our 1970 manifesto, "A Better Tomorrow", we pledged to investigate the possibility of negative income tax. We said that Governments had overestimated the difficulty of this idea. Yesterday my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins) made a strong plea for the Government again to consider this possibility, and I believe that he was right to do so.

At present four agencies assess income and pay benefits: the Inland Revenue, the Contributions Agency, the Benefits Agency and local authorities. It is possible for a family to be on the books of all four at the same time. That does not seem to make much sense. There are several possible ways forward. Negative income tax, basic income schemes or partial basic income schemes would all bring three real benefits: administrative simplicity, an elimination of or a reduction in poverty traps, and a guarantee —I attach great importance to this point—that benefits to which people are often entitled but are too proud to claim will be paid to them without them having to apply for those benefits. I am convinced that such an approach would bring great relief to pensioners. I shall look at it in detail over the coming year. I hope that the Government, too, will give it serious consideration and possibly even consider setting up a royal commission on the subject.

My judgment on the Budget is the same as that of a former adviser to the Labour party, Gavyn Davies. He described the Budget as "brave and sensible". I agree with that judgment.

7.23 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West): I shall be brief as I know that many hon. Members, particularly on the Labour Benches, wish to speak.

I start by reiterating the importance of the GATT round. As the House knows, I am chairman of a public company, TransTec, which is heavily engaged in exports around the world. I assure the Chancellor of the Exchequer and all those engaged in these negotiations that it is vital that they succeed if Britain is to continue to have the access that we need on the terms that we need to expanding world markets. That is all the more important given, regrettably, the bad prospects for the United Kingdom economy following this Budget.

I welcome the Chancellor's presence tonight. The Export Credits Guarantee Department is vital to exporters. Although the increases were welcome—I imagine that it was not easy to get them and I congratulate the Chancellor on doing so—they are not enough. I know from direct experience of selling in export markets against Italy and other countries that are big exporters—the success of the Italians following their devaluation is even bigger than our own—that their terms and the amounts available to them are considerably greater. We have to do more.

The President of the Board of Trade in his remarks today challenged us to say anything good about the City of London. As the chairman of a public limited company that is quoted on the stock exchange, I am delighted to do so. I shall shortly take the opportunity of quoting some City stockbrokers' interesting remarks on the Budget, with which I largely agree.

When I attend meetings in the City I am struck by the huge investment to keep it the financial capital of Europe. I am pleased to see that. Offices are palatial and communications systems fantastic. It would knock Frankfurt and other centres into a cocked hat.

The problem is the marked contradistinction in which that stands to our manufacturing industries, let us say, in

[Mr. Geoffrey Robinson]

the midlands, which the Chancellor knows so well. That is why in our briefing before the Budget and after the Budget we have urged the Government to move on capital allowances. They have done nothing about it. Cash flow impacts much more importantly on industry than on the Government—the Government will get the money anyway. We are talking of a cash flow effect. That is an important consideration if one is serious about incentives to invest.

I welcome in particular the joint ventures project and the appointment of Sir Alastair Morton to be the private sector representative. I welcome it, not least because I had the pleasure of working with Alastair Morton, as he then was, for a number of years in the late 1960s in what was then the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation. If the Chancellor does not know already he will soon learn that Alastair Morton strongly believes in Government-industry co-operation. He does not believe that they have to be at each other's throats, as was encouraged unnecessarily through the 1980s. It will be necessary for the Chancellor to stump up some money, if the venture is to work and Sir Alastair is to have any chance at all. He is unquestionably the man for the job and an excellent choice. I commend him to the Chancellor. I am not clear whether this money is to be within the external financing limits or outside the normal Government guarantee that is implicit in any Government funding. Whichever it is, the money must be available on sensible terms. There is the old concept of public dividend capital and there is the possibility of longer-term loans. The size of the financial package is vital if the venture is to succeed.

What does industry need? Above all, it needs lower interest rates—the Chancellor is still being too cautious on that—and a continuing competitive exchange rate. The two are closely linked. The Chancellor must keep those at the front of his mind as the overriding priorities for next year.

The Kleinwort Benson research group—the City merchant bank to which I referred earlier—has produced an excellent note, which makes three points about the Budget with which I fully agree. It states that the Chancellor has

> "unveiled a far tougher unified Budget than the fiscal retrenchment of the early 1980s."

If that does not send a shiver down the spine of all hon. Members present, it should do. The two further points concern public spending. The note states:

> "In real terms, underlying public spending is forecast to fall by 1·3 per cent. next fiscal year."

More importantly, it states that

> "public sector capital expenditure is forecast to fall by 18·5 per cent. in real terms, in sharp contrast to what is happening in Japan."

I shall take up that reference later.

Those are enormous sums and, as the Treasury inflicts them on the country, it should be aware of what happened in the early 1980s. I know that it is all part of tawdry folklore that that Budget laid the foundation for success through the 1980s. That is rubbish. What gave us success was a cheap pound, the tremendous growth in world markets and some movement in commodity prices. All that that Budget did was to get us to such a low level we had nowhere else to go apart from disappear down a vortex of total despair. For those hon. Members who were not in the House during those years and for the Chancellor who was, I shall remind the House that in the west midlands we lost one third of our manufacturing capacity and we have not got it back. That is what shows in the balance of trade in manufacturing goods now. Much of that capacity was perfectly viable, manufacturing capacity. It was not lost because of inefficient plants or management, trade union activity or other such nonsense. Every day that I woke up in Coventry a new factory had gone under and if that is where we are again heading, action must be taken to avoid it.

Clearly, there are no signs of many important world markets recovering. It is well known that the upsurge of the American economy pulled the world economy with it during the 1980s, but there is no sign of that happening now. Europe is in deep depression and Japan is in recession, so the only way for the United Kingdom to come out of recession is through the manufacturing sector and the benefits, if we can secure them, from lower interest rates and a commensurately low and competitive sterling exchange rate.

The other route out of recession concerns public spending, which, far from being boosted as is happening in Japan, is being cut dramatically by 18·5 per cent. I shall quote a paragraph of the Kleinwort Benson research headed "The madness of cutting public sector investment", which directly applies to the Chancellor. It states that the Chancellor

> "has clearly not learnt anything from the Japanese. In sharp contrast to what is happening here, public sector investment in Japan is forecast to grow by over 11 per cent. in real terms in calendar year 1994, after 11 per cent. this year. According to . . . our Japanese economist, public sector investment is being relied upon to be the engine for the recovery and next year could contribute 2 per cent. to overall growth in Japan."

The Chancellor has ruled out that option. It brings me to my final point—the question of unemployment.

The Chancellor has clobbered the middle classes, he has taken inadequate measures for industry and unfairly penalised—in an opportunist fashion—the unemployed when it is least required. Whatever aspirations he may have or however much he feels that he has to keep in with his own right wing, will he take it from me that the jobs are not there. Cutting the period in which one can claim benefit from one year to six months will not reduce unemployment, but merely increase the misery of those on the dole. Let the Chancellor come to the west midlands and see the low level in manufacturing. Where are the people who are looking for jobs going to find them in the present circumstances? That was the unkindest cut of all and not worthy of the Chancellor as a person.

I hesitate to take issue with my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), but it seems that we have a problem in the nation's finances. On present terms, I do not see how the present level of taxation, with the current and growing levels of social benefit payments——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

7.33 pm

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Many have already referred to the recovery in Britain that forms the backdrop to the Budget. The Government have forecast growth at 1·75 per cent. this year and 2·5 per cent. next year. Inflation is well down and is at its lowest level for 30 years, industrial production is well up, retail sales are up and unemployment is down. Interest rates are at their lowest level since 1977 and the Organisation for Economic

Co-operation and Development, the European Union and the International Monetary Fund have predicted that Britain will be the fastest-growing major economy in Europe this year and next. The shrewdest of all economic watchers, the markets, tend to agree. Not only has the market in London risen significantly over the past week, it has also risen consistently over the past year and now stands at some 20 per cent. higher than a year ago.

Before anybody on the Opposition Benches casts a sneer in that direction, they should remember that we live in the 1990s when there are more shareholders in Britain than there are trade union members—10 million shareholders will benefit from that growth. Eleven million people who participate in occupational pension schemes will benefit because they have £200 billion invested on the United Kingdom stock market. The 1·5 million people who participate in share option schemes and the 6 million people who have private pension schemes will also benefit.

In contrast to the positive way in which the Budget has been received by the markets because of the benefits that I have outlined is the response of the Opposition. During the debate on the Loyal Address, I had the temerity to ask the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), as he was castigating policy after policy of the Chancellor that was announced in the Queen's Speech, whether he still stood by his pledge made at the past election to abolish the upper earnings limit on national insurance contributions. The hon. Gentleman replied:

> "Our policies are going before the Commission on Social Justice,"—[*Official Report*, 25 November 1993; Vol. 233, c. 597.]

What a staggering response. I wonder if the same applies to the other policies such as increasing child benefit to £9·95 a week, increasing the basic retirement pension by £5 a week, abolishing the 2 per cent. national insurance contribution for earnings under £54 per week or increasing the top rate of tax to 50 per cent.? Those so-called election winners last year are embarrassingly locked in the cupboard of the Commission on Social Justice this year.

The Commission is comprised of members from a broad and average cross-section of the British public. I have a list of them. There are some six professors, the provost of Sheffield cathedral, the vice-chair of the Low Pay Unit, the national officer of the Confederation of Health Service Employees and, out of 16, there is one business man—the chairman of Northern Foods plc.

What have that broad, cross-section of the British public made up of Mr, Mrs and Ms Average come up with after a year? The Commission has just published an important report on the vital issue of social security, which states:

> "Over the next six months we will publish a series of papers explaining some of the tough questions which we believe the country faces: setting out the advantages and disadvantages of the different options."

It displays a degree of forthrightness that makes the Liberal Democrats look decisive. It is no wonder that in exasperation the Leader of the Opposition dashed off to Brussels to sign the socialist manifesto. It may be a bad policy, but at least it is a policy.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said in his own press release on 3 July:

> "We"—

the Labour party—

> "have nothing to say across a whole range of Macro economic policy, on exchange rates on interest rates, fiscal policy, demand management and public spending."

The Opposition are so bereft of ideas, as to make their last manifesto seem original.

I shall now talk about a matter that may gain some cross-party support—late payment of debt. I brought the issue before the House when I presented the Commercial Debt Settlement Bill on 2 December 1992. It called for statutory payment terms of 30 days from the date of invoice on commercial debt in the United Kingdom. In the United Kingdom, it takes 81 days for the average business debt to be settled; that is 51 days after normal payment terms. We have the worst record in Europe. The figure for Germany is 18 days and for France it is 28 days. Ireland is the only country to come anywhere near us with 34 days. When one considers that it is only the United Kingdom and Ireland that do not have any statutory protection for businesses in that area, the figures are not surprising.

The choice is between a code of practice and legislation. I am normally against increasing the legislative burden at a time of deregulation, but I believe that the only opportunity to offer protection is through statutory requirements. The CBI introduced a prompt payers charter three years ago. Since then, it has managed to get only 600 firms, out of some 3 million in the United Kingdom, to sign up to the charter. That demonstrates the problems we face.

The problem affects not only small business, but big business. Now that we are in the single market, people from countries that have protection against late payment look to the United Kingdom as an opportune market in which to get cheap credit. On 11 May 1993, the *Financial Times* reported the findings of a survey carried out by NCM, the credit insurance company. The article said:

> "One in five UK companies lost money as a result of late payment by an EC customer in the year ended March 1993 compared to one in eight in the year ended March 1989."

In the year ended March 1993, delayed payments from Germany rose by 136 per cent. and from Italy by 115 per cent. It is vital that our exporters, who are the lifeblood of our economy and who are leading the country out of recession, are afforded the fullest protection possible when they trade with their European competitors. The only way to do that is through legislation and I shall feed that view into the current DTI consultation.

In the north-east, Manufacturing Challenge, a private, self-help initiative, has been set up. It is run by business men and entrepreneurs for business men and entrepreneurs. They have set themselves a target of doubling output and tripling exports over the next 10 years. Already, almost 1,000 north-east manufacturing businesses have signed up to the challenge. We must do everything possible to ensure that the challenge is achieved.

The export credit guarantee premiums reduction will be especially welcome. However, business will focus, as the hon. Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson) rightly did, on an agreement on the general agreement on tariffs and trade, especially at this important juncture. Some 116 countries are participating in the Uruguay round of GATT. The success of the negotiations in liberalising world trade in the past has been dramatic. The average tariff has fallen from almost 40 per cent. when GATT was established in 1947 to about 4·7 per cent. now. If the final negotiations are successful this week, the figure will be reduced still further to 3 per cent.

The negotiations have been going on for seven years and they will have a dramatic effect on trade. Between 1959 and 1975, world trade expanded fivefold and the world economy doubled in size. The Prime Minister has rightly placed the settlement of the GATT round at the top

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of his agenda. Its conclusion could do much to release the rest of Europe from the grip of recession. That, together with the Budget, will leave British business in an extremely good position to take full advantage of the recovery.

The Budget is a courageous and strategic one. It has succeeded at a stroke in boosting recovery in the United Kingdom, in reforming the nation's finances for the next century and in exposing the paucity of ideas and alternatives among Opposition Members.

7.42 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): A couple of hours ago, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) reminded us of the Macleod dictum—cheers for the Budget, but tears in the summer. With the change in the timetable, we should amend that to cheers for the Budget, but tears before Christmas. I suspect that given the tax rise of £10 a week for average families, it will not be long before the gloss is knocked off this particular Budget.

I shall proceed on the basis that what the Chancellor did not say last Tuesday may be more important than what he did say. I was struck by the fact that only one sentence in the Budget statement was allocated to the balance of payments. Indeed, when the President of the Board of Trade spoke earlier today, he argued that the balance of payments was improving because the Treasury forecast for last year's deficit had been revised downwards. That is true. The Treasury forecast for the 1992 balance of payments deficit has been revised downwards in the Red Book from £12·5 billion to £8·5 billion. However, that is merely the revision of a forecast. The real underlying position is a deterioration from a £8·5 billion deficit last year to a £9·5 billion deficit being forecast this year. It strikes me that if the Treasury could not this year forecast last year's deficit correctly, it is hardly likely to be able to forecast the future correctly. The underlying position is deteriorating. Six out of seven of the Chancellor's wise men forecast a further deterioration in the balance of payments deficit over coming years, despite of and after the correction in the value of sterling.

The basic constraint on the United Kingdom economy is not the Budget deficit, which we have been debating for the past week, but the balance of payments deficit. If it were not for a deficit of such magnitude, it would be possible to expand the economy out of recession and to recoup Budget revenues in that fashion. The basic problem is that the British balance of payments is already in deep water. If we had a recovery of any scale, the balance of payments would go right down the plughole. I also believe that the anticipated recovery will not be, in the Chancellor's jargon, "sustainable". It will be a recovery that is "poor, solitary and short".

The recovery will also be "nasty" and "brutish" as a result of the taxation changes that the Budget entails. Whenever the Chancellor has made key taxation decisions, he has chosen the regressive route. There has been a reduction in benefits, a shift to indirect taxation, a freezing of allowances and the beginnings of the opt-out of the middle classes from welfare provision. All that suggests a regressive attitude towards basic welfare and taxation provision.

It is true that, as the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) suggested earlier, many people who are more comfortably off will feel the chill wind of taxation from this Budget. I suspect that it is part of the Government's political strategy that such people will be compensated in the short term by the reduction in mortgatge payments and that, as we near the election, the Government will reverse the sacrifices of the middle classes.

Therefore, the Budget is anti-poor. It is also anti-Scottish in many of its components, and I shall examine three of those this evening. First, there is no recognition in the compensation scheme for VAT on domestic fuel of the fact that within colder areas, such as Scotland, it costs more for people to heat their homes. Even when the compensation package operates to its full extent, £150 million to £200 million will be taken out of the Scottish economy by the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel. That is £30 to £40 a head.

That imposition comes on top of the real problem, which is widely recognised. Some 750,000 people in Scotland currently have trouble with their heating. There is no way in which the Chancellor's compensation package will fully compensate people who already have problems with their domestic heating in a cold climate. It is to the shame of the House that when the issue was put to the test on 28 October, only 33 hon. Members bothered to go into the Division Lobbies to vote for a cold climate allowance which would have tackled head on the question of fuel poverty.

A second example of the anti-Scottish nature of the Budget is the imposition of increases in petrol duties. They will fall hardest in the rural areas and in areas where there are already high petrol prices. I have here the Automobile Association's current fuel price report. It shows that with an average price of £2·35 a gallon in Aberdeen, it is now 24p dearer to buy a gallon of unleaded petrol there than it is to buy a gallon in Portsmouth, where it costs £2·11. Clearly, an imposition of further duties, with the threat of much more to come, will hit hardest the areas where fuel prices are now highest.

As has been mentioned, private cars are not a luxury but a necessity in many rural areas. The fuel tax increase of 3p a litre as the Chancellor described it—I was surprised because if there was ever a gallon man, it was the Chancellor—which is the equivalent of 14p or more per gallon, will increase the price of just about every item on shop and supermarket counters throughout Scotland. We have the irony of fuel tax increases that will hit hardest the energy-producing areas of the country.

Thirdly, the Budget offered a rather strange petroleum revenue tax concession to pipeline networks in the North sea. I am in favour of PRT concessions because I believe that the PRT changes last year did a great deal of damage in the North sea. However, the one concession in the Budget has been drawn so specifically that the only pipeline consortium that can possibly benefit is the central area transmission system—the CATS consortium—which takes gas from the central North sea and lands it on Teesside. It is a concession that has been drawn in such a way that it can benefit only one consortium of oil and gas companies. It would be like having a concession on income tax that said in its subtext that the concession would be given only to someone named Clarke, whose first name is Kenneth, who happens to be the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who dresses in a dishevelled manner and wears Hush Puppies. The oil tax concession has been drawn in such a way as to benefit British Gas and Amoco; those companies are suctioning gas out of the North sea and taking it to Teesside.

In those three areas, the Budget ensures that the Scottish people will suffer the remarkable paradox of fuel poverty among energy plenty.

I was struck not only by the foolish cheers of Conservative Members that greeted the Budget but by the lack of genuine outrage on the Labour Benches. Some hon. Members will be familiar with *The Sunday Post*, a remarkably successful Scottish newspaper that even its friends would not call a left-wing organ of the radical side of politics. On Sunday, its political commentary about the Budget said:

> "There was cold comfort for the poorest, oldest and weakest among us—the very people Labour claim to be protecting . . . a lean and hungry Opposition would have eaten the Tories for breakfast, but John Smith's toothless tigers let them off with barely a scratch.
>
> Nye Bevan must be spinning in his grave."

If we have reached a situation when even *The Sunday Post* believes that the Labour party has lost its radical cutting edge, it suggests that it is not only the Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer who has lost his way in politics.

7.51 pm

Mr. David Willetts (Havant): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on a Budget that has struck an ingenious balance between fiscal probity on the one hand and political sensitivity on the other. The Government's borrowing requirement needed to be reduced for the simple reason—setting aside all the fancy economic arguments—that it is very expensive to borrow £50 billion a year. That means that taxpayers' money is used for interest payments when it should be use for better things.

The Chancellor has managed to combine a reduction in the borrowing requirement with taking account of the sensitivities of important groups of the population. Pensioners will have the benefit of the very generous package of compensation for VAT on fuel. Small business men in my constituency will welcome the tightening up on the late payment of bills.

The Chancellor has struck another balance, the one between fiscal policy and monetary policy. As well as cutting the Budget deficit, there was a very welcome reduction in interest rates announced the week before the Budget.

We have heard the arguments about the conduct of monetary policy and the arguments for and against an independent central bank, particularly from my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen). There are arguments for giving the Bank of England greater independence. When I think back to my days as an official in the Treasury's monetary policy division 10 years ago, I am embarrassed about the way that articles appearing in the Bank of England's Quarterly Bulletin were sent to us for detailed textual scrutiny; every paragraph had to be checked and suggestions made so that it was identical to the Treasury view. The fact that the Bank of England now has its own independent role in commenting on the Government's performance in attaining its inflation objectives is clearly an improvement.

One of the achievements of the Budget is that it has tightened fiscal policy and, at the same time, made some loosening of monetary policy possible. Have we reached the position where we have to be coy about a reduction in interest rates? If the Chancellor has reached an overall macro-economic judgment, I do not see why we should feel that an announcement of a cut in interest rates should be made at a different time by a different body. It is acceptable that the announcements of tax increases and interest rate cuts should go together.

Some people say that the problem of the credibility of financial policy requires an independent central bank. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West moved towards the conventional wisdom on this subject, which was unusual for him. We rarely associate him with the conventional wisdom.

If 10-year gilt rates are down to 7 per cent., that suggests that the City has no doubt about the Government's ability to hold down the rate of inflation in the long term. Some of the more radical arguments for an independent central bank are not borne out by the evidence.

My second point on the Budget concerns a subject that is rather shrouded in esoteric mystery—the announcement in the Budget about improved resource accounting in the public sector. One of my right hon. and learned Friend's great gifts is the ability to talk about the economy and controlling the public finances in language that is understood by the everyday citizen. I am sure that we will not hear much from the Chancellor about the esoteric mysteries of resource accounting. That is sensible and understandable.

There is buried within the Treasury's proposals about improved accounting for the cost of capital and sensible recognition—and here I disagree with the hon. Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson)—that within the public sector the assumption that capital is virtuous and that current spending is somehow evil does not make much sense. The hon. Member for Coventry, North-West quoted figures from Kleinwort Benson's investment bulletin. I must reveal that I am a consultant to Kleinwort Benson. Even so, I disagree with what the hon. Gentleman said using those quotations.

In the public sector paying science teachers more may be a better long-term investment for the British economy than building new schools. One of the problems of the public sector is that we have too often engaged in funding new capital projects when it would have been more sensible better to maintain our current plant and equipment. More money should have been spent on refurbishment and proper maintenance.

In a world where capital is free but rationed, there is a temptation for people in the public sector to bid for more of that free capital because they have never had to think about long-term depreciation costs and the real cost of capital. In the public sector, we are biased towards capital spending, which I hope the Treasury's new guidelines will correct.

My third comment concerns the balance of the burden of taxation. The argument that has been debated in the media during the past few months is whether the way to deal with the Budget deficit is by increasing taxes or cutting expenditure. That either/or dilemma seems to me to be bogus. We can see from the Budget that tight public expenditure control and tax increases complement each other.

The best way to achieving tight public expenditure control is for people to see that the taxpayers who can afford it are making their contribution to bringing the deficit down. Taxpayers will be prepared to pay higher taxes only if they are confident that the public sector is

[Mr. David Willetts]

subject to the same stringency and discipline that the private sector has been experiencing for the past few years. The tax increases and tight expenditure control announced in the Budget are stronger and more credible because they are set alongside each other.

After the March Budget, there was an argument that because of VAT on fuel the Budget was regressive. But VAT on fuel was only approximately a third of the tax increases announced in the Budget. There was also an increase in national insurance contributions, from which pensioners are exempt. Moreover, most pensioners are not paying mortgages and are unaffected by the reduction in mortgage interest relief. The overall impact of the first Budget this year was, if anything, to shift the burden of taxation away from pensioners.

This Budget is equally progressive. The Library provided me with some figures concerning the long-term trends in the proportion of taxpayers paying income tax. In 1978-79, the top 1 per cent. of taxpayers bore 11 per cent. of all income tax liabilities. In 1993-94 it is provisionally estimated that the top 1 per cent. of income taxpayers will bear 17 per cent. of all income tax liabilities. In 1978-79, the top 10 per cent. of income taxpayers were bearing 34 per cent. of all income tax liabilities; that is now up to 45 per cent. In other words, the more affluent taxpayers are paying a higher proportion of the total burden of income tax than at the beginning of the Government's term in office. That suggests that the picture of tax increases is very different from what we have been led to believe.

The debate on the future of the welfare state has now begun. On Sunday, I read with great interest a story on the front page of *The Sunday Times* which said that we should now have a debate about the integration of taxes and benefits. My hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) spoke on that subject.

We need continuing reform of the welfare state because it cannot be allowed to remain unchanged, but, equally, some ideas about the integration of taxes and benefits are classic examples of yesterday's ideas for tomorrow. They are largely unworkable because people pay taxes on their annual income while benefits are paid to them according to weekly or fortnightly needs. People are also taxed on the basis of where they are employed, whereas benefits are paid on the basis of where they live.

Moreover, as a Conservative, I believe that there is a crucial difference between paying into the system through taxes and national insurance contributions and taking out of the system through social security payments. We need continuing reform of the welfare state, but it needs to take the form of encouraging private insurance, wherever that is possible. We should also ensure that entitlement to benefit is targeted on greatest need, which means ensuring that the conditions for that entitlement are properly met.

I hope that the Labour party's Social Justice Commission will address some of those questions, but as my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has already said, so far it seems to be more concerned with raising questions than delivering answers. My overall judgment of the Chancellor's Budget is that it strikes the right balance between fiscal probity and political sensitivity and I warmly welcome it.

8.1 pm

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): It is important that the Opposition should not be seen to be wholly negative, so may I begin by welcoming some parts of the Budget. For example, the assistance for child care, although underfunded, is a start. I also welcome the plans for apprenticeships and the proposals to close certain tax loopholes as well as the proposals to tackle late payments for small businesses. I understand, however, that the business community is not united on that issue, so caution must be exercised before any legislation is introduced.

I also welcome the upgrading of the west coast main line, which will benefit the west midlands. I should remind the Chancellor, however, that the Minister for Public Transport said on the Monday before the Budget that failure to upgrade the west coast main line was not an option and that if private finance did not come forward, the public sector must invest.

Budgets are judged on the economic future that they create for Britain. On that key issue the Chancellor delivered the Budget with all the style and panache of a second-hand car dealer selling a dodgy motor—the bigger the defects, the wider the grin and the faster the patter.

The Chancellor originally got the franchise to sell his vehicle by advertising at the general election that the Conservative Government would cost less and deliver more. Instead, with the cheeky assurance that we had all got off lightly because he had not extended VAT, the Chancellor delivered one of the biggest tax hikes in British history at the same time as imposing some of the worst cuts in public provision.

The Government say that their new policy is "back to basics", but we now know that a "back to basics" economic policy means that people pay more and get less. "Back to basics" does not just mean that the usual victims of Conservatism will be punished. Yes, the unemployed will be battered because their benefits will be reduced to six months and invalids may face six months of worry about whether they will qualify for the equivalent of invalidity benefit. This time, however, middle income families will also pay more and get less. They will lose because of the cuts in the married couple's allowance and mortgage interest relief. They will lose due to the burglary tax, because of VAT on home insurance, and they will lose due to the new car tax, because of VAT on car insurance. The new airport tax will hit any holidays taken by families from October 1994. Taken together, this year's Tory Budget will cost middle income families in my constituency £10 a week next year and £16 a week from April 1995. Half of the total collected will come from direct taxation.

Tory broken promises will mean that 19 out of 20 households will be worse off and the total tax burden will rise to 38·5 per cent. in the next few years—it was 34 per cent. under Labour in 1979. People will receive less provision for the extra money that they must spend.

The Chancellor told the House that the aim of his first Budget was to sustain economic recovery, but that is precisely the central flaw in his Budget. Taking so much out of the economy at a time of such tentative recovery is an extremely risky strategy. According to business men in the west midlands and north Warwickshire, the recovery is at best very weak and could easily stall. If so, we would be dependent upon the recovery of the European economies. That could take some years.

This is the wrong time to take risks with the recovery, but the Chancellor has decided to take them for short-term party political gains—three days of good headlines. He said that the recovery was the priority, but the real aim of the Budget was just to reduce the deficit. I do not deny that the two are interlinked, but effectively tackling the deficit depends on economic recovery. The Chancellor seems to think, however, that economic recovery depends on tackling the deficit.

In my view, the Government have overplayed the dangers of the deficit at this stage in the economic cycle for two reasons. First, it is an excuse for cuts in social security payments and the welfare state. Secondly, because of the Government's current lack of economic direction, they are still dependent on the old nostrums of monetarism to act as some kind of guide even on the zig-zag economic course on which they have now embarked.

The deficit was the creation of economic mismanagement by the Government in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In particular, we entered the ERM at a rate that many of us —even those of us who favoured the ERM in principle —said at the time was unsustainable. By trying to sustain the unsustainable, through high interest rates, appalling damage was done to the British economy. That policy drove us into recession and unemployment, which created the deficit. It was the Government's bad judgment that created the deficit.

It was only the failure of Government policy in September 1992 that allowed the recovery to start as the value of the pound fell and interest rates also began to fall. To take money out of the economy now through taxation and social security cuts will reduce demand and damage the many businesses that rely on spending power. That decision displays the same bad judgment that we have seen all too often from the Government.

The Government's concern that the deficit would crowd out investment and damage recovery is not completely unfounded, but we do not live in a closed economy. The crowding out of investment is a theory that lacks resonance day by day as our economy becomes more international and investment is an international decision for capital.

It is difficult to be sure how much of the deficit is structural, but the OECD has suggested that at least two thirds of the PSBR is cyclical—mainly unemployment related. If £27 billion goes on keeping people out of work, the Government have two choices: they could cut benefits or invest in putting the unemployed back to productive work. The Chancellor chose the first option. Labour would choose the second.

The Chancellor risks a £12 billion deflationary Budget in the hope that it will not damage recovery. I hope that he is right, but I suspect that he is wrong. He has taken a risky course and a lot will depend on lowering interest rates soon to reduce the deflationary impact of the Budget.

In an internationally competitive market, the central role of Government is to use their resources, their ability to plan and direct, to create the basis for effective competition for Britain. That means creating physical infrastructures such as good quality railways, roads and communications. It means creating an intellectual base for research and development opportunities and a skilled and educated work force. It means creating the basis for a high skill, high wage, productive, competitive economy.

The Budget does not have that vision for Britain. It has all the hallmarks of the fag-end of the Thatcherite agenda. The old sweat shop mentality still drips from every pore of the Budget. Thatcherism failed economically because it tried to build policy on an intellectual argument that did not recognise the realities of the modern international economies. This Budget will therefore fail. It does not create an effective economic base for Britain's future.

The effects of the failure of the Chancellor's policies will be felt disproportionately by the unemployed and by the sick. In the Budget, the vulnerable pay the price of their vulnerability.

Last weekend, several people who were seeking invalidity benefit were at my surgery. They expressed real concern about their future. There is little evidence of abuse of invalidity benefit. The DSS commissioned research by Ehrens and Gate and, as the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) pointed out in his speech last Wednesday, the DSS has not yet received the findings of that research, and there is little evidence that dishonest people are receiving invalidity benefit on a large scale. Eight out of 10 claims referred to the Benefits Agency medical service have seen the GP's decision upheld.

Although the Government's proposals will not remove most of the present recipients from benefit, they will cause massive worry to a most vulnerable group. They will ensure that a number of current marginal cases do not get the benefit, and that a section who are now clearly within the present criteria are moved to a marginal position where they may or may not get the benefit.

The Budget has been about punishing victims: the victims of invalidity, of unemployment and, beyond that, of all the taxpayers of Britain, who are the victims of a Tory Government whose incompetence over the past 14 years has been continued in the Budget.

8.11 pm

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): The hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) was clearly not in the Chamber last Tuesday to hear the Budget that I heard. I wonder whether he has confused last Tuesday's Budget with the Labour party shadow Budget of last year, because the Budget that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor introduced last Tuesday has received a resounding welcome up and down the country.

I want to speak in support of the Budget, particularly on behalf of the west country, which is the region that I am proud to represent. In the west country, we have a high proportion of retired people. Therefore, I am particularly pleased that, in anybody's language, the Budget can be described as a Budget for pensioners. I was delighted with the compensation package for VAT on fuel. It is an excellent package, and I am sure that it will alleviate—and already has alleviated—many of the anxieties of pensioners living in the west country.

Of course, many of those anxieties have been whipped up by Opposition Members, who I am sure spend every night lying awake thinking up ways of getting up in the morning and frightening elderly people. Now that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor has delivered such an excellent compensation package, I wonder what the active minds of Opposition Members will be dreaming up tonight to frighten elderly people tomorrow.

I welcome the support that we have given, not just to pensioners on income support and the most vulnerable, but to all pensioners. The reason why I welcome it so strongly is that I believe that we should encourage responsible behaviour. We should encourage those who have been

[Mr. Gary Streeter]

thrifty, and have put a little by for a rainy day. So often we exclude them from any benefit and compensation, but they can be just as elderly, as concerned and anxious as the next person.

I would encourage us to go further down the line of setting up our tax and welfare systems to encourage responsible behaviour and discourage irresponsible behaviour. I particularly welcome the fact that the compensation is to be received by pensioners in advance of the higher bills. That will enable them to see that they no longer have to worry about turning on the gas and electricity for fear of not being able to afford to pay their bills, because the compensation will be there before their very eyes before those days arrive.

I welcome also the fact that, on average, the compensation package will broadly cover all changes in fuel bills. I note that the Labour party must be happy about the compensation package, because it has not tabled any amendments to today's debate to amend it in any way.

I welcome the guaranteed income bond, which is another initiative of my right hon. and learned Friend. Another anxiety that pensioners have is that, as interest rates decline, and while those of us with large mortgages —in my case, I mean large—welcome interest rate reductions, pensioners see their incomes shrink.

We can argue until we are blue in the face that, with very low inflation, the real value of their capital and their monthly income is being preserved, but it does not feel that way to them. That is why I so warmly welcome the guaranteed income bond, which, when established, will give a guaranteed monthly return for a fixed period of five years. That is something for elderly people to plan on. If there is one thing that pensioners like to do more than anything else, it is to be able to look forward with a sense of certainty and comfort.

Those new bonds, which I am sure will quickly be called granny bonds, are to be warmly welcomed; they are an excellent part of the Budget.

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): Does my hon. Friend agree that something else for which pensioners have the Government to thank in planning their finances is the very low rate of inflation, which was not something that they enjoyed under the past Labour Government?

Mr. Streeter: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that excellent point. The bedrock of our policies is to help elderly people with savings. Low inflation is the key: that is something that Opposition Members could never achieve in the past, and of course will never have the opportunity to achieve in the future. I welcome the Budget as a Budget for pensioners, and therefore a Budget for the west country.

The second aspect of the Budget which is a super boost for the west country is the help for small businesses. We know that the west country is full of many excellent small and medium-sized businesses. Until I was elected to this place, I spent my career advising small and medium-sized businesses on legal and other general commercial matters as a solicitor specialising in company and commercial law. I feel that I have a sense of what businesses require. When business people in Plymouth speak to me about what they want from the Government, they say that, first and foremost, they want a stable economic environment. Secondly, they want a minimum of expensive bureaucracy. Thirdly, they want the ability to obtain working capital at a price they can afford. I shall examine the Budget against that benchmark: first, the right economic environment. With inflation at 1·4 per cent., with interest rates currently at 5·5 per cent.—we hope that they will go lower yet—and with a competitive pound, that is the right framework that our businesses are looking for.

The managing director of the Barden Corporation, which is an excellent company in Plymouth, employs 250 people, makes high-precision ball bearings and exports them all over the world, told me only a week ago that it was now enjoying the best year that it had had for 10 years. He puts it down primarily to two things: first, the competitive pound, which makes his products competitive for overseas markets; secondly, the fact that our non-wage labour costs are lower than those of our European competitors.

He drew my attention to the fact that his sister company in Germany has non-wage labour costs roughly 30 per cent. higher than the costs in the United Kingdom, because of the implications of German employment legislation reflecting the social chapter. The recipe that Opposition Members wish to prescribe for this country is non-competitive labour rates, which would price our goods out of the market.

When I think about what Opposition Members want us to enter into—a minimum wage, the social chapter and the 35-hour working week—I can only describe it as a charter for job losses. It is to be rejected by all right-thinking people.

We have the right framework for economic growth, and business people in the west country are grateful for that. The Budget has introduced a variety of excellent measures to help the small business man. Again, my right hon. and learned Friend has referred to deregulation, a boost that is to come in the months that lie ahead. In that deregulation, can we also deal with those over-zealous officials who, no matter what regulations we might have, seek to enforce them in a way that does not take into account the requirements of small businesses?

Perhaps it should be made an absolute requirement for enforcement officers to have greater experience of small business, so that they know what it is like for business men to worry that they may not have enough money to pay the wages at the end of the week or to buy food for their families at the weekend unless they get their bills paid and can produce the goods that week. We need to look at the way in which we enforce our regulations.

The deregulation move is important, as are the reform of the current regime for assessing personal tax, the lifting of the VAT threshold and the reduction of audit requirements. All those measures are welcome.

I want to make one final point about small business before I sit down and allow others to have their say. I have been advising small and medium-sized companies for the past 12 years. In my experience, one of the pressing requirements is working capital, in particular the ability to attract equity investment. I welcome the venture capital trust and enterprise investment schemes warmly, because they will be an important factor in helping to bridge the gap in the market.

Unlike some of their European competitors, our business people find it difficult to attract equity capital in relatively small amounts. When I was in private practice, I used to say to clients, "I can find you £3 million, but it will be a struggle to find £100,000." It is that sort of amount that makes the difference between standing still or growth, enabling businesses to build a new extension, find extra markets or take on a new sales director. That is the sort of equity investment for which small and medium-sized businesses are looking.

I welcome the change from the old BES rules, which will allow investors to take up a paid directorship with the company in which they are investing. Many people with money to invest are looking to become actively involved in small companies for interest's sake. They have not just cash but a wealth of experience and expertise to offer, and can be tremendously helpful to young growing companies. I believe that the measures to help small businesses are an enormous asset to it. They will be a boost for jobs, and will be warmly welcomed throughout the west country.

In my opinion, the most important aspect of the Budget is the way in which it has been received. Its first goal was that it should not damage the recovery. That is why the reception of ordinary men and women up and down the country has been so important. I am one of many Conservative Members who—unlike Opposition Members, I suspect—are in touch with real people outside this place. [HON. MEMBERS: "Come off it."] Opposition Members, who spend their time with trade unionists and full-time officials, are not in touch with real people. Real people welcome the Budget. It will not be a brake on the recovery. It will keep tills ringing in Plymouth high street, and I look forward to retail sales in December and January significantly higher than in the same period last year. This has been a successful Budget, and it is an important milestone on the road towards our great goal of sustainable economic growth.

8.24 pm

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): Last week, in one of the jolly radio interviews that have become the Chancellor's hallmark, the right hon. and learned Gentleman revealed that he was amazed at the positive reception that his Budget elicited. I am not surprised that he was amazed. No one knows better than the right hon. and learned Gentleman just how much of a gamble his Budget was; how deeply and possibly deadly deflationary it will turn out to be; and how savage will be its effect on living standards of people throughout the country, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman has been the first to boast. That is why many of the economic judgments that have followed the Budget are rather more cautious than the enthusiastic response of political journalists—a more impressionable bunch, in my experience—not to mention the premature excitement shown by Tory Members as illustrated by the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter).

What the hon. Gentleman and other Tory Members need to remember is that the people who have not yet spoken about the Budget are those most directly affected by it—the public. They have yet to give their verdict about the combined effect of tax increases and spending cuts equivalent to almost 8p on the basic rate of income tax. They have not yet said what they think about the implications for services of public sector wage increases having to be paid for out of patient care, school books and social services, or about the additional financial burden on families, as sick pay, invalidity benefit and unemployment benefit are cut. They have not said what they think about the fact that council tax will be pushed through the roof as the inevitable consequence of the measures in the Budget. The public's reaction will be justifiable fear, then anger made all the fiercer because of the Government's duplicity and their betrayal of election promises.

The longer-term economic judgment of the Budget—and of the Chancellor's claim that the Budget has delivered sound finance at last—depends on a number of assumptions that are by no means certain to be fulfilled: first, that recovery is not damaged by the deflationary effect of the measures; secondly, that the Chancellor's spending targets are met; thirdly, that the Chancellor is prepared to put up taxes even further if the totals do not hold; and, fourthly, that world economic developments promote growth rather than undermine it—a dangerous assumption given conditions in Europe, and particularly in Germany, as well as in Japan.

A great risk is being taken with the recovery, which is very fragile, as Ministers acknowledge in their more candid—or their more cornered—moments. The recovery is being held back above all by the sheer scale and fear of unemployment, which is still depressing confidence and spending in the economy. That is why the recovery should have been nurtured much more actively, by greater rather than less public investment in housing, infrastructure and other supply side components to strengthen the capacity and performance of the economy.

The Red Book reveals that net capital public sector spending will fall from 2·25 per cent. of GDP in 1993-94 to just 1·5 per cent. by 1995-96 and in each successive year. That is exactly the opposite of what not just the Labour party but the CBI, and now Europe's top industrialists, led by Sir Denys Henderson, have urged. There is no evidence that that huge cut will be made up by the private sector, however much we might welcome that in principle and however hopeful the Government and their supporters might be as a result of the work of the task force led by Sir Alastair Morton.

The issue is not only that fewer jobs will be created as a result of the loss of investment, causing unemployment to remain higher than it need, but that recovery is being directly endangered by the Budget, and that opportunities to stimulate growth and strengthen the economy in the long term are being sacrificed as a result of the Chancellor's shortsightedness. Moreover, to realise their admittedly modest and unambitious growth target of 2·5 per cent. in the next year, the Government will be relying heavily on cuts in interest rates by next spring and summer to stimulate growth in manufacturing output and employment. Desperation over interest rates in the next six months may add further interesting spice to the Chancellor's relationship with the Prime Minister, as they vie with each other over when and by how much to reduce interest rates and compete to catch and influence the ear of the Governor of the Bank of England.

It can hardly be sensible for the Government to depend so exclusively on the uncertain weapon of interest rates, that one-club policy to secure growth, when it is also the only weapon open to the Chancellor to control inflation. If there is a conflict between the need to stimulate growth by reducing interest rates and to control inflation by having to increase them, it will be interesting to see which way the Chancellor jumps. It will be an invidious choice. That is why he is wrong to rely exclusively on rate cuts and to ignore other supply-side, investment and employment measures which all in industry and the Opposition have called for to ensure growth is strong and sustained.

[Mr. Peter Mandelson]

On the Chancellor's public spending assumptions, I echo the views of the Institute of Fiscal Studies that were reflected in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson). The Chancellor's plans are not just a squeeze, they are a huge contraction, and only remotely reasonable when contrasted with what the Chief Secretary would like to do if he were given half a chance.

The plans are absolutely unprecedented in their severity; they are more draconian than anything achieved by Mrs. Thatcher and Nigel Lawson at the height of their power in office. We must question their desirability—they are certainly inconsistent with the pledges made in the Conservative manifesto at the last general election—but also their feasibility.

The new spending total suggests a real-term, non-cyclical increase of 3·8 per cent. to 1999. That contrasts with the comparable rise of 12·5 per cent. in real terms between 1980-81 and 1986-87. To meet his spending total, I wonder how far the Chancellor is prepared to go in further decimating public services, driving down their standards, contracting out whatever the sense or benefit in doing so, and pushing up charges to individual users of the services, thereby putting them out of reach for so many. It means the wholesale abandonment of many Tory election promises and I believe that many Conservative Members have yet to wake up to that.

The other assumption underlying the Budget is that the Chancellor would put up taxes even further if his spending plans are not met. Is the Chancellor prepared to own up to that? Certainly on television this weekend he simply said that he did not have a clue. I wonder about that. I suspect that the Chancellor knows now that his arithmetic will not add up and that further tax rises have been planned to pay for past mistakes and the cost of future low growth and continuing mass unemployment.

He hinted as much in his Budget speech when he said:

> "I have never disguised my personal view that the coverage of VAT in this country is too narrow.".

He went on:

> "The Government's clear policy has always been to shift the burden of taxation, over time from income to spending.".—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1993; Vol. 233, c. 932-6.].

The Chancellor is putting that cover in place in order further to increase the tax burden in future years. The growth in VAT and indirect taxes is the uncompleted, glossed over, yet-to-explode part of the Budget story as the Chancellor's perilously balanced equations start to unravel, as Conservative Members will soon discover.

The Budget managed to combine savage deflationary content with overly optimistic rose-tinted presentation. It does not begin to address Britain's core economic problems: our lack of industrial capacity and competitiveness, the waste of unemployment and our declining share of world trade.

It begins—as it needs to—to deal with the unsustainable financial deficit but is less than honest both in its prescriptions and in its predictions about how the deficit will be conquered. The consequences of the Budget will be tax, tax and yet more tax, however thinly it may be disguised and camouflaged. That is why the Tories' election promises will never be trusted again.

8.34 pm

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): I am particularly pleased to have the opportunity to welcome the Budget, which is both clever and compassionate, and to follow a characteristically churlish contribution from the Labour Benches.

In company with other hon. Members, I should like to take the opportunity to single out a particular aspect of the Budget—the package for dealing with VAT on fuel and its effect on the more vulnerable in our society.

It is a strange issue in many ways because of the emotion it arouses in Opposition Members. The prime emotion it tends to arouse is hypocrisy in many quarters. We saw a classic example from the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) when he had the audacity earlier today to claim that the Government were trying to avoid a vote on VAT on fuel.

Even the newest hon. Member of the 1992 intake would know that that vote has already taken place and, as was pointed out earlier, it was perfectly open to the official Opposition to table an amendment on the package, but not on the principle of VAT on fuel, and they have signally and dismally failed to do so. The matter was dealt with following the March Budget and today we are talking about the package for dealing with the less well-off.

It is particularly rewarding to know that, in advance of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor's Budget statement, the Labour social security spokesman, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), said that he was looking for 50p extra on pensions. I know that the quotation will appear several times in the debate, but it certainly bears repetition. I know that Opposition Members do not like to hear it, so let them hear it again. I predict that they will hear it many more times in the coming months. The hon. Gentleman said

> "The Government has to add something on to take account of that"

—the introduction of VAT on fuel—

> "and they could do it with an extra 50p on pensions."

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Is the hon. Gentleman not aware that the publication in which that quote appeared subsequently admitted that my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said no such thing and that he was misquoted? That has been made perfectly clear, not least by my hon. Friend today to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Waterson: I was unaware that had been the case. I seem to remember that, when the point was made on the first day of the Budget debate, the hon. Gentleman did not leap to his feet to make the point on his own behalf. That is a quotation from *The People* on 21 November 1993.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the hon. Gentleman withdraw that quotation?

Mr. Waterson: I will not withdraw it. I am quoting from *The People* newspaper of 21 November.

Mr. Darling: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Waterson: No. I have a speech to make and I will make it. It is worth commenting that the Government are providing what the right hon. Gentleman was calling for even before VAT is imposed at its standard rate.

Let us move on. I have already dealt with the hypocrisy of Labour Members; let me now deal with the hypocrisy of the Liberal Democrats. I notice that they have not chosen to grace us with their presence in the Chamber this evening.

I represent the constituency of Eastbourne, a place reasonably well known in recent political history because of the famous by-election. We have heard a great deal from the Liberal Democrats on the issue in Eastbourne. We have seen endless leaflets and statements in the papers. They have made a great deal of political mileage out of it. As we all know, the Liberal Democrats are political chameleons who change their colour depending on the background in a particular part of the country. In my part of the country, which is predominantly Conservative, they pretend to be just like the Conservatives. Elsewhere, they do the opposite and pretend that they are a more pleasant alternative to the Labour party. However, as we all know, in truth they are Labour's country cousins. If one needs evidence of that, one need only look at the alacrity with which they leapt into a pact with Labour to run East Sussex county council after the elections a little earlier this year.

As I have quoted the Labour party's spokesman on the issue, it is only fair that I should quote the Liberal Democrats. As recently as the Liberal Democrats 1992 election manifesto, they said:

> "We will support a Community-wide Energy Tax on all energy sources."

In a policy document entitled "Taxing Pollution, not People" which was endorsed by their 1993 party conference, the Liberal Democrats stated:

> "We support the European Community proposals for an energy/carbon tax, and would press for its immediate implementation at national level".

Perhaps the most damning quotation, and the one which they can wriggle and squirm about, but from which the Liberal Democrats cannot get away, is set out in their 1990 policy document entitled "Costing the Earth" in which they say that they

> "advocate as a first priority the imposition of a tax on energy . . . The UK is unusual amongst EC members in not applying even standard rates of VAT to domestic fuels . . . If it proved completely impossible to persuade our international partners to adopt energy taxes, we would nevertheless press forward, but phase them in at lower levels than otherwise—for example, by ending the anomalous zero-rate of VAT on fuel".

As that quotation rightly recognises, most other countries in the industrialised world, and certainly in the European Community, already have VAT or its equivalent on fuel. It is and always has been a political inevitability that one day, sooner or later, VAT would be imposed on domestic fuel. That must of course be admitted, if only behind closed doors, by Opposition parties.

What matters, and what has always mattered, is the package to be introduced to look after those less able to pay the extra VAT. It is also important to address the feelings of other people in my constituency, the better-off pensioners who have, none the less, expressed their concern about the ability of the less well-off in my constituency to bear the tax.

That is why, since the March Budget, many of us have made representations to my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor and his colleagues about this subject. That is why I am so pleased today to welcome, with my colleagues, the extra help and the package which involves £2·5 billion over three years and will benefit 15 million people. All pensioners, widows, the long-term sick on invalidity benefit and those on low incomes will benefit.

I need not spell out once more the details of the proposals. However, as if that package were not enough, in addition we have an extra £35 million a year for the home energy efficiency scheme. We all know that the elderly and retired often live in large relatively uninsulated and not very energy-efficient properties. They will benefit more than any other group in society from that extra spending. In addition, there is a 25 per cent. increase in the cold weather payments over two years. There is no good reason for anyone who is vulnerable in our society to be worried about paying the extra VAT on fuel despite all the propaganda and worry caused by Labour and Liberal Democrat Members.

Another issue that is particularly good news for my retired constituents is the guaranteed income bond, or "granny bond". The Chancellor has rightly recognised that whenever interest rates are cut, although that may be good news for those in business and those paying a mortgage, it has a significant effect on pensioners' incomes in places like Eastbourne and on their spending power. Potentially, that has a knock-on effect on the local economy. We should not underestimate the effect of such cuts on the standard of living of pensioners.

Mr. Bates: Will my hon. Friend confirm that many pensioners are very fearful about inflation because many of them are living on fixed incomes from occupational pension schemes? The last thing that they can afford to suffer is high inflation. Therefore, low inflation is very much the pensioners' friend.

Mr. Waterson: I am delighted to agree with my hon. Friend. One of the Government's most tremendous achievements is that they have brought inflation down to such a very low level—and they are keeping it at that level. We all know that the most important thing that any Government in this country can do for the pensioner is to do precisely that. When I recall the raging inflation prior to 1979, I dread to think of what the effect would be on my constituents if we were still suffering under a Labour Government.

The Budget has done three major things: it has restated the importance of sound public finances; it has done a great deal to protect and encourage the recovery; and, at the same time, it has protected the more vulnerable in our society. In that way, it has tackled an issue which was, until the Budget, being cynically exploited by our political opponents.

I am delighted that the Budget has been welcomed so widely by pensioners' organisations, including Age Concern in my constituency. The Liberal Democrats will no longer be able to gain votes by issuing propaganda on that issue. The Chancellor has tackled the problem and has produced a package which no one could have foreseen in its generosity and its comprehensive nature. As far as the Liberal Democrats are concerned, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor has shot their fox.

8.46 pm

Mr. Alan Milburn (Darlington): As I listened to the Chancellor's first Budget last week, I was overcome by an overwhelming sense of deja vu. I had seen that devil-may-care self-confidence somewhere before. For a moment, I could not recall where, but the cheering from the Tory Back Benches and the waving of Order Papers reminded me that, precisely seven months before, the Budget of the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr.

[Mr. Alan Milburn]

Lamont), was greeted in exactly the same way. He also managed to produce a flurry of Order Papers, and he too was hailed as a financial wizard and conjuror who had saved the Government's bacon. Alas, just a few weeks later, Norman's miracle had turned into a mirage. There he was, back on the Back Benches, sacked because his Budget had been recognised for what it was—a disaster for the country.

A week on, and the new Chancellor's Budget is also beginning to unravel. All the representational panache in the world cannot disguise the reality of the Budget—the most deflationary in recent history. How on earth will taking £20 million from the pockets of Darlington families in tax rises next year and £32 million the year after be good for the local economy? That is more than £50 million less to spend on products and services in an area in which more than 5,000 people are out of work and where more, not less, investment is needed.

The Budget, like the 1992 general election, will not produce the promised results because it is built on a series of confidence tricks. The con is that the welfare state is somehow safe in the Government's hands and that the Budget changes merely amount to prudent saving at a time of high public sector debt. The reality is rather different. Even people who are sick and who are disabled face a tax on their benefits. The jobless are to have salt rubbed into the wound of unemployment by slashing their entitlement to benefits.

That is just the start. By the time the Prime Minister's B team—the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Secretary of State for Social Security—have their way, we really will be back to basics, back to the time when the disabled, the poor, the elderly and the ill simply had to fend for themselves. However, as the self-same Secretary of State for Social Security acknowledges, growth and jobs will actually bring down social security expenditure by the end of the century.

Social security spending is high not because Ministers have suddenly discovered that there are too many elderly people or too many single mothers in our society but because Conservative economic policies have failed. That failure is now to claim yet another victim—the dismantling of the welfare state in favour of an inadequate privatised system of provision.

The Budget is a con for another reason: it promises a new dawn but it represents business as usual. The old dicta remain firmly locked in place—public is bad, private is good, the best role for Government is to do as little as possible, and the market still rules okay. That means no place for Government incentives to encourage investment, no continuation of the capital allowance scheme for industry, no extra resources for skills training to ensure that Britain rises to the top of the international skills league instead of languishing at the bottom.

The Budget offers no industrial strategy to take Britain into the next century because it is based on the false premise that the best role for the Government is to have no role at all. That promises no future for my constituents. Darlington is a place of vast economic potential. It has a range of high-quality greenfield industrial sites ready to attract the next Nissan or Fujitsu, it has a highly skilled and trained labour force, and it has a proud history of manufacturing production carried on by first-class companies. But it is disadvantaged by virtue of its place on the periphery of the single European market. That means that it is crying out for more infrastructure investment and for more industrial incentives. It means, above all else, that it is crying out for measures that will instil confidence.

We heard not a word—not a peep—from the Chancellor of the Exchequer as he delivered his Budget last week about any prospects for economic growth in my constituency. Instead, the Budget perpetuates the con that public spending cuts will somehow encourage more private sector investment. Over the next two years, after allowing for depreciation, capital investment will fall by about £3 billion. The £500 million cuts in public housing finance will not mean a rush of new developments for the construction industry; it will mean more redundancies and more closures. It certainly will not mean more homes being built; it will mean fewer. It will not mean fewer people waiting for a home; it will mean more homeless people on our streets.

The Budget seeks to con Britain by gambling on a self-initiating growth. That flies in the face of reality. Customers and consumers are so overcome with debt and uncertainty that prospects for an old-fashioned consumer-led boom simply do not exist. Such a view takes no account of reality. The housing market is in tatters, and the big boys in the British corporate sector are planning, not more investment to create jobs, but further redundancies and job losses.

At best, as the Red Book acknowledges, the Budget will bring only low growth and high unemployment because it does nothing to tackle the lack of productive capacity in the British economy that is at the root of our present economic woes.

The Chancellor managed to skip over our trade balance in his Budget presentation, and for good reason. Rising imports in the midst of a deep and damaging recession tell a story of fundamental economic weakness.

The biggest con of all about the Budget is the Chancellor's claim that there is no other way and that the only way of tackling the mess into which the Government have plunged us all is by cutting and taxing. TINA is back in town with a vengeance. We are continually told by Conservative Members that there is no alternative—there is no other way. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Why did the Chancellor not close all the £10 billion of tax loopholes identified by Labour? Why did he not free local authority capital receipts to put backbone into Britain's building industry and to tackle the obscenity of homelessness? Above all, why did he not put talents to use by making it a Budget for recovery, a Budget that put people back to work, rather than lost to public finances £9,000 for each unemployed person each year? The answer is simple enough: it was a political Budget, designed in a desperate attempt to get the Government off a hook of their own making and to further the Chancellor's own desperate attempt to climb the political ladder. Now we are all to bear the price in higher taxes and savage public spending cuts.

The Budget will do untold damage to the fabric of British society and to our prospects for a durable economic recovery into the next century. For those reasons, it deserves to be rejected by the House.

8.56 pm

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): Given the time, instead of issuing a press release which summarises my speech, I have been forced to make a speech which summarises my press release.

I wish to draw attention to one long-term aspect of the Budget which is of great concern. In his Budget statement, the Chancellor made it clear that the upgrading of pensions was a one-off event and that he expected to see the real value of the state pension relative to average earnings continue to decline as it has done over the past 10 to 15 years.

It is widely accepted that that means that the basic state pension in the second decade of the next century will be worth less than perhaps 10 per cent. of average earnings. Given the inadequacies of the state earnings-related pension scheme, that means that those who are currently on low incomes and who by then will have retired, and even those on average incomes, will have retirement pensions which are well below the average earnings which are being enjoyed at that time in the next century. Therefore, the Budget and the Budget strategy build inadequate pensions into the next century for many of those who are about to retire and for many of those who are currently at work.

But worse still is the fact that the Budget strategy implicitly emphasises that the Government will continue to encourage opting out of SERPS and into the private pension plan industry. Given the current state of that industry, that is an extraordinary and dangerous strategy which poses a great threat to the future security of far too many people. In the past few years, the Government have fostered a badly regulated personal pension plan industry, which has exposed millions of people to high charges and the risk of erratic market performance and has already wasted hundreds of millions of pounds of the public's hard-won savings.

People who cancel their pension policies early are penalised by the high cost of early cancellation. They may have to cancel because of unemployment or because the policy turned out to be too expensive. The Securities and Investments Board estimates that just under a third of personal pension plans are cancelled within the first two years, leading to the loss of virtually all the premiums paid by people who have been encouraged to opt out of SERPS. A rough survey of the calculations available suggests that the total amount of hard-won taxpayers' money lost through early cancellation is some £200 million a year.

That means that the failure of the personal pension plan industry repeats, every 18 months or so, a loss of public money on the scale of the Maxwell scandal because of bad regulation of the industry and poor protection available to the public. If the Government are to encourage people to rely on private pensions for all or part of their future retirement income, they have a general duty of stewardship over the use of those moneys. Their failure to monitor and regulate the industry effectively is a disgrace that threatens the pensions of millions of people in the next century.

9 pm

Ms Harriet Harman (Peckham): The Budget breaks election promises on spending as well as taxation. It will make British people pay more and get less. It makes those who can least afford it pay the price of Tory mismanagement and it will deepen Britain's economic problems. Above all, the Budget fails three key tests: on jobs, investment, and fairness.

According to the Government's own figures, the recovery is faltering. In the Budget, the growth forecast for the second half of the year and the forecast for manufacturing growth next year have both been downgraded. The Budget is testimony to 14 years of economic mismanagement. The United Kingdom's growth has been lower than in any period since the war. Manufacturing output has risen by just 5 per cent. in Britain in the past 10 years, whereas it has grown by 25 per cent. in America, 35 per cent. in Germany, and 50 per cent. in Japan.

There is and continues to be mass unemployment. A third of the United Kingdom's manufacturing employment has been lost and, for the first time ever, Britain has a deficit in manufacturing trade. For the first time, we are importing more manufactured goods than we are exporting.

Against that background, a sensible Budget would have taken immediate action to promote jobs and growth and medium-term measures to step up investment. It would have begun to release the £4 billion of capital receipts from council house sales to revive the ailing construction industry, as Labour called for before the Budget. It would have given incentives to firms to hire the long-term unemployed by rebating national insurance contributions for a year, as Labour called for before the Budget. It would have extended capital allowances to industry to stimulate much-needed investment, as Labour and the Confederation of British Industry called for. It would have ensured that all employers contributed towards vital training of the nation's work force, as we proposed before the Budget. It would have taken measures to modernise our infrastructure through both public and private sector investment working together.

However, the Budget did none of that and the reasons go to the heart of the Government's approach. Stimulating recovery? It has nothing to do with the Government. Investing in the economy? That has nothing to do with them either. It can all be left to the market.

We also needed a Budget for fairness. Instead, we got a Budget that made everyone pay tax on their gas and electricity but left tax relief on private health insurance. It put 1p on everyone's national insurance contributions but left completely untaxed the thousands of pounds received by top-paid executives in executive share option schemes. That is the Government's sense of priorities.

Before the Budget, Labour called for tax reforms. First, the Chancellor said that the tax abuses that we had identified did not exist. He then closed some of them, but only £2 billion worth. In the Budget he has now opened up another one.

The Budget breaks promises on public spending. The Conservative manifesto said:

> "Lower taxes and a prudent approach to borrowing do not mean public spending must fall; quite the reverse."

The Prime Minister said:

> "If we were going to cut public expenditure we would have done it before and I don't believe it is economically right . . . so you can rule out any prospect of that."

Mr. Richards: The hon. Lady referred to public spending. Does she believe that the national health service

[Mr. Richards]

is underfunded? If so, will she say by how much? If the Labour party was in office, how much would it spend in addition to the current budget?

Ms Harman: We believe that there is a lack of investment, particularly capital investment, in the national health service. That has been charted by the all-party Select Committee. We think that since capital investment in the health service has fallen, now is not the time to cut it. The Government are cutting capital investment on health, education and transport because they have messed up the economy and they are now telling us that we cannot afford that expenditure.

The Government said in their election manifesto that no cuts would be necessary. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury said that his vision was

> "of a society prosperous enough to provide for those in need and invest in public services."

That was before the election. They were all clear promises which have now been broken. The Budget cuts public spending below present levels next year and the year after, despite those election promises. The Budget reduces public sector investment.

The cuts in investment announced in the Budget last week will further undermine our economic infrastructure and further weaken the already weak economy. On transport, in the 1992 election manifesto, the Conservative party said:

> "Over the next three years we are committed to the biggest investment in Britain's transport infrastructure in our history."

Those are bold words. They have now cut the transport budget by 8·3 per cent. in real terms. The Tories said:

> "We believe that the railways can play a bigger part in responding to Britian's growing transport needs and we are investing accordingly."

In the Budget they have cut British Rail's external financing limit by 20 per cent. next year, 24 per cent. the year after and 25 per cent. the year after that.

What about London Underground? As my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) reminded us, two weeks ago 20,000 people were trapped for hours in dark tunnels underground when ancient cabling failed. Millions of pounds worth of business in London was lost as a result. Two days earlier, the Secretary of State for the Environment had issued a questionnaire to all of us who live and work in London. He asked us what we most appreciate about London and he gave a list of suggestions. One of his suggestions for what we most appreciate about London was the London Underground. The Government's role is not to issue barmy questionnaires, but to modernise the London Underground.

Before the election the Government promised that London Transport would be allowed to invest £1·2 billion. We are now told that the figure is to be cut to £900 million —a cut of a quarter. According to the chairman of London Underground, the Government are providing only half what it needs to create what he calls, "a decently modern metro."

In its Budget submission to the Chancellor the CBI said that public investment must be maintained and that

> "a substantial increase in UK investment is needed to provide the basis for sustained growth."

We agree with the CBI, yet the Budget makes the investment deficit worse. Public investment in housing has fallen dramatically during the past 10 years, yet it is to be cut again next year by £500 million, with £300 million being cut from housing associations. That will mean more jobs lost in the ailing construction industry and fewer homes for the homeless.

Capital spending on the health service is falling. In the Budget it is to be cut again by £144 million, at a time when the NHS faces an outstanding repairs and maintenance bill of £2·2 billion.

The Government's support for local authorities has been cut by 1·8 per cent. in real terms. That will cut services, particularly schools. The Secretary of State for the Environment has confirmed that council tax bills are set to rise by 7 per cent. or more. The hallmark of the Budget and of the Government is that one pays more and one gets less.

Mr. John Townend: The hon. Lady is giving us a great list of the items on which she objects to the Government trying to save money. Throughout the debate, the Opposition have opposed cuts in public spending and increases in taxation. How would the hon. Lady's party deal with the deficit?

Ms Harman: We want the Government to cut spending on unemployment and on income support. We want a nation that is at work and is not on benefits.

The story of the public sector borrowing requirement is one of low growth and of high unemployment. Despite that, the employment budget has been cut by 3 per cent. at a time when improved training for the whole work force is more necessary than ever. All those cuts will worsen public services and will undermine our economy.

Mr. Richards: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Harman: I have given way to the hon. Gentleman already.

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): The hon. Lady has made it clear many times that her policy is to reduce unemployment. Will she explain how she would do that other than by higher public borrowing?

Ms Harman: We have set out measures, many of which have been supported by the CBI and by other employers' organisations, which would deal with the fundamental problems of high unemployment and of low growth in the economy.

The problem with the Government is not that they do not know what the solutions are. The problem is that they think that they have no role in the economy and that they can leave it to the markets. The tragedy is that that has flattened the economy. That is why we have high public spending on unemployment and why manufacturing industry has suffered.

Mr. Richards: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Harman: I am not giving way to the hon. Gentleman—I have given way to him once.

The Government have once again signalled that their vision of Britain is limited to a low-investment, low-growth, low-wage and low-skilled economy. There is nothing in the Budget to improve the prospect of the public-private partnership, which could play a part in modernising our infrastructure. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyme (Mr. Sheldon) said that, at the previous autumn statement, the Government boasted about the public-private finance initiative, yet the record since then has been one of ignominious failure.

The CBI has said, politely, that progress has been painfully slow. Even the Chancellor had to admit that the flow of projects had been "disappointingly small". This is not some unfortunate accident, as the Government would have us believe. It is a direct result of the Government's prejudice against any kind of public sector investment, even when it involves private investment working together with it.

The Chancellor gave the game away in his recent speech to the CBI, when he said that the public-private finance initiative was a way of privatising the process of capital investment in our key public services. It is clear that that initiative is not about partnership. It is about the Government abandoning their responsibility to modernise our economy and our infrastructure and it is about them passing the buck to the private sector.

Mr. Bates: The Labour party manifesto of last year says on page 10:

> "We will allow British Rail to proceed with a leasing scheme of 188 new Networker trains on the North Kent line—the first step in securing private investment to help modernise Britain's railways".

Is that still the hon. Lady's policy?

Ms Harman: We believe that public and private capital working together can have a role to play in improving our infrastructure. The problem is that it will not work unless there is a partnership, and this Government will not be involved in a partnership. They just pass the buck to the private sector—that is why it will not work.

In his Budget the Chancellor proudly told us that the Government were giving the go-ahead to three substantial new transport projects, under the private finance initiative. He cited the extension of the docklands light railway to Lewisham—*[Interruption.]* It might have been the first time that the right hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned it, but the project was first proposed eight years ago. The legislation passed its Second Reading as long ago as 1991, but there is still no commitment of public or private sector investment. Tendering will begin only next year and there is still no firm start date for the project. So it is not new and it certainly does not have the go-ahead.

The Chancellor's second announcement was the go-ahead for the modernisation of the west coast main line. BR has been calling for this investment for years, but the competition for the franchise will take place only late next year and there is no firm start date. Once again, it is not new and there is no go-ahead.

The Chancellor's third announcement was the go-ahead for a new air traffic control centre for Scotland. There has been no public sector commitment to invest in it and the Treasury will not even hazard a guess at what the start date might be. This project, I concede, might be new, but it certainly does not have the go-ahead——

Mr. Riddick *rose*——

Ms Harman: The truth is that the Government's private finance initiative is just an excuse for their refusal to invest in our infrastructure. We have heard announcements and reannouncements, but no action. The problem has been described very well by the Chief Secretary, whose philosophy is that if business wants something, business will pay for it; and if business does not want something, it will not pay for it, so it does not matter. That is why we have no channel tunnel rail link. It is why in France, where the French understand about investment in infrastructure, their industry has the opportunity of a modern rail link taking goods to the rest of Europe. It is why, when the channel tunnel opens next year, British industry will find that it is serviced only by ageing Network SouthEast trains.

Mr. Riddick *rose*——

Ms Harman: This was not just a Budget that undermined our economy and made everyone pay the price of Conservative economic failure. No; the Tories are cynically using the crisis in our public finances as an excuse for their ideological mission to end the welfare state. Unemployment benefit is to be cut; so is invalidity benefit. Sick pay is to be pushed on to employers and we know only too well that that is just the start.

The contrast between Labour and the Tories could not be clearer: we engage in an open debate about the future of the welfare state; Tory Ministers plot its destruction behind closed doors. We look at analysis and at facts; the Tories refer only to bigotry and prejudice. We look at how Government can enable people to help themselves; the Tories think that any action—in particular, the Chief Secretary thinks that any action—by Government can only diminish individual responsibility. We ask what is fairest, what is the best way of meeting the need. The Tories reply: public bad, private good. We want to modernise and improve the welfare state; the Tories want to end it. It is because the welfare state needs to change to meet changes in society that we need a Labour Government. The Tories cannot be trusted with the welfare state. They will not change it for the better; they will just destroy it. That is the real story of this unified Budget. It is designed to unify the Tory party, but to deepen divisions in the country.

Mr. Riddick: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Harman: I will give way because I have reached my points on taxation. I hope that the Government will give us answers on taxation.

Mr. Riddick: My question is, indeed, about taxation. From the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition at Question Time today it appears that the Labour party would like an opportunity to vote tonight on VAT on fuel. Can the hon. Lady tell the House why the Opposition did not table an amendment to the Budget resolution on the Order Paper, as the House would allow?

Ms Harman: The first vote at the conclusion of tonight's debate will give us the chance to vote down VAT on gas and electricity.

Mr. Riddick *rose*——

Ms Harman: If the hon. Gentleman wants to——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I expect the Front Bench to set an example. I am having great difficulty hearing the hon. Lady, as I am sure is the rest of the House. We will hear the rest of the debate in reasonable quietness.

Ms Harman: The hon. Gentleman's constituents will not be interested in his procedural nit-picking. They will want him to vote consistently with his promises to end VAT on gas and electricity.

Mr. Riddick: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that it is a point of order.

Mr. Riddick: You have just heard the hon. Lady say that the first vote tonight will be on VAT on domestic fuel, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At Question Time the Leader of the Opposition said that we were not being allowed an opportunity——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Riddick: Surely——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Obviously, my appeal of a few seconds ago fell on deaf ears. I expect the debate to be heard in reasonable quietness, so that Members of all parties have a chance to be heard.

Ms Harman: On taxation, too, the ground is littered with broken promises. The Conservative manifesto said that the Conservative party was

> "the only party that understands the need for low taxation."

Yet, as my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) pointed out, in this Budget we have the largest tax rise in history. Some £24 billion will be taken in tax over the next three years. From next year, the typical family will pay an extra £10 a week and from 1995 an extra £16 a week.

On income tax, the Prime Minister told us:

> "we will make further reductions in the rate of taxation . . . we will be able to make reductions year on year."

Yet this Budget imposes three separate increases in income tax this year and next. Personal allowances are to be frozen for two years running. The married couple's allowance will be reduced in 1994 and again in 1995. Mortgage interest tax relief will be reduced in 1994 and again in 1995.

On national insurance, the Prime Minister said:

> "I have no plans to raise . . . the level of national insurance contributions."

Yet from April next year, national insurance will be increased by 1 per cent.

On VAT, the Prime Minister said:

> "I've made the pledge in the past . . . I have made it clear we have no plans and no need to extend the scope of VAT."

We have not been able to believe any of those promises. We all know what happened to them. Despite the compensation scheme, everyone, even the poorest, will have to pay some of this tax. What nauseating hypocrisy we have heard from the Tories about helping people with their fuel bills. They are not helping people with their fuel bills; they are putting tax on people's fuel bills and for some people they are rebating some of it. Everyone is being taxed on their fuel bills.

The Budget imposed three new taxes. For two of them, the Chancellor targeted the one area in which growth has been at record levels under the Conservatives. He has targeted the one area where the figures have risen constantly and the one area where the United Kingdom is near the very top of the league. What area is that? Crime. Crime has more than doubled since 1979 and now there is an attack on its victims. There is also a tax on holidays.

Any group of villains know that when they are up to no good the most important thing to do is to get the story straight, use the same alibi, to spin the same yarn and perhaps they will get away with it. Treasury Ministers have failed to learn that lesson. When interviewed separately about broken promises, they have all given different alibis. The Financial Secretary to the Treasury—I hope that he is listening because he may wish to retract it—has protested his innocence about broken promises. On the BBC programme "Question Time" on 11 November, he was asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Durham North-West (Ms Armstrong):

> "Why did you say that you would not raise or have to extend VAT?"

The Financial Secretary replied: "We didn't". My hon. Friend said:

> "Well the Prime Minister did",

and the Financial Secretary replied:

> "The Prime Minister didn't either. Labour have been saying this since the March Budget, but have failed to produce any single piece of written evidence to support the assertion."

The Financial Secretary knows that the Prime Minister's promises on VAT are a matter of record in the *Official Report* and also in the newspapers. He knows that there is written evidence of those promises. I will give way to the Financial Secretary so that he can retract his statement that there was never any policy to put VAT on gas and electricity. That particular villain is claiming the right to silence. He has nothing to say. The Financial Secretary is guilty and the British people know it.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury tells a different story. He is more artful and admits that the Government broke the promise on taxes, but he says that they were only little promises and that the really big promise was to deliver sound public finance. In his election address, the Chief Secretary mentioned that little promise on tax not once, not twice, but 10 times. However, the big promise of sound public finance was not mentioned once. He has only told us now.

As for the Chancellor, he is the leader of the gang and the most hardened of all those offenders. He did not deny it. He admits that he did it, but said that it did not matter. Who cares? Promises do not count if they are made "on a wet night in Dudley".

Those promises matter. The British people believed them. In the case of those offenders, it is time to understand a little less and to condemn a little more.

We have a Budget for low investment. We have a Budget for low growth, which will make our economic problems worse. We have seen an unfair Budget which fails to end tax abuses by the richest and which makes ordinary families pay the price of the Government's economic mismanagement. Above all, we have seen a Budget that breaks election promises and demonstrates contempt for democracy.

The promise on public spending has been broken. The promise on transport investment—broken. The promise on protecting those in need—broken. The promise on taxation —broken. *[Laughter.]* Conservative Members may laugh. The people in the country do not think that it is funny to have a Government who have no integrity. The promise on income tax—broken. The promise on national insurance —broken. The promise on VAT—broken.

The Budget marks the conclusive failure of the Conservative economic experiment. The Conservatives told us that their economics could deliver low taxation, sound finance, a competitive economy and good public services. They have destroyed our manufacturing base. They have created mass unemployment. They have run down our public services. They have created a record trade deficit and a record level of Government borrowing.

The record of the total failure of the Conservatives' economic policy has now forced them to claw back all the tax cuts of the 1980s. The central Conservative claim has collapsed; the promise of low taxes now lies in tatters. All the excuses have run out. All the promises are broken and the country will never trust the Conservatives again. We will vote against the Budget tonight.

9.30 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I believe that if the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) is really to be the left's answer to my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, she will need something better than the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) trying to lead a clapping ovation for her at the end. The Labour party showed itself to be still so disunited that it could not clap or shout in unison at the right points in the hon. Lady's speech.

The hon. Member for Peckham sat down on the one clear note of intention that I got from her speech. She said that she would vote against the Budget. I shall begin by exploring precisely why we are not having a vote against VAT on fuel after the scandalous campaign that was run throughout the summer.

I have been puzzled, because I had expected a vote on VAT on fuel. I thought that the Labour party, the Liberal Democrats or others of our critics would raise the matter. At various times, I have discussed with my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) and with my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip the position on that vote. I am glad to say that I satisfied myself that just as we won the vote in the previous Session, we would win it comfortably again.

But no vote has been called. We have reached the end of the argument about VAT on fuel after an extremely irresponsible campaign, which has caused genuine fear and alarm for many poor and elderly people.

I thought that we should have some explanation of why there would not be a vote. We had an explanation this afternoon from the Leader of the Opposition, who rather puzzled my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—he certainly puzzled me—by saying that we had so tabled the Budget resolutions that we had robbed the Labour party of an opportunity to vote. He obviously realised that his hon. Friends had chosen not to table the usual amendment to the Budget resolutions which would have paved the way for the discussion of the Finance Bill, which we all thought would happen.

There can be no doubt about the matter. I cannot believe that a mistake has been made by the shadow Treasury team. I believe that there was a conscious decision that this issue, having been given a whirl in the autumn, should now be withdrawn, as it has in effect been withdrawn by the decision this evening.

I wrote to the shadow Chancellor, so it is no good his looking embarrassed. He knows the position perfectly well. I wrote to him the usual explanatory note on the Ways and Means resolutions, which made the position quite clear. He had only to get to paragraph 2 to see that he had to table an amendment to the first resolution if he was to pave the way for the discussion of the Finance Bill which he wanted.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Will the Chancellor, with his expertise in detail, tell us the effect of voting against the first resolution this evening, as we are pledged to do?

Mr. Clarke: What exactly did the Leader of the Opposition have in mind when he said that we had obscured the resolution? The amendment, as he knows, has no practical effect on the law. It is the paving amendment for the whole general debate on the Budget.

The hon. Gentleman has taken part in many Budget debates, and he knows that whenever a resolution of this kind is tabled—which seeks to exclude further amendments on VAT—amendments have been tabled to pave the way for VAT discussions in the Finance Bill that the Opposition told us that we were not going to have. They have not tabled such a resolution this time—possibly because they know that we would win, as we did in the previous Parliament. They sought to pretend that there was some procedural reason why they could not do that, when the truth is that they are embarrassed by the public statements of their colleagues, not least the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar).

Mr. Dewar: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: I will give way in a moment.

Let us not exclude all discussion. The hon. Member for Garscadden comes forward with a tortured look. We have had a number of tortuous discussions about this throughout the debate. I am not questioning the hon. Gentleman's honour—I have never known him to be untruthful in his dealings with me. I have received his letter, and I accept his explanation of what occurred.

If the hon. Gentleman is also fair, there is absolutely no doubt that he found himself grossly misquoted, if his account is true—as I accept it is—by Mr. Nigel Nelson in *The People*. There is no doubt what the original cutting means. The colour put on it by Mr. Nelson a fortnight later does not bear the slightest examination. There is a picture of the hon. Member for Garscadden, with the heading "Cash Call" underneath. It refers to VAT on fuel, and says:

> "'The Government has to add something on to take account of that and they could do it with an extra 50p on pensions.'"

The hon. Gentleman now comes forward with his explanation of how he came to say that, which he did not volunteer until after the Budget. He left that explanation as it was.

There is no doubt what readers of *The People* believed, including several of my hon. Friends—I almost said, the more eclectic and eccentric of my hon. Friends. There is no doubt what any reader of *The People* would believe, because the term "cash call" is quoted alongside the article. Because the hon. Gentleman believed other newspaper reports, he did not believe that we would come forward with compensation on such a scale, and he has been trying to get out of it ever since.

The hon. Member for Garscadden knows that the package that we have come forward with is worth far more than 50p a week to pensioners. In the first year, certainly, the package will be worth 50p a week to a single pensioner and 70p a week to a couple. The same again on top will be offered the year after that, and the year after that.

The uprating, which includes the VAT on fuel, will be almost £2 a week for a pensioner by 1996, by which time large numbers of pensioners will be fully compensated for any change in their fuel bills, including VAT. That is why Labour's great campaign is fizzling out in such ignominious confusion.

Mr. Dewar: The essence of the charge that the Conservative party has made against me—[Hon. Members: "Guilty."] No. The charge against me is that I

[Mr. Dewar]

indicated to *The People* that 50p for pensioners would be adequate compensation for the imposition of VAT on fuel. I am grateful to the Chancellor for what I think I detect, among all the verbiage, is an acceptance that I never said that.

The Chancellor knows that, since the matter was brought to my attention, I have maintained that position, as has the journalist concerned. The journalist has told the Chancellor that, and has said in his copy that the Prime Minister's and Chancellor's attempts to put their interpretation on my words was a load of cobblers. I recognise that many people are used to hearing a load of cobblers from the Government. I am grateful to the Chancellor for accepting my word. I have been totally and maliciously misinterpreted during the past few days.

Mr. Clarke: If one puts the explanation of the journalist, Mr. Nigel Nelson—[Hon. Members: "Apologise."] No. The hon. Gentleman raised this matter, which seems to be important to him. He has intervened, but it seems to be of importance to those on the Opposition Front Bench not to dwell on the matter.

If one puts the two columns together, the explanation offered by the journalist Mr. Nigel Nelson does not bear a moment's examination. The fact that Mr. Nelson suggests that the way in which the Government read his column must be the work of "snakes and vipers" merely shows that he is somewhat partisan on this issue. If the hon. Member for Garscadden has been scandalously misrepresented, he has been misrepresented by seeing his picture above the headline "Cash call", alongside the quotation I gave.

Mr. Dewar: What I find objectionable is that the right hon. and learned Gentleman, having been offered an explanation not only from me but backed up by the journalist concerned, is not gentleman enough to accept it. He says in one sentence that he accepts my word, but then tries to wriggle out of that acceptance. Does he confirm that he now accepts that at no time did I say that 50p was enough compensation for VAT on domestic fuel? All that happened was that it was put to me that there might be a 50p increase, and I said that that was a possibility.

Mr. Clarke: I am prepared to accept the hon. Gentleman's word when he speaks of his honour, and I am therefore prepared to accept that he was scandalously misquoted. [Hon. Members: "Withdraw."] I am not expecting the hon. Gentleman to bounce up again, but I could not stop him if he chose to do so. I want to know why he did nothing to withdraw the misquotation, until he discovered we offered a lot more.

I should also like to know why, at the election, the Labour party declined to commit itself to the zero rate on domestic fuel when it committed itself to the zero rate on every other commodity then zero-rated. I should also like to know how much the Labour party would pay in compensation or what taxation it would impose instead.

I should like to know, on one of the great issues of principle that the Labour party has raised, whether a figure is attached to anything. I believe that the Labour party's campaign has been without substance. It has been answered, as the Government said, with generous help to pensioners and the poor. That is why the Labour party will not vote with us tonight.

That is also why we will have no vote from the Liberal party—the party that first canvassed the idea of VAT on fuel in its thesis on environmental policy. The Liberals felt themselves free to campaign just as ruthlessly as the Labour party by telling people that they would have to pay large amounts on their fuel bills. They are committed to a European Community carbon energy tax, which they say is preferable——

Mr. Malcolm Bruce *indicated assent.*

Mr. Clarke: I am glad to note that the hon. Gentleman agrees.

The Liberals have not explained the consequences of the EC carbon tax for the pensioners, the poor and, and most important, British industry. The country does not require the EC carbon energy tax, because we are the only member of the European Union that already meets the Rio targets through the taxes we have imposed.

The EC carbon energy tax, as proposed by the Commission, would——

Mr. Malcolm Bruce *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way in a second, once I have confronted the hon. Gentleman with a policy to which I shall try to nail the Liberal party.

The Commission's proposal is for a $10 rate on the price of fuels, both domestic and industrial. The effect of the Liberal proposal on domestic bills would lead to an increase in the price of gas by 17 per cent., domestic coal by 27 per cent.—[Hon., Members: "Oh!"]—electricity by 14 per cent.—[Hon. Members: "Oh!"]—fuel oils by 27 per cent and petrol by 8 per cent. In his speech a few moments ago, the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) was eloquent against taxes on petrol.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way later. There is more to come.

What will be the effect on industry of the Liberal Democrats' policy on Rio targets—the EC carbon energy tax—and on industrial fuels? The figures are: industrial gas, up 41 per cent.; coal—a subject on which the Liberal Democrats are eloquent whenever they are near a coal seam—up 71 per cent.; electricity, up 28 per cent.; fuel oils, up 64 per cent.; and petrol, up 9 per cent.

That is why the Liberal Democrats are not pursuing their heroic battle against VAT on domestic fuel in the House this evening. They have been escaping from the position that they once took on the argument by solemnly supporting a tax which they believe no one understands but which, when one looks at it, will put up most domestic and industrial fuel prices vastly beyond the needs of the country and vastly beyond the capacity of either domestic or industrial users to pay.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: I am grateful to the Chancellor for giving way. The figures that he has expressed are a load of rubbish, as the European Commission will testify.

However, specifically on the issue of petrol tax, is he prepared to explain to the House why in the Budget the Government are putting more on petrol—by twice as much as an energy tax, or carbon tax, would achieve over five years? How can he accuse us of increasing prices when he is doing five times more than any carbon tax?

Mr. Clarke: I was quite open in the Budget about the increase in petrol taxation required to meet our Rio targets. The Liberal Democrats are committed to the Rio targets but are not committed to any figure. They are not committed to any structure of the tax—or they are, but they will not face up to the consequences of what they propose. They campaign against the tax that we impose here, and then support something far more damaging to British industry and the poor outside.

Let me move on to the Budget.

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I have given way quite a lot.

The fact is that, from the beginning of the Budget debate, the only clarity about intentions on tax, on spending or borrowing—and, above all, on the recovery of our economy—have come from the Budget speech and from my right hon. Friends.

The Liberal Democrats produced a shadow Budget outside, but we have heard precious little of it in the House. I have never heard a Front-Bench Treasury team go through an entire Budget debate with nobody producing any views at all on the great issues facing the country. In almost every speech, without exception, the word "inflation" was never mentioned, no spending figure was ever totalled, no tax proposal was ever put forward—vacuous emptiness, as typified by the speeches from the Opposition.

I must admit that the reception for the Budget took me by surprise—a favourable surprise. I have always in the past believed the maxim that a Budget well received on the day is by no means likely to be believed some months later. The fact that there is no answer to any of it—or no alternative to any of it from the Opposition—persuades me that there is a first time for everything.

What has been clear is that not just the business community but ordinary, sensible men and women have responded favourably to a Budget set forward frankly and candidly, explaining how we are going to tackle the country's problems.

There has been a suggestion—I do not find it too worrying, as I have been accused of many things in my time—that I had been some sort of magician in concealing what I had presented. I think that that was because a well-known pundit outside, who normally does better, did not understand how the public spending reductions had been arrived at. We had a red herring for a couple of days, until the press sorted out that indeed we had made a balanced contribution to cutting the deficit from taxation to spending.

There is absolutely no doubt in the minds of those who recall the Budget speech that I explained the strategy to get sustained growth based on low inflation and healthy public finances. I was quite clear about the taxation that we were raising on top of the March taxation, and quite clear about the reductions in public spending that we were making.

I believe that the public accepted that. Mr. and Mrs. Average accepted that it was incredible that the Labour party could proceed without addressing any of those subjects, and that the necessary action now would make our recovery stronger and sustained, would create jobs and would make us one of the stronger economies in Europe in the years to come.

Mr. Salmond: Will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Clarke: I will give way to Scotland.

Mr. Salmond: If the Chancellor feels that the fuel tax issue is dead, he is wrong. There are 750,000 households in Scotland that already have problems with their heating bills. How many of those households will be fully compensated by the package that the Chancellor announced in the Budget?

Mr. Clarke: What we have announced is that, by 1996, the great bulk of people will find that increases in their fuel bills have been met by a lasting increase in the real value of their retirement pensions. What we cannot do is compensate exactly people living in a whole variety of households of different sizes all over the country. But what we can do is to show that £1·2 billion helping 15 million people will mean that all those pensioners—all those poor people who have been alarmed by the Labour party's campaigns—will find that their bills have almost been met in full.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members should not persist in rising. It is clear that the Chancellor does not propose to give way at this stage.

Mr. Clarke: I have given way generously, even to an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman whose colleagues would wish that I did not keep allowing him to intervene.

Our spending proposals have shown for the first time that we are capable of getting a firm grip on spending—above all, by reducing the cost of government—and reflect spending priorities that we believe the bulk of the public will support.

With 1·5 per cent. growth in real terms, it is absurd for the hon. Member for Peckham to suggest that the health service has not been protected, and that we have not lived up to our manifesto commitment. We have increased spending on supply side measures—in higher education; in training, with the new apprentice scheme; and by protecting our spending on law and order.

It is nonsense for Labour Members to try to detract even from those parts of the spending package that they should welcome. The child allowance for those claiming family credit is an extremely valuable measure, but as the debate went on, several Labour Members tried to knock even that. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), for example, tried to suggest that it would not help those at the maximum level of family credit. Of course it will not: they have all the family credit they require already.

The point of the measure, clearly explained in the Budget, was to pave the way to work and family credit for those who are at home, unable to go to work and qualify for the benefit, and for part-time workers who cannot increase the hours they work because of difficulties with looking after the children. Anything up to 150,000 working mothers are capable of benefiting from help with child care and returning to work. Those measures have been better received by organisations such as Gingerbread than by the Labour party.

Labour then attempts to claim that we are damaging investment. The hon. Member for Peckham has done that, and the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) laboured the point. Those claims do not stand up to examination, either. The hon. Member for Peckham continued to insist that we had made cuts in investment in London Transport, despite the plain retraction by London

[Mr. Clarke]

Transport's leaders of the remarks mistakenly made by people in that organisation when the Budget was first announced.

Investment in London Transport next year will be running 50 per cent. higher than the level of investment in London Transport in the 1980s. Before that, there was a Labour Government in power. Investment in London Transport will now be 80 per cent. higher in real terms than it was when Labour were in power in the 1970s.

If there is a huge backlog in the work in the London Transport underground system to be caught up on by the levels of investment the Government are now bringing forward, that is because, in the days of the Labour-controlled GLC, London Transport was neglected, year in year out.

British Rail investment is also sustained at much higher levels than in recent years. The figures quoted by the hon. Member for Peckham discounted the fact that some of the international investment will fall out of the picture in future years. Investment in core business is being sustained at much higher levels than in recent years.

I was astonished by the reaction of the hon. Member for Peckham to the private finance initiative. When pressed, the hon. Lady will concede that she agrees that private finance should combine with public sector finance in the public services. That really is a sinner come to repentance, because the hon. Lady would never have agreed to that five years ago, when she was dealing with health matters and health capital.

The hon. Lady was saying that things have not come to fruition, so let us look at London. The Jubilee line is being built with private sector participation—the first underground line built in London since the Victoria line. Heathrow Express is being constructed. She says that the other projects that I have announced, including the critically important west coast main line—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Morgan: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The Chancellor may have just said something that could have inadvertently misled the House. I am sure that he believes what he has said to be correct. He said that the Jubilee line is proceeding with the assistance of private finance, when he is referring to the European Investment Bank, which is public sector finance and Government-guaranteed.

Madam Speaker: That is not a point of order; it is a point of argument.

Mr. Clarke: The European Investment Bank raises its money on the private market. *[Interruption.]* It is only one participant in the banks that are investing in the Jubilee line. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) will be less excited when I reveal to him the shocking news that the European Investment Bank contribution contains not a penny of public money.

The hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends would no doubt cancel the project if they thought that the money going into it was not public money raised from the taxpayer. Like the hon. Lady, the hon. Gentleman does not understand the management of large infrastructure projects. He has nothing except an idée fixe that public investment is preferable to private investment. We are making progress with a combination.

We are making progress in the Budget towards getting on top of the public sector borrowing requirement, which, if it were not tackled, would lead first to increased taxation for later generations as the interest piled up and, more importantly, short-term pressure on interest rates if people felt we were not tackling it.

We will build on the success of British industry, which is already increasing its output, increasing employment in Britain and leading the way to recovery in Europe.

Throughout the debate, the Labour Opposition have advocated increased public spending. They have opposed any increase in taxation. They have talked of the expansion of demand, but they have not explained how on earth that would avoid returning to the 1976 position into which they took the country. They are devoid of policies. They are abandoning their opposition to specific measures. They know that this Budget has set Britain on the road to recovery and them on the road to many more years of much-deserved opposition.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 326, Noes 291.

Division No. 9] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter

Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria

Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and the public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide——

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply, acquisition or importation;
(b) for refunding any amount of tax;
(c) for varying the rate of that tax otherwise than in relation to all supplies, acquisitions and importations; or
(d) for relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description.

MADAM SPEAKER *then, pursuant to paragraph (3) of Standing Order No. 50 (Ways and Means Motions), put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of the further motions.*

2. WINE AND MADE-WINE (RATES)

Resolved,

That—

(1) For the Table of rates of duty in Schedule 1 to the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 there shall be substituted the following Table—

"TABLE OF RATES OF DUTY ON WINE AND MADE-WINE

PART I

WINE OR MADE-WINE OF A STRENGTH NOT EXCEEDING 22 PER CENT.

Description of wine or made-wine	Rates of duty per hectolitre
	£
Wine or made-wine of a strength not exceeding 2 per cent.	13·48
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 2 per cent. but not exceeding 3 per cent.	22·46
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 3 per cent. but not exceeding 4 per cent.	31·45

Description of wine or made-wine	Rates of duty per hectolitre
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 4 per cent. but not exceeding 5 per cent.	40·44
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 5 per cent. but not exceeding 5·5 per cent.	49·42
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 5·5 per cent. but not exceeding 15 per cent. and not being sparkling	134·77
Sparkling wine or sparkling made-wine of a strength exceeding 5·5 per cent. but not exceeding 15 per cent.	222·55
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 15 per cent. but not exceeding 22 per cent.	207·33

PART II

WINE OR MADE-WINE OF A STRENGTH EXCEEDING 22 PER CENT.

Description of wine or made-wine	Rates of duty per litre of alcohol in the wine or made-wine
	£
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 22 per cent.	19·81"

(2) This Resolution shall come into force on 1st January 1994.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

3. CIDER (RATE)

Motion made, and Question put,

That—

(1) In section 62(1) of the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 for "£22·39" there shall be substituted "£22·82".

(2) This Resolution shall come into force on 1st January 1994.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

The House divided: Ayes 329, Noes 55.

Division No. 10] **[10.17 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*

Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sidney Chapman.

NOES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Harvey, Nick
Hoey, Kate
Hood, Jimmy
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Olner, William
Primarolo, Dawn
Rendel, David
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Don Foster and
Mr. Simon Hughes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

4. TOBACCO PRODUCTS (RATES)

Resolved,

That—

(1) For the Table in Schedule 1 to the Tobacco Products Duty Act 1979 there shall be substituted—

"TABLE

1. Cigarettes	An amount equal to 20 per cent. of the retail price plus £52·33 per thousand cigarettes.
2. Cigars	£77·58 per kilogram.
3. Hand-rolling tobacco	£81·86 per kilogram
4. Other smoking tobacco and chewing tobacco	£34·26 per kilogram."

(2) This Resolution shall come into force at 6 o'clock in the evening of 30th November 1993.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

5. HYDROCARBON OIL (RATES)

Motion made, and Question put,—

That—

(1) In section 6(1) of the Hydrocarbon Oil Duties Act 1979 for "£0.3058" and "£0.2514" there shall be substituted "£0.3314" and "£0.2770" respectively.

(2) In section 11(1) of that Act for "£0.0105" and "£0.0149" there shall be substituted "£0.0116" and "£0.0164" respectively.

(3) In section 14(1) of that Act for "£0.0105" there shall be substituted "£0.0116".

(4) This Resolution shall come into force at 6 o'clock in the evening of 30th November 1993.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

The House divided: Ayes 323, Noes 52.

Division No. 11] **[10.30 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary

Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

NOES

Ainger, Nick
Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Harvey, Nick
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCrea, Rev William
Maclennan, Robert
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Rendel, David
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alex Salmond and
Mr. Andrew Welsh.

Question accordingly agreed to.

6. GAMING MACHINE LICENCE DUTY (SURRENDER, ETC.)

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending Part II of Schedule 4 to the Betting and Gaming Duties Act 1981.

7. GAMING MACHINE LICENCE DUTY (NEW LICENCES)

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall have effect.

Licences for periods beginning on or after 1st May 1994

1.—(1) The Betting and Gaming Duties Act 1981 shall be amended as follows.

(2) For section 21(3) (period of gaming machine licences) there is substituted—

"(3) A gaming machine licence may be granted for a period of a month, or of any number of months not exceeding twelve, beginning on any day of any month".

(3) Section 22(5) (rates of duty) is omitted.

(4) For section 23 (amount of duty) there is substituted—

"Amount of duty

23.—(1) The amount of duty payable on a gaming machine licence shall be—

(a) the appropriate amount for the machine which it authorises, or

(b) if it authorises two or more machines, the aggregate of the appropriate amounts for each of those machines.

(2) The appropriate amount for each machine shall be determined in accordance with the following Table by reference to—

(a) the period for which the licence is granted, and

(b) whether the machine falls within column 2 or column 3 of the Table,

and references in this Part to a rate of gaming machine licence duty are references to the rate in column 2 or the rate in column 3.

TABLE

(1) Period (in months) for which licence granted	(2) Small prize or five-penny machines	(3) Other machines
	£	£
1	50	125
2	90	230
3	130	335
4	170	435
5	210	540
6	245	630
7	290	735
8	330	840
9	365	930
10	405	1,035
11	425	1,090
12	450	1,150"

(5) In section 24 (restrictions on number of licences)—

(a) subsection (2),

(b) in subsections (3) and (4), "such", and

(c) in subsection (6)(a), the words from "or" at the end of sub-paragraph (i) to "greater", are omitted.

(6) In section 26 (supplementary provisions), in subsection (4)—

(a) "section 22(5) or" is omitted, and

(b) for "those provisions" there is substituted "that provision".

(7) In Part II of Schedule 4 (supplementary provisions) for paragraphs 6 and 7 (applications and duration of licences) there is substituted—

"6. An application for a gaming machine licence shall be made to the Commissioners in such form and manner as they may require.

7. The period for which a gaming machine licence is granted shall begin with the day on which application for the licence is received by the Commissioners or, if a later day is specified for that purpose in the application, with that day; and the licence shall expire at the end of that period."

(8) Paragraphs 9 to 11A of that Schedule (amendment, etc.) shall not apply at any time before 1st May 1994 to any licence in relation to which this paragraph has effect.

(9) This paragraph of this Resolution shall have effect in relation to gaming machine licences granted for any period beginning on or after 1st May 1994.

Special licences

2. No special licence (as defined in section 21(2) of the Betting and Gaming Duties Act 1981) may be granted for any period beginning on or after 1st May 1994.

Seasonal licences

3.—(1) In Part I of Schedule 4 to that Act (exemptions), for paragraph 4 (and the cross-heading preceding it) there shall be substituted—

"*Seasonal licences*

4.—(1) If at any time during March of any year there has previously been granted a seasonal licence for that year authorising the provision of any number of small-prize machines on any premises and that licence has not been surrendered, it shall be treated for the purposes of this Act as authorising the provision at that time of that number of small-prize machines on the premises.

(2) Where a seasonal licence is granted for any year authorising the provision of any number of small-prize machines on any premises, and the licence is not surrendered, it shall be treated for the purposes of this Act as authorising during October of that year the provision of that number of small-prize machines on the premises.

(3) Subject to sub-paragraph (4) below, in this Schedule "seasonal licence", in relation to any year, means a gaming machine licence expressed to authorise only the provision of small-prize machines on any premises for the period of six months beginning with 1st April in that year.

(4) A licence in respect of any premises is not a seasonal licence in relation to any year if any gaming machine licence has been granted in respect of those premises for any period which includes the whole or any part of the preceding winter period.

(5) If, in relation to any year—

(a) a seasonal licence is granted in respect of any premises, and

(b) another gaming machine licence is granted (whether before or after the grant of the seasonal licence or after the surrender of the seasonal licence) in respect of those premises for any period which includes the whole or any part of the following winter period (and does not include the whole or any part of the preceding winter period),

there shall (unless an amount has already become payable under this sub-paragraph in respect of the seasonal licence) be payable on the seasonal licence on the relevant date an additional amount of duty.

(6) The additional amount is the difference between the duty payable (apart from this paragraph) on that licence at the time it was granted and the amount that would have been so payable if the licence has been granted for a period of eight months or, in a case where the seasonal licence has been surrendered before the beginning of September, seven months.

(7) In sub-paragraph (5) above, the "relevant date" means—

(a) the date on which the seasonal licence granted, or

(b) the date on which the other licence is granted,

which ever is the later.

(8) In this paragraph "winter period" means November to February."

(2) The references in paragraph 4(4) and (5)(b) of that Schedule (as inserted by this paragraph) to a licence in respect of any premises included a reference to any special licence in respect of any machine on those premises.

(3) Section 21(3) and 23 of that Act (as inserted by paragraph 1 of this Resolution) shall have effect for the purposes of paragraph 4(6) of that Schedule (as inserted by this paragraph) in relation to gaming machine licences granted for the period of six months beginning with 1st April 1994.

(4) This paragraph of this Resolution shall have effect in relation to gaming machine licences granted for any period beginning on or after 1st April 1994.

Provisional statutory effect

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

8. VEHICLES EXCISE DUTY (RATES)

Resolved,

That—

(1) The Vehicles (Excise) Act 1971 shall be amended as follows.

(2) In section 2(1)(b), for "£35" there shall be substituted "£50".

(3) In Schedule 1, in Part I, paragraph 4(a) shall be omitted.

(4) In Schedule 2—

(a) in Part I, paragraphs 3 and 5 shall be omitted; and

(b) in the second column of the first entry in the Table set out in Part II, for "125" there shall be substituted "130".

(5) In Schedule 4, in the Table set out in paragraph 4(1), there shall be inserted at the end—

38,000	44,000	—	—	—	2,730	2,730	1,240

(6) In Schedule 4, paragraph 6(6)(a), (c) and (d) shall be omitted.

(7) In Schedule 5, in the second column of paragraph 2 in the Table set out in Part II, for "125·00" there shall be substituted "130·00".

(8) This Resolution shall apply in relation to licences taken out after 30th November 1993.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

9. VEHICLES EXCISE DUTY (GENERAL)

Resolved,

That provision may be made about vehicles excise duty.

10. AIR PASSENGER DUTY

Resolved,

That provision may be made for the imposition of a duty of excise on the carriage of passengers by air from any place in the United Kingdom.

11. VALUE ADDED TAX (REPAYMENT SUPPLEMENT)

Resolved,

That section 20 of the Finance Act 1985 may be amended.

12. INSURANCE PREMIUM TAX

Motion made, and Question put,—

That provision may be made for charging a tax on premiums (including anything treated as a premium) received in respect of insurance contracts.

The House divided: Ayes 323, Noes 287.

Division No. 12] **[10.44 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John

Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitl[illegible] Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe

Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

13. INCOME TAX (CHARGE AND RATES FOR 1994-95)

Resolved,

That—

(1) income tax shall be charged for the year 1994-95, and for that year—

(a) the lower rate shall be 20 per cent.,

(b) the basic rate shall be 25 per cent., and

(c) the higher rate shall be 40 per cent.

(2) For the year 1994-95 section 1(2) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 shall apply as if—

(a) the amount specified in paragraph (aa) were £3,000, and

(b) the amount specified in paragraph (b) were £23,700;

and accordingly section 1(4) of that Act shall not apply for the year 1994-95.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

14. INCOME TAX (PERSONAL ALLOWANCE)

Resolved,

That section 257 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 shall apply for the year 1994-95 as if the amounts specified in it were the same as the amounts specified in it as it applies for the year 1993-94, and accordingly section 257C(1) of that Act so far as relating to section 257 shall not apply for the year 1994-95.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

15. MARRIED COUPLE'S ALLOWANCE ETC.

Resolved,

That the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 shall have effect as follows.

(1) The provisions of section 256 of that Act shall become subsection (1) of that section and after that subsection there shall be inserted the following subsections—

> "(2) Where under any provision of this Chapter the relief to which a person is entitled for any year of assessment consists in an income tax reduction calculated by reference to a specified amount, the effect of that relief shall be that the amount of that person's liability for that year to income tax on his total income shall be the amount to which he would have been liable apart from that provision less whichever is the smaller of—
>
> (a) the amount equal to 20 per cent. of the specified amount; and
>
> (b) the amount which reduces his liability to nil.
>
> (3) In determining for the purposes of subsection (2) above the amount of income tax to which a person would be liable apart from any provision providing for an income tax reduction, no account shall be taken—
>
> (a) where that provision is section 259 or 261A, of any income tax reduction under any of the other provisions of this Chapter;
>
> (b) where that provision is section 262(1), of any income tax reduction under any of the other provisions of this Chapter except section 259 or 261A; or
>
> (c) whatever that provision—
>
> (i) of any relief by way of a reduction of liability to tax which is given in accordance with any arrangements having effect by virtue of section 788 or by way of a credit under section 790(1); or
>
> (ii) of any tax at the basic rate on so much of that person's income as is income the income tax on which he is entitled to charge against any other person or to deduct, retain or satisfy out of any payment;
>
> but paragraph (a) above, so far as it relates to any income tax reduction under section 261A, is without prejudice to the provisions of subsection (2) of that section."

(2) In section 257A of that Act—

(a) in subsection (1), for the words from "to a deduction" onwards there shall be substituted "for that year to an income tax deduction calculated by reference to £1,720";

(b) in subsection (2), for the words from "to a deduction" to "the deduction" there shall be substituted "for that year to an income tax reduction calculated by reference to £2,665 (instead of to the reduction";

(c) in subsection (3), for the words from "to a deduction" to "the deduction" there shall be substituted "for that year to an income tax reduction calculated by reference to £2,705 (instead of to the reduction"; and

(d) in subsection (6), for "deduction" there shall be substituted "income tax reduction".

(3) In subsections (1) and (2) of section 257BA of that Act—

(a) for the words "to deduct from her total income", in each place where they occur, there shall be substituted "to an income tax reduction calculated by reference to"; and

(b) for the words "that he is entitled to deduct under section 257A", in each place where they occur, there shall be substituted "by reference to which the calculation of the income tax reduction to which he is entitled under section 257A is to be made".

(4) In subsection (3) of section 257BA of that Act—

(a) for "to deduct from his total income" there shall be substituted "to an income tax reduction calculated by reference to";

(b) for "the amount, if any, that he is already entitled to deduct" there shall be substituted "any income tax reduction to which he is already entitled"; and

(c) for "that she is entitled to deduct by virtue of that election" there shall be substituted "by reference to which the calculation of the income tax reduction to which she is entitled by virtue of that election is to be made".

(5) Any election made for the purposes of section 257BA of that Act before 6th April 1994 which, apart from this Resolution, would have effect in accordance with that section for the year 1994-95 shall so have effect as if it were an election for the purposes of that section as amended by this Resolution.

(6) In subsection (1) of section 257BB of that Act, for paragraph (b) and the words after that paragraph there shall be substituted—

> "(b) the amount of the reduction to which he is entitled is determined in accordance with section 256(2)(b) or, by virtue of his having no income tax liability to which that reduction is applicable, is nil,
>
> his wife shall be entitled (in addition to any reduction to which she is entitled by virtue of an election under section 257BA) to an income tax reduction calculated by reference to an amount equal to the unused part of the amount by reference to which her husband's income tax reduction fell to be calculated in pursuance of section 257A and any election under section 257BA."

(7) In subsection (3) of section 257BB of that Act, for paragraph (b) and the words after that paragraph there shall be substituted—

> "(b) the amount of the reduction to which she is entitled is determined in accordance with section 256(2)(b) or, by virtue of her having no income tax liability to which that reduction is applicable, is nil,
>
> her husband shall be entitled (in addition to any other reduction to which he is entitled by virtue of section 257A) to an income tax reduction calculated by reference to an amount equal to the unused part of the amount by reference to which his wife's income tax reduction fell to be calculated in pursuance of that election.";

and after that subsection there shall be inserted the following subsection—

> "(3A) In this section references, in relation to such an amount as is mentioned in subsection (1)(b) or (3)(b), to the unused part of an amount by reference to which any income tax reduction fell to be calculated are references to so much of it (including, where the amount so mentioned is nil, all of it) as has no practical effect on the determination of the amount so mentioned."

(8) Subsection (6) of section 257BB of that Act shall cease to have effect.

(9) Where the year in question for the purposes of subsection (5) of section 257D of that Act is the year 1994-95, deductions by virtue of any of sections 257A to 262 of that Act shall be disregarded in determining the deductions which a wife is taken for the purposes of paragraph (c) of that subsection to have been entitled to make from her total income for the year immediately preceding the year in question.

(10) In section 257D(5)(d) of that Act, the words "section 257A and" shall be omitted.

(11) In section 257F(c) of that Act, after "257A" there shall be inserted "or, as the case may be, an income tax reduction under that section".

(12) In subsection (1)(b) of section 259 of that Act, for "to a deduction from his total income" there shall be substituted "to an income tax reduction".

(13) In section 259(2) of that Act, for "to a deduction from his total income of" there shall be substituted "for that year to an income tax reduction calculated by reference to".

(14) In subsection (3) of section 259 of that Act, for "deduction" there shall be substituted "income tax reduction".

(15) In subsection (4A) of section 259 of that Act—

(a) for the words "a deduction", in the first and third places where they occur, there shall be substituted "an income tax reduction"; and

(b) for the words "a deduction", in the second place where they occur, there shall be substituted "a reduction".

(16) In subsection (1)(b) of section 260 of that Act, for the words from "the deduction" to "equal" there shall be substituted "the income tax reduction to which each of them is entitled under that section shall be calculated, subject to subsection (2) below, by reference".

(17) In subsection (2) of section 260 of that Act, for the words from "the deduction" to "equal" there shall be substituted "the income tax reduction to which he is entitled for that year under section 259 shall be calculated by reference".

(18) In section 261A(1) of that Act, for "to a deduction from his total income of" there shall be substituted "for that year to an income tax reduction calculated by reference to".

(19) In subsection (1) of section 262 of that Act—

(a) in paragraph (a), for "to a deduction from her total income of" there shall be substituted "to an income tax reduction calculated by reference to"; and

(b) in paragraph (b), for "to a deduction of" there shall be substituted "to an income tax reduction calculated by reference to".

(20) In section 265(3)(b) of that Act, the words from "section 257A" to "or under" shall be omitted.

(21) In section 276 of that Act, after subsection (1) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

> "(1A) In subsection (1) above the references to relief under this Chapter do not include references to relief consisting in such an income tax reduction as is mentioned in section 256(2) above."

(22) This Resolution shall apply for the year 1994-95; and section 257C(1) of that Act, so far as relating to section 257A(1) to (3) of that Act, shall not apply for the year 1994-95.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

16. AMOUNT BY REFERENCE TO WHICH MCA IS REDUCED

Resolved,

That section 257A(5) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 shall apply for the year 1994-95 as if the amount specified in it were the same as the amount specified in it as it applies for the year 1993-94, and accordingly section 257C(1) of that Act so far as relating to section 257A(5) shall not apply for the year 1994-95.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

17. RELIEF FOR MAINTENANCE PAYMENTS ETC.

Resolved,

That sections 347A and 347B of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 and section 38 of the Finance Act 1988 shall have effect in relation to payments becoming due on or after 6th April 1994 with the following modifications.

(1) Section 347A shall apply to any payment made—

(a) in pursuance of any obligation which falls within paragraphs (a) to (c) of subsection (4) of section 36 of the Finance Act 1988 and is an obligation under an order made by a court, a written or oral agreement or a deed executed for giving effect to an agreement, and

(b) for the benefit, maintenance or education of a person (whether or not the person to whom the payment is made) who attained the age of 21 on or before the day on which the payment became due after 5th April 1994,

as if that obligation were not an existing obligation within the definition contained in that subsection.

(2) In subsection (2) of section 347B—

(a) the words "Notwithstanding section 347A(1)(a) but" shall be omitted; and

(b) for the words from "in computing" to "to deduct" there shall be substituted "for a year of assessment to an income tax reduction calculated by reference to".

(3) In subsection (3) of section 347B, for the words from the beginning to "exceed" there shall be substituted "The amount by reference to which any income tax reduction is to be calculated under this section shall be limited to".

(4) In subsection (5) of section 347B, for "otherwise than under this section" there shall be substituted "by virtue of section 36(3) of the Finance Act 1988 but otherwise than in accordance with section 38(2)(a) of that Act".

(5) After subsection (5) of Section 347B there shall be inserted the following subsections—

> "(5A) Where any person is entitled under this section for any year of assessment to an income tax reduction calculated by reference to the amount determined in accordance with subsections (2) to (5) above ('the relevant amount'), the amount of that person's liability for that year to income tax on his total income shall be the amount to which he would have been liable apart from this section less whichever is the smaller of—
>
> (a) the amount equal to the appropriate percentage of the relevant amount; and
>
> (b) the amount which reduces his liability to nil;
>
> and in this subsection 'the appropriate percentage' means 20 per cent.
>
> (5B) In determining for the purposes of subsection (5A) above the amount of income tax to which a person would be liable apart from any income tax reduction under this section, no account shall be taken of—
>
> (a) any income tax reduction under Chapter I of Part VII;
>
> (b) any relief by way of a reduction of liability to tax which is given in accordance with any arrangements having effect by virtue of section 788 or by way of a credit under section 790(1); or
>
> (c) any tax at the basic rate on so much of that person's income as is income the income tax on which he is entitled to charge against any other person or to deduct, retain or satisfy out of any payment."

(6) In subsection (3) of section 38, for the words from the word "aggregate", in the first place where it occurs, to "exceed" there shall be substituted "amount (if any) by which the relevant aggregate exceeds the amount specified in section 257A(1) of the Taxes Act 1988 for the year; and in this subsection and subsection (3A) below 'the relevant aggregate' means whichever is the smaller of the following, that is to say, the aggregate amount of the payments made by him which fall due in that year and to which this section applies and".

(7) After subsection (3) of section 38 there shall be inserted the following subsection—

> "(3A) Sections 347A and 347B of the Taxes Act 1988 (except, in the case of section 347A, so far as it restricts the extent to which any payment is to be treated as forming part of the income of the person to whom it is made or any other person) shall have effect as if so much of the relevant aggregate for any year of assessment as does not exceed the amount specified for that year in section 257A(1) of that Act were a qualifying maintenance payment made otherwise than in pursuance of an existing obligation."

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

18. RELIEF FOR BLIND PERSONS

Resolved,

That—

(1) In section 265(1) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 for "£1,080" there shall be substituted "£1,200".

(2) This Resolution shall apply for the year 1994-95

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

19. RELIEF FOR INTEREST (LIMIT FOR 1994-95)

Resolved,

That, for the year 1994-95, the qualifying maximum defined in section 367(5) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 shall be £30,000.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

20. RELIEF FOR INTEREST (NEW BASIS)

Resolved,

That—

(1) For subsection (1) of section 353 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 there shall be substituted the following subsection—

"(1) Where a person pays interest in any year of assessment, that person, if he makes a claim to the relief, shall for that year of assessment be entitled (subject to sections 354 to 368) to relief in accordance with this section in respect of so much (if any) of the amount of that interest as is eligible for relief under this section by virtue of sections 354 to 365."

(2) After that subsection there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(1A) Where a person is entitled for any year of assessment to relief under this section in respect of any amount of interest which—

- (a) is eligible for that relief by virtue of section 354 or 365, and
- (b) so far as eligible by virtue of section 354, is so eligible in a case which falls, or is treated as falling, within section 355(1)(a), 356 or 358,

that relief shall consist in an income tax reduction for that year calculated by reference to that amount.

(1B) Where a person is entitled for any year of assessment to relief under this section in respect of any amount of interest which—

- (a) is eligible for that relief otherwise than by virtue of section 354 or 365, or
- (b) is eligible for that relief by virtue of section 354 in a case falling within section 355(1)(b),

that relief shall consist (subject to sections 237(5)(b) and 355(4)) in a deduction or set-off of that amount from or against that person's income for that year.

(1C) Without prejudice to subsection (1E) below, where the whole or any part of an amount of interest is eligible for relief under this section by virtue of section 354 in a case which (apart from this subsection) would fall, or be treated as falling, within both section 355(1)(a) or 356 and section 355(1)(b), then that case shall be treated for the purposes of this section and the following provisions of this Act—

- (a) except in relation to payments to which an election made for the purposes of this subsection by the person entitled to the relief applies, as falling within section 355(1)(b) and not within section 355(1)(a) or 356; and
- (b) in relation to payments to which such an election does apply, as falling within section 355(1)(a) or, as the case may be, 356, and not within section 355(1)(b).

(1D) An election for the purposes of subsection (1C)—

- (a) shall be made, and may be withdrawn, by the giving of written notice to an officer of the Board;
- (b) shall apply to every payment of interest which—
  - (i) is made after the time specified in the notice of that election as the time as from which it takes effect; and
  - (ii) is not made after a time specified in a notice of the withdrawal of that election as the time as from which that election is withdrawn;
- (c) shall not be made so as to take effect as from any time except the beginning of a year of assessment or a time as from which the conditions for the case to fall, or be treated as falling, within both section 355(1)(a) or 356 and section 355(1)(b) have begun to be satisfied in relation to payments of interest on the loan in question;
- (d) shall not be withdrawn except as from the beginning of a year of assessment; and
- (e) shall not be made so as to take effect, and shall not be withdrawn, as from anytime before the beginning of the year of assessment immediately before that in which the notice of the election or, as the case may be, of the withdrawal is given to an officer of the Board.

(1E) Where any person is entitled for any year of assessment to relief under this section in respect of any amount of interest which is eligible for that relief partly as mentioned in subsection 1(A) above and partly as mentioned in subsection (1B) above, that amount of interest shall be apportioned between the cases to which each of those subsections applies without regard to what parts of the total amount borrowed remain oustanding but according to the following factors, that is to say—

- (a) the proportions of the total amount borrowed which were applied for different purposes; and
- (b) in the case of so much of any amount of interest which is, or in pursuance of an appointment under paragraph (a) above is treated as, eligible for relief by virtue of section 354, the different uses to which the land or other property in question is put from time to time;

and subsection (1A) or (1B) above shall apply accordingly in relation to the interest apportioned to the case to which that subsection applies.

(1F) Where any person is entitled under this section for any year of assessment to an income tax reduction calculated by reference to an amount of interest, the amount of that person's liability for that year to income tax on his total income shall be the amount to which he would have abeen liable part from this section less whichever is the smaller of—

- (a) the amount equal to the applicable percentage of that amount of interest; and
- (b) the amount which reduces his liability to nil.

(1G) In subsection (1F) above 'the applicable percentage'—

- (a) in relation to so much of any interest as is eligible for relief under this section by virtue of section 354, means 20 per cent.; and
- (b) in relation to so much of any interest as is eligible for relief under this section by virtue of section 365, means the percentage which is the basic rate for the year of assessment in question.

(1H) In determining for the purposes of subsection (1F) above the amount of income tax to which a person would be liable apart from any income tax reduction under this section, no account shall be taken of—

- (a) any income tax reduction under Chapter I of Part VII or section 347B;
- (b) any relief by way of a reduction of liability to tax which is given in accordance with any arrangements having effect by virtue of section 788 or by way of a credit under section 790(1); or
- (c) any tax at the basic rate on so much of that person's income as is income the income tax on which he is entitled to charge against any other person or to deduct, retain or satisfy out of any payment."

(3) Subsections (4) and (5) of section 353 of that Act shall cease to have effect.

(4) In section 355(4) of that Act—

- (a) for the words from "where" to "but" there shall be substituted "falling within subsection (1)(b) above shall be given only against income from the letting of any land, caravan or house-boat (whether or not the land, caravan or house-boat in question), but"; and
- (b) for the words "the first-mentioned land, caravan or house-boat" there shall be substituted "the land, caravan or house-boat in question".

(5) In section 356(1) of that Act, for "Section 355(1)" there shall be substituted "Section 355(1)(a)".

(6) In section 356A(3) of that Act, after "is", in the second place where it occurs, there shall be inserted "or but for section 353(1C)(a) would be".

(7) In sections 356D(1) and 357(1) of that Act, for "eligible for relief under section 353 by virtue of section 355(1)(a) or 356(1)" there shall, in each case, be substituted ", in a case falling or treated as falling within section 355(1)(a), 356 or 358, eligible for relief under section 353 by virtue of section 354".

(8) In sections 357A(7) and 357B(1)(c) and (6) of that Act, for "by virtue of section 355(1)(a) or 356(1)" there shall, in each case, be substituted "and is such that the conditions for the case to fall, or be treated as falling, within section 355(1)(a), 356 or 358 were satisfied".

(9) In section 357C(1)(e) of that Act, for "by virtue of section 355(1)(a) or 356(1)" there shall be substituted "and would have been such that the conditions for the case to fall, or be treated as falling, within section 355(1)(a), 356 or 358 were satisfied".

(10) In section 357C(2) of that Act, for "by virtue of section 355(1)(a) or 356(1)" there shall be substituted "and was been such that the conditions for the case to fall, or be treated as falling, within section 355(1)(a), 356 or 358 were satisfied".

(11) In section 358 of that Act, after subsection (4) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

> "(4A) References in this Act to a case falling within this section shall not include references to a case falling within section 355(1)(b) where the interest paid by the personal representatives or trustees is eligible for relief under section 353 apart from the assumptions for which subsection (3) above provides."

(12) In section 368(1) of that Act, for "for any other purpose of the Income Tax Acts" there shall be substituted "for any purpose of the Income Tax Acts except so far as it is so allowable in accordance with subsection (1B) of that section."

(13) In subsection (1) of section 369 of that Act, for the words from "income tax" onwards there shall be substituted "the applicable percentage thereof." and after that subsection there shall be inserted the following subsection—

> "(1A) In subsection (1) above 'the applicable percentage'—
> (a) in relation to so much of any payment of relevant loan interest as is not a payment in relation to which paragraph (b) below has effect, means 20 per cent.; and
> (b) in relation to so much of any payment as—
> (i) has become due before 6th April 1994; or
> (ii) being a payment becoming due on or after 6th April 1994, would, apart from section 353(2), be eligible for relief under section 353 by virtue of section 365,
>
> means the percentage which is the basic rate for the year of assessment in which the payment has become or becomes due."

(14) For subsections (3) to (5B) of section 369 of that Act there shall be substituted the following subsection—

> "(3) The following payments, that is to say—
> (a) payments of relevant loan interest to which this section applies, and
> (b) payments which would be such payments but for section 373(5),
>
> shall not be allowable as deductions for any purpose of the Income Tax Acts except in so far as they fall to be treated as such payments by virtue only of section 375(2) and would be allowable apart from this subsection."

(15) In section 370 of that Act—

(a) in subsection (2), after "section 353(2)" there shall be inserted "and any other provision applying to interest falling to be treated as relevant loan interest"; and

(b) after subsection (6) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

> "(6A) In disregarding section 353(2) for the purposes of subsection (2)(c) above, section 353(1C) and (1D) shall apply for determining whether or not the condition in section 355(1) or 356(1) is fulfilled as (but for section 353(2)) they would apply for the purpose of determining whether or not the case falls, or is treated as falling, within section 355(1)(a) or 356."

(16) In section 375(3) of that Act, for the words from "entitles" to "been allowed" there shall be substituted "shall be taken as regards the borrower as entitling him to any deduction or to retain any amount deducted and, accordingly, where any amount that has been deducted exceeds the amount which ought to have been deducted".

(17) Subsection (7) of section 57 of the Finance Act 1993 shall cease to have effect.

(18) This Resolution—

(a) shall have effect in relation to payments of interest made on or after 6th April 1994 (whenever falling due); and

(b) shall also have effect, so far as it relates to relevant loan interest, in relation to any payments of interest becoming due on or after 6th April 1994 which have been made at any time before that date but on or after 30th November 1993;

and in this paragraph "relevant loan interest" has the same meaning as in Part IX of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.

And it hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collectioin of Taxes Act 1968.

21. CORPORATION TAX

(CHARGE AND RATE FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 1994)

Resolved,

That corporation tax shall be charged for the financial year 1994 at the rate of 33 per cent.

22. CORPORATION TAX (SMALL COMPANIES: 1994)

Resolved,

That for the financial year 1994—

(a) the small companies' rate shall be 25 per cent., and

(b) the fraction mentioned in section 13(2) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 shall be one fiftieth.

23. BENEFITS IN KIND (CAR FUEL)

Resolved,

That, for the year 1994-95, section 158 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 shall have effect with the substitution of the following for the Tables in subsection (2)—

TABLE A

Cylinder capacity of car in cubic centimetres	Cash equivalent
	£
1,400 or less	640
More than 1,400 but not more than 2,000	810
More than 2,000	1,200

TABLE AB

Cylinder capacity of car in cubic centimetres	Cash equivalent
	£
2,000 or less	580
More than 2,000	750

TABLE B

Description of car	Cash equivalent
	£
Any car	1,200"

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

24. BENEFITS IN KIND (BENEFICIAL LOAN ARRANGEMENTS)

Resolved,

That charges to income tax may be imposed in respect of loans made by reason of a person's employment.

25. NON-CASH VOUCHERS, CREDIT-TOKENS AND CASH VOUCHERS

Resolved,

That provision may be made about non-cash vouchers, credit-tokens and cash vouchers.

26. PAYE (EXTENSION OF SCOPE)

Resolved,

That charges may be imposed by—

(a) provisions relating to regulations under section 203 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988, and

(b) provisions connected with the provisions mentioned in paragraph (a).

27. PRIVATE MEDICAL INSURANCE

Resolved,

That provision may be made about private medical insurance.

28. MEDICAL INSURANCE (REDUCTION OF RELIEF)

Resolved,

That—

(1) Section 54 of the Finance Act 1989 shall be amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (3) for the words from "it shall be deducted" to the end of the subsection there shall be substituted "the individual shall be entitled to relief under this subsection in respect of the payment; and (except where subsections (4) to (6) below apply) relief under this subsection shall be given—

(a) in accordance with subsections (3A) to (3C) below, and

(b) only on a claim made for the purpose."

(3) The following subsections shall be inserted after subsection (3)—

"(3A) Where an individual is entitled to relief under subsection (3) above in respect of one or more payments made in a given year of assessment, the amount of his liability for that year of assessment to income tax on his total income shall be the amount to which he would be liable apart from this section less whichever is the smaller of—

(a) the amount found under subsection (3B) below, and

(b) the amount which reduces his liability to nil.

(3B) The amount referred to in subsection (3A)(a) above is an amount found by—

(a) taking the amount of the payment referred to in subsection (3A) above or (as the case may be) the aggregate amount of the payments there referred to, and

(b) finding an amount equal to tax on the amount taken under paragraph (a) above at the basic rate for the year of assessment concerned.

(3C) In determining for the purposes of subsection (3A) above the amount of income tax to which a person would be liable apart from this section, no account shall be taken of—

(a) any income tax reduction under Chapter I of Part VII of the Taxes Act 1988 or under section 347B of that Act;

(b) any income tax reduction under section 353(1A) of the Taxes Act 1988;

(c) any relief by way of a reduction of liability to tax which is given in accordance with any arrangements having effect by virtue of section 788 of the Taxes Act 1988 or by way of a credit under section 790(1) of that Act;

(d) any tax at the basic rate on so much of that person's income as is income the income tax on which he is entitled to charge against any other person or to deduct, retain or satisfy out of any payment."

(4) This Resolution shall apply in relation to payments made on or after 6th April 1994.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

29. MEDICAL INSURANCE (SURVIVING SPOUSE)

Resolved,

That—

(1) In section 54 of the Finance Act 1989 the following subsection shall be inserted after subsection (2)—

"(2A) In a case where—

(a) a payment is made in respect of a premium under a contract at a time when the contract meets the requirement in subsection (2) above by virtue of paragraph (c) of that subsection, and

(b) a payment is made under the same contract at a time after one of the individuals has died and when the contract does not (apart from this subsection) meet the requirement in subsection (2) above by virtue only of the fact that the surviving spouse is not aged 60 or over at the time,

for the purposes of subsection (2) above in its application to the contract the surviving spouse shall be deemed to be aged 60 or over at the time mentioned in paragraph (b) above."

(2) This Resolution shall apply where the first or only payment to be made in respect of a premium under the contract after the death occurs is made on or after 6th April 1994.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

30. PROFIT SHARING SCHEMES

Resolved,

That—

(1) Schedule 10 to the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 shall be amended as follows.

(2) In paragraph 3 the words from "In this paragraph" to the end of the paragraph shall be omitted.

(3) The following paragraph shall be inserted after paragraph 3—

"3A.—(1) In paragraph 3 above the reference to the relevant age shall be construed as follows.

(2) Where the scheme is approved before 25th July 1991 and the event occurs before 30th November 1993, the relevant age is pensionable age.

(3) Where—
- (a) the scheme is approved before 25th July 1991,
- (b) the event occurs on or after 30th November 1993
- (c) the scheme defines the period of retention by reference to the age of 60 for both men and women, and
- (d) the reference to that age is incorporated in the definition by virtue of an alteration approved by the Board under paragraph 4 of Schedule 9 before the event occurs,

the relevant age is 60.

(4) Where—
- (a) the scheme is approved before 25th July 1991,
- (b) the event occurs on or after 30th November 1993, and
- (c) sub-paragraph (3) above does not apply,

the relevant age is pensionable age.

(5) Where the scheme is approved on or after 25th July 1991, the relevant age is the specified age."

And it is hereby declared that it is expendient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

31. PROFIT-RELATED PAY (THE DISTRIBUTABLE POOL)

Resolved,

That—

(1) Schedule 8 to the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 shall be amended as follows.

(2) After paragraph 13 there shall be inserted—

"13A.—(1) Where a scheme includes provision by virtue of paragraph 13(4) or (5) above the scheme must be so framed that in arriving at the profits for the base year or for the previous profit period any profit-related pay and any secondary Class I contributions in respect of it are accorded the same accountancy treatment as is accorded to any profit-related pay and any secondary Class I contributions in respect of it in arriving at the profits in the profit period.

(2) In sub-paragraph (1) above—
- (a) "profit-related pay" means profit-related pay under whatever scheme;
- (b) "secondary Class I contributions" means secondary Class I contributions under Part I of the Social Security Act 1975 or Part I of the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Act 1975 or Part I of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 or Part I of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits (Northern Ireland) Act 1992.

(3) Sub-paragraph (1) above shall apply notwithstanding anything in paragraph 19 below.

(4) Where a scheme includes provision by virtue of paragraph 13(4) above the scheme must also include provision that if the pay for the profit period is less than the pay for the base year or for the previous profit period (as the case may be) the percentage to be applied for the purposes of the provision included by virtue of paragraph 13(4) above shall be the increased percentage (instead of any other percentage).

(5) The increased percentage must be one arrived at by—
- (a) taking the percentage that would be applied for the purposes of the provision included by virtue of paragraph 13(4) above apart from the provision included by virtue of sub-paragraph (4) above, and
- (b) adding the percentage found by expressing the difference in pay as a percentage of the profits for the base year or for the previous profit period (as the case may be).

(6) For the purposes of this paragraph—
- (a) the pay for the profit period or for the previous profit period or for the base year is the pay paid to employees in respect of employment in the period or year concerned in the employment unit concerned;
- (b) the difference in pay is the difference between the pay for the profit period and the pay for the previous profit period or for the base year (as the case may be);

and any profit-related pay shall be ignored in applying paragraph (a) above."

(3) After paragraph 14 there shall be inserted—

"14A.—(1) Where a scheme includes provision to give effect to paragraph 14(3) above or provision by virtue of paragraph 14(4) above the scheme must be so framed that in arriving at the profits in the preceding period of 12 months any profit-related pay and any secondary Class I contributions in respect of it are accorded the same accountancy treatment as is accorded to any profit-related pay and any secondary Class I contributions in respect of it in arriving at the profits in the profit period.

(2) Where a scheme includes provision by virtue of paragraph 14(5) above the scheme must be so framed that in arriving at the profits in the relevant period of 12 months any profit-related pay and any secondary Class I contributions in respect of it are accorded the same accountancy treatment as is accorded to any profit-related pay and any secondary Class I contributions in respect of it in arriving at the profits in the profit period; and for this purpose the relevant period of 12 months is the period of 12 months immediately preceding the first or only profit period to which the scheme relates.

(3) In sub-paragraphs (1) and (2) above—
- (a) "profit-related pay" means profit-related pay under whatever scheme;
- (b) "secondary Class I contributions" means secondary Class I contributions under Part I of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 or Part I of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits (Northern Ireland) Act 1992.

(4) Sub-paragraphs (1) and (2) above shall apply notwithstanding anything in paragraph 19 below.

(5) Where a scheme includes provision by virtue of paragraph 14(4) above the scheme must also include provision that if the pay for the profit period is less than the pay for the preceding period of 12 months the percentage to be applied for the purposes of the provision included by virtue of paragraph 14(4) above shall be the increased percentage (instead of any other percentage).

(6) The increased percentage must be one arrived at by—
- (a) taking the percentage that would be applied for the purposes of the provision included by virtue of paragraph 14(4) above apart from the provision included by virtue of sub-paragraph (5) above, and
- (b) adding the percentage found by expressing the difference in pay as a percentage of the profits in the preceding period of 12 months.

(7) For the purposes of this paragraph—
- (a) the pay for the profit period or for the preceding period of 12 months is the pay paid to employers in respect of employment in the period concerned in the employment unit concerned;
- (b) the difference in pay is the difference between the pay for the profit period and the pay for the preceding period of 12 months;

and any profit-related pay shall be ignored in applying paragraph (a) above."

(4) This Resolution shall have effect in relation to any scheme not registered before 1st December 1993.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

32. PROFIT-RELATED PAY (PARTS OF UNDERTAKINGS)

Resolved,

That—

(1) Schedule 8 to the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 shall be amended by inserting the following paragraphs after paragraph 22—

"23.—(1) In a case where—
- (a) paragraph 21 above applies to a scheme, and
- (b) method A (specified in paragraph 13 above) is employed for the purposes of the scheme,

the scheme must contain provisions which comply with this paragraph and which apply as regards each profit period to which the scheme relates.

(2) The scheme must ensure that no payments are made under it by reference to a given profit period if the percentage mentioned in paragraph 13(1) above exceeds the permitted percentage.

(3) The scheme must ensure that the permitted percentage is a percentage found by—

(a) taking the pay paid to employees in respect of employment in the relevant year in the employment unit to which the other scheme mentioned in paragraph 22(1)(a) above relates or (if there are two or more other schemes) the aggregate of the pay paid to employees in respect of employment in the relevant year in the employment units to which the other schemes relate;

(b) taking the profit-related pay paid to employees in respect of employment in the relevant year in the employment unit to which the other scheme mentioned in paragraph 22(1)(a) above relates or (if there are two or more other schemes) the aggregate of the profit-related pay paid to employees in respect of employment in the relevant year in the employment units to which the other schemes relate;

(c) taking the pay paid to employees in respect of employment in the relevant year in the employment unit to which the scheme mentioned in paragraph 21 above relates;

(d) taking the fraction whose denominator is equal to the number of whole pounds found under paragraph (a) above and whose numerator is equal to the number of whole pounds found under paragraph (b) above;

(e) multiplying the amount found under paragraph (c) above by the fraction found under paragraph (d) above;

(f) taking the profits for the relevant year of the undertaking mentioned in paragraph 21 above;

(g) expressing the amount found under paragraph (e) above as a percentage of the amount found under paragraph (f) above;

(h) taking the percentage found under paragraph (g) above as the permitted percentage.

(4) The scheme must ensure that the relevant year is a period of 12 months identified in the scheme and ending at a time within the period of two years immediately preceding the given profit period.

24.—(1) In a case where—

(a) paragraph 21 above applies to a scheme, and

(b) method B (specified in paragraph 14 above) is employed for the purposes of the scheme,

the scheme must contain provisions which comply with this paragraph and which apply as regards each profit period to which the scheme relates.

(2) The scheme must ensure that no payments are made under it by reference to the first or only profit period to which the scheme relates if the notional pool mentioned in paragraph 14(1)(a) above exceeds the permitted limit.

(3) The scheme must also ensure that no payments are made under it by reference to a given profit period other than the first if the distributable pool for the previous profit period (mentioned in paragraph 14(1)(b) above) exceeds the permitted limit.

(4) The scheme must ensure that the permitted limit is a limit found by—

(a) taking the pay paid to employees in respect of employment in the relevant year in the employment unit to which the other scheme mentioned in paragraph 22(1)(a) above relates or (if there are two or more other schemes) the aggregate of the pay paid to employees in respect of employment in the relevant year in the employment units to which the other schemes relate;

(b) taking the profit-related pay paid to employees in respect of employment in the relevant year in the employment unit to which the other scheme mentioned in paragraph 22(1)(a) above relates or (if there are two or more other schemes) the aggregate of the profit-related pay paid to employees in respect of employment in the relevant year in the employment units to which the other schemes relate;

(c) taking the pay paid to employees in respect of employment in the relevant year in the employment unit to which the scheme mentioned in paragraph 21 above relates;

(d) taking the fraction whose denominator is equal to the number of whole pounds found under paragraph (a) above and whose numerator is equal to the number of whole pounds found under paragraph (b) above;

(e) multiplying the amount found under paragraph (c) above by the fraction found under paragraph (d) above;

(f) taking the amount found under paragraph (e) above as the permitted limit.

(5) The scheme must ensure that the relevant year is—

(a) a period of 12 months identified in the scheme and ending at a time within the period of two years immediately preceding the first or only profit period to which the scheme relates (in the case of provisions contained in the scheme by virtue of sub-paragraph (2) above);

(b) a period of 12 months identified in the scheme and ending at a time within the period of two years immediately preceding the given profit period (in the case of provisions contained in the scheme by virtue of sub-paragraph (3) above)."

(2) This Resolution shall have effect in relation to any scheme not registered before 1st December 1993.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

33. VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Resolved,

That, in relation to payments made on or after 1 January 1994, section 32 of the Finance Act 1991 shall have effect with the following amendments.

(1) In subsection (1), after paragraph (c) there shall be inserted the following paragraphs—

"(ca) the individual has attained school-leaving age and, if under the age of nineteen, is not a person who is being provided with full-time education at a school,

(cb) the individual undertakes the course neither wholly nor mainly for recreational purposes or as a leisure activity,".

(2) In subsection (10), the words after paragraph (b) shall be omitted.

(3) After subsection (10) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(11) In this section—

'school' means any institution at which full-time education is provided to persons at least some of whom are under school-leaving age; and

'school-leaving age' means the age of sixteen."

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

34. RETIREMENT BENEFITS SCHEMES (GENERAL)

Resolved,

That provision may be made about retirement benefits schemes (including provision imposing liability on persons for tax due from others, whenever falling due).

35. RETIREMENT BENEFITS SCHEMES (ANNUITIES)

Resolved,

That provision may be made about annuities acquired with funds held for the purposes of retirement benefits schemes.

36. ASSESSMENT UNDER SCHEDULE D

Resolved,

That charges may be imposed by—

(a) provisions changing the basis of assessment under each of Cases I to VI of Schedule D;

(b) provisions connected with provisions mentioned in paragraph (a) above.

37. PARTNERSHIPS AND SUCCESSIONS

Resolved,

That charges may be imposed by provisions about partnerships and the effect of changes in the ownership of trades, professions and vocations.

38. DIVIDENDS

Resolved,

That provision may be made about dividends.

39. MANUFACTURED PAYMENTS

Resolved,

That provision may be made about amounts representative of dividends or interest.

40. SALE AND REPURCHASE OF SECURITIES

Resolved,

That provision may be made about the sale and repurchase of securities.

41. PREMIUMS REFERRED TO PENSION BUSINESS

Resolved,

That provision may be made about premiums to be referred to pension business.

42. AUTHORISED UNIT TRUSTS

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending Chapter III of Part XII of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.

43. DOUBLE TAXATION RELIEF (REGULATIONS)

Resolved,

That provision may be made empowering regulations to extinguish or limit entitlement to relief under Part XVIII of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.

44. RESTRICTION ON DEDUCTION FROM INCOME

Resolved,

That section 808 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 may be amended.

45. NON-RESIDENT COMPANIES

Resolved,

That provision may be made about companies regarded for the purposes of double taxation relief arrangements as resident outside the United Kingdom.

46. CONTROLLED FOREIGN COMPANIES

Resolved,

That provision maay be made amending Schedule 25 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.

47. EXCHANGE GAINS AND LOSSES

Resolved,

That Chapter II of Part II of the Finance Act 1993 may be amended.

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48. INTEREST RATE AND CURRENCY CONTRACTS AND OPTIONS

Resolved,

That charges (including charges by reference to existing contracts and options) may be imposed by—

(a) provisions about interest rate contracts and options and currency contracts and options;

(b) provisions connected with provisions mentioned in paragraph (a) above.

49. LLOYD'S UNDERWRITERS

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about Lloyd's underwriters.

50. CORPORATION TAX (NON-PAYMENT)

Resolved,

That, in relation to cases in which, following a change in the ownership of a company, corporation tax for an accounting period of the company beginning before the change is unpaid, provision may be made for the payment of the unpaid tax by other persons.

51. CHARGEABLE GAINS (ANNUAL EXEMPT AMOUNT)

Resolved,

That provision may be made as to the operation of section 3 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 for the year 1994-95.

52. CHARGEABLE GAINS (INDEXATION ALLOWANCE)

Resolved,

That for the purpose of the taxation of chargeable gains provision may be made about indexation allowance.

53. CHARGEABLE GAINS (OPTIONS AND FUTURES)

Resolved.

That provision may be made in relation to options and commodity and financial futures contracts.

54. CAPITAL ALLOWANCES (MACHINERY AND PLANT)

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about capital allowances in respect of machinery and plant.

55. CAPITAL ALLOWANCES (CHANGE OF PERIODS AND METHODS)

Resolved,

That charges may be imposed by—

(a) provisions changing the periods in respect of which, and the methods by which, effect is given to the provisions of the Capital Allowances Act 1990;

(b) provisions connected with provisions mentioned in paragraph (a) above.

56. LOSS RELIEF

Resolved,

That charges may be imposed by—

(a) provisions amending Chapter I of Part X of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988;

(b) provisions connected with provisions mentioned in paragraph (a) above.

57. RAILWAYS

Resolved,

That provision may be made in connection with transfers and other disposals under or by virtue of the Railways Act 1993.

58. EXPENDITURE INVOLVING CRIME

Resolved,

That provision may be made preventing expenditure being deducted, or included in expenses of management, if incurred in making a payment induced by blackmail or extortion.

59. PETROLEUM REVENUE TAX (ABORTIVE EXPLORATION EXPENDITURE)

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending section 5 of the Oil Taxation Act 1975 with effect from the time of royal assent to the Finance Act 1993.

60. PETROLEUM REVENUE TAX (TRANSFER OF ASSETS)

Resolved,

That provision may be made about the treatment for the purposes of petroleum revenue tax of certain disposals, within the meaning of paragraph 5 of Schedule 2 to the Oil Taxation Act 1983, of assets which, in relation to a participator in an oil field, are qualifying assets for the purposes of that Act.

61. VALUATION OF OIL, INCLUDING GAS

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of corporation tax and petroleum revenue tax, provision may be made with respect to the valuation of oil, including gas.

62. INHERITANCE TAX (INDEXATION OF RATE BANDS)

Resolved,

That provision may be made as to the operation of section 8(1) of the Inheritance Tax Act 1984 as regards chargeable transfers made in the year beginning 6th April 1994.

63. STAMP DUTY (EXECUTION OF DEEDS)

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall have effect for the period beginning 7th December 1993 and ending 31 days after the earliest of the dates mentioned in section 50(2) of the Finance Act 1973—

(1) In section 122 of the Stamp Act 1891 (definitions)—

- (a) after subsection (1) there shall be inserted—
  "(1A) For the purposes of this Act a deed (or, in Scotland, a deed for which delivery is required) shall be treated as executed when it is delivered or, if it is delivered subject to conditions, when the conditions are fulfilled", and
- (b) at the end of the definition of "executed" and "execution" in subsection (1) there shall be added "(but subject to subsection (1A) of this section)".

(2) In section 27 of the Stamp Duties Management Act 1891 (definitions), in the definition of "executed" and execution", for the words following "execution" there shall be substituted "have the same meaning as in the Stamp Act 1891".

(3) This Resolution shall apply to any instrument except one which, on or before 7th December 1993, had been executed for the purposes of the Stamp Act 1891 as that Act had effect before amendment by this resolution.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of section 50 of the Finance Act 1973.

64. STAMP DUTY (EXCHANGE, PARTITION, ETC.)

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall have effect for the period beginning 7th December 1993 and ending 31 days after the earliest of the dates mentioned in section 50(2) of the Finance Act 1973—

(1) Where—

- (a) the consideration for the transfer or vesting of any estate or interest in land or the grant of any lease or tack consists of or includes any property, and
- (b) for the purposes of stamp duty chargeable under or by reference to the heading "Conveyance or Transfer on sale" in Schedule 1 to the Stamp Act 1891 no amount or value is, apart from this Resolution, attributed to that property on that transfer, vesting or grant,

then, for those purposes, the consideration or, as the case may be, the consideration so far as relating to that property shall be taken to be the market value of the property immediately before the instrument in question is executed, and accordingly the instrument shall be charged with ad valorem duty under that heading.

(2) For the purposes of this Resolution the market value of the property at any time is the price which that property might reasonably be expected to fetch on a sale at that time in the open market.

(3) Stamp duty shall not be chargeable under the heading "Exchange or Excambion" in Schedule 1 to the Stamp Act 1891, and section 73 of that Act (exchange and partition or division) shall cease to apply to the exchange of property; and, accordingly, in that section the words from first "upon" to "heritable property, or" and the words "exchange or" shall cease to have effect.

(4) In that section, as amended by paragraph (3) above, for "real or heritable property" there shall be substituted "estate or interest in land".

(5) In Schedule 1 to that Act, in paragraph (3) of the heading "Lease or Tack" (consideration consisting of money, stock or security charged as on a conveyance on sale), for "or security" there shall be substituted "security or other property".

(6) This Resolution shall apply to instruments executed after 7th December 1993, not being instruments executed in pursuance of a control made before 30th November 1993.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of section 50 of the Finance Act 1973.

65. STAMP DUTY (UNASCERTAINABLE CONSIDERATION)

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall have effect for the period beginning 7th December 1993 and ending 31 days after the earliest of the dates mentioned in section 50(2) of the Finance Act 1973—

(1) Where, for the purposes of stamp duty chargeable under or by reference to the heading "Conveyance or Transfer on sale" in Schedule 1 to the Stamp Act 1891, the consideration, or any part of the consideration, for—

- (a) the transfer or vesting of any estate or interest in land, or
- (b) the grant of any lease or tack,

cannot, apart from this Resolution, be ascertained at the time the instrument in question is executed, the consideration for the transfer, vesting or grant shall for those purposes be taken to be the market value immediately before the instrument is executed of the estate or interest transferred or vested or, as the case may be, the lease or tack granted.

(2) Where, for the purposes of stamp duty chargeable under paragraph (3) of the heading "Lease or Tack" in Schedule 1 to that Act, the rent, or any part of the rent, payable under any lease or tack cannot, apart from this Resolution, be ascertained at the time it is executed, the rent shall for those purposes be taken to be the market rent at that time.

(3) For the purposes of this Resolution—

- (a) the cases where consideration or rent cannot be ascertained at any time do not include cases where the consideration or rent could be ascertained on the assumption that any future event mentioned in the instrument in question were or were not to occur,
- (b) the market rent of a lease or tack at any time is the rent which the lease or tack might reasonably be expected to fetch at that time in the open market, and
- (c) the market value of property at any time is the price which that property might reasonably be expected to fetch on a sale at that time in the open market.

(4) This Resolution shall apply to instruments executed after 7 December 1993.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of section 50 of the Finance Act 1973.

66. STAMP DUTY (SURRENDER OF LEASES)

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall have effect for the period beginning 7th December 1993 and ending 31 days after the earliest of the dates mentioned in section 50(2) of the Finance Act 1973—

(1) Where, in pursuance of any agreement, any lease is surrendered (or, in Scotland, renounced) at any time otherwise than by deed, the agreement shall be treated for the purposes of any duty chargeable under the Stamp Act 1891 as if it were a deed executed at that time effecting the surrender (or, as the case may be, renunciation).

(2) This Resolution shall apply to any agreement made after 7th December 1993.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provision of section 50 of the Finance Act 1973.

67. RELIEF FROM TAX
(INCIDENTAL AND CONSEQUENTIAL CHARGES)

That it is expedient to authorise any incident or consequential charges to any duty or tax (including charges having retrospective effect) which may arise from provisions designed in general to afford relief from taxation.

PROCEDURE (FUTURE TAXATION)

Resolved,

That, notwithstanding anything to the country in the practice of the House relating to the matters which may be included in

Finance Bills, any Finance Bill of the present Session may contain the following provisions taking effect in a future year—

- (a) provision about the management of tax;
- (b) provision about Lloyd's underwriters;
- (c) provision about annuities acquired with funds held for the purposes of personal pension schemes;
- (d) provision about the taxation of social security benefits payable in respect of incapacity for work;
- (e) provision amending sections 79 and 79A of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.

PROCEDURE (FUTURE TAXATION)

Resolved,

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the practice of the House relating to the matters which may be included in Finance Bills, any Finance Bill of the present Session may contain the following provisions taking effect in a future year—

- (a) provision about the management of tax;
- (b) provision about Lloyd's underwriters;
- (c) provision about annuities acquired with funds held for the purposes of personal pension schemes;
- (d) provision about the taxation of social security benefits payable in respect of incapacity of work;
- (e) provision amending sections 79 and 79A of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.

FINANCE [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act of the present Session relating to finance, it is expedient to authorise—

- (a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of sums payable by virtue of any provision of that Act enabling provision to be made under section 128 of the Finance Act 1990 about the repayment of fees for nominations relating to vehicle registration marks;
- (b) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase in the sums payable out of such money which is attributable to any provision of that Act conferring jurisdiction on tribunals.

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the foregoing resolutions: And that the Chairman of Ways and Means, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Howard, Mr. Secretary Heseltine, Mr. Secretary MacGregor, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Lilley, Mr. Secretary Patten, Mr. Michael Portillo, Sir John Cope, Mr. Anthony Nelson and Mr. Stephen Dorrell do prepare and bring it in.

FINANCE BILL

Mr. Stephen Dorrell accordingly presented a Bill to grant certain duties, to alter other duties, to amend the law relating to the national debt and the public revenue, and to make further provision in connection with finance: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 5.]

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE

MADAM SPEAKER *put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the motion relating to further expenditure, pursuant to Order [26 November].*

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House welcomes the new spending plans set out in the Budget statement presented by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer on 30th November; congratulates Her Majesty's Government on its policy of reducing the share of national income taken by the public sector; welcomes the contribution which is being made by firm control of public spending to reducing the PSBR, so providing conditions for sustainable recovery; supports the increased spending planned in priority areas and the pressure being applied to the Government's own costs; and commends the Government's determination to maintain sound public finances and improve value for the taxpayers' money.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

Amendment proposed to the Question, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'notes the real cuts in the Government's new spending plans set out in the Budget statement presented by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer on 30th November 1993 resulting from the complete inadequacy of the Government's economic policies which have failed to produce either high employment or sustainably high rates of growth; regrets the absence of any strategy for using public investment to help generate growth and employment; condemns the unacceptable cuts to key public services and public investment programmes, while forcing public sector workers to pay the price of the Government's economic failure; and condemns the betrayal of election pledges which will see public spending plans cut below this year's level in real terms both next year and the year after, will slash transport and housing programmes, cut the employment budget and support for local authorities, and sharply reduce unemployment benefit, invalidity benefit and the Government's contribution to sick pay, so increasing poverty.'.—*[Mr. Derek Foster.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 288, Noes 331.

Division No. 13] **[10.58 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce

Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew

Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Brown and
Mr. Derek Conway.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 332, Noes 284.

Division 14] **[11.13**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel

Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
H[illegible]ward, Rt Hon Michael
[illegible]warth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew McKay and
Mr. Derek Conway.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill

Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the new spending plans set out in the Budget statement presented by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer on 30th November; congratulates Her Majesty's Government on its policy of reducing the share of national income taken by the public sector; welcomes the contribution which is being made by firm control of public spending to reducing the PSBR, so providing conditions for sustainable recovery; supports the increased spending planned in priority areas and the pressure being applied to the Government's own costs; and commends the Government's determination to maintain sound public finance and improve value for the taxpayers' money.

PETITION

RAF Chivenor

11.25 pm

Mr. Nick Harvey (North Devon): I have the honour to present a petition from the people of north Devon concerning the future of RAF Chivenor, a much-loved part of the local community. The petition has been signed by 34,601 people, which represents more than half of the voting public in that scattered, rural population. The Government have invited public responses to the proposal from today and I believe that this petition will represent a strong response.

The petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will recognise that RAF Chivenor is a highly operationally effective unit, having had millions of pounds spent on upgrading the facilities; that the favourable weather conditions and low air traffic in the surrounding area facilitate maximum flying hours; that over many years an excellent relationship has been built up with the local community; that RAF Chivenor provides essential air-sea rescue services; and that RAF Chivenor is essential to the local economy, and will therefore urge the Secretary of State for Defence in his study of training facilities to retain it as an operational flying unit.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Great Yarmouth and Waveney Health Authority

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

11.26 pm

Mr. Michael Carttiss (Great Yarmouth): I am grateful for the opportunity to protest on behalf of my constituents in Great Yarmouth against the Government's decision to accept East Anglian regional health authority's recommendation to split Great Yarmouth and Waveney health district.

I am honoured to see here with me the Chief Whip, some of whose constituents belong to the James Paget hospital catchment area, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson), together with other colleagues and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State.

Since the inception of the national health service 45 years ago, Waveney and Great Yarmouth have been treated as one health community. The old Great Yarmouth general hospital and Lowestoft general hospital, serving what we now call the Waveney district, were in the same hospital group for hospital management services when the NHS was set up—that also included the Norwich hospitals. Waveney and Great Yarmouth was treated as one district in the old Norfolk area health authority from 1973-74, which is when I became a member of that health authority. I well remember the difficulties we had in Great Yarmouth and Waveney in getting Norwich people to give us any attention.

Great Yarmouth and Waveney health authority was established when the districts were created about 13 years ago. For all that time, Waveney and Great Yarmouth have been treated as one health district. The James Paget hospital was built at the southern end of my constituency to serve Great Yarmouth and the Waveney district, replacing the two general hospitals to which I have referred.

Unlike my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, whose great uncle was a Prime Minister, my great uncle and grandfather worked on the land in Filby where I live now. I am sure that the Prime Minister to whom I refer, who held office in the early part of the century, would have shared my grandfather's view—although he was not a Liberal—that if it works, do not mend it.

We have a situation which works in Great Yarmouth and Waveney, but the East Anglian health authority proposes to split it up. It proposes to merge Yarmouth with Norwich to create an East Norfolk health authority, and to put Waveney with the Suffolk authority. Decisions which affect people in Yarmouth and in Waveney which have been taken for the past 20 years within our district will now be decided in Ipswich for the Suffolk end and in Norwich for the Norfolk end.

My local newspaper, the *Great Yarmouth Mercury*, reported:

> "Opposition is stacked up against the changes planned for the local health service. The medical staff is solidly against the shake-up, and it has even united the Labour and Tory sides at Great Yarmouth Town Hall."

When East Anglian regional health authority launched its consultation exercise in the summer, it presented four options about which it talked widely with various people who submitted their views. The general view was that local people were in favour of Yarmouth and Waveney district remaining as the purchasing body under the new arrangements. The hospitals are self-governing trusts and it makes sense to reorganise—I am not against that.

The Minister did not accept that merging Yarmouth with Waveney and Norwich would have been a reasonable proposition. I accept that there must be some merger. I am not asking that we do not merge with Norwich, because I recognise that we must have a reorganisation of the health service. The problem is that the splitting of Yarmouth and Waveney will create a small bit on the east coast of Norfolk. The huge conglomeration of Norwich, with about 500,000 people in that health district, should be compared with the 70,000 or 80,000 in my health district. When Waveney, which is much bigger, is added the total will be around 250,000 people.

In the time which I spent on the Norfolk area health authority, we were able to balance the interests of our area with those of Norwich. Under the new arrangements, Waveney will be at one end of the Suffolk regime, while Yarmouth will be a small bit on the end of Norfolk.

The chairman of the Association of Voluntary Organisations in Great Yarmouth wrote to the chairman of the East Anglian regional health authority, saying:

> "I am writing to say that, at a general meeting of our Association at which some 25 local organisations were represented, we found that your authority's decision to ignore the strength of local feeling quite abhorrent . . . This Association has rarely been more united about anything, nor has it been more vocal; democracy of local people is being totally ignored and public confidence in the whole process of consultation has been swept away."

That is the perception in Great Yarmouth and in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) who, with permission, will intervene later.

In publishing its four options for change, the health authority was confronted by recognition in most quarters that there had to be some change. However, the change which would have gained public support would have been one which ensured that the integrity of Yarmouth and Waveney together would continue.

In putting the reasons for rejecting the Great Yarmouth and Waveney merger with Norwich—the proposal of which the Great Yarmouth and Waveney district health authority approved—there was much talk about coterminosity. I will not take the time of the House to read all the details. However, the fundamental argument against Yarmouth and Waveney staying together was the need, according to the regional health authority and endorsed by the Department of Health and my hon. Friend the Minister, to relate the boundaries of the new health district and the purchasing bodies of hospitals and other local services to the providers of social services, education, probation etc.

In that sense, the Minister felt that East Anglian regional health authority was right to remove Waveney, which is in Suffolk, and to put Yarmouth, which is in Norfolk, with the Norfolk health authority. Next year, however, the review body which is to look at the structure of local government will be in Norfolk. It is likely to recommend abolishing Norfolk and Suffolk county councils, with the result that social services providers will not be based on the present boundaries.

In the west of Norfolk, the constituency represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham), the health district set up under this new system of purchasing bodies—replacing the old administrative ones—and known as the North-West Anglia

[Mr. Michael Carttiss]

authority, cuts across the county boundaries of Norfolk and Cambridgeshire. So the coterminosity argument has not applied in the King's Lynn and Wisbech area, and what is good enough for King's Lynn and Wisbech is certainly good enough for us in Yarmouth and Waveney.

The other argument is that there will be more competition if we have an area health authority based in Norwich and one in Ipswich buying services from the James Paget. That is the market economy theory. I am not against the reorganisation of the health service or against bringing some private enterprise market forces to bear on it, but the ultimate conclusion that one is forced to draw from the idea of having the two authorities is that if the Suffolk authority can purchase care more cheaply from Ipswich, which is 50 miles from Waveney, that is where it will purchase it. That will result in fewer services being created and expanded in the James Paget hospital, which serves 250,000 people on the coast.

I conclude by saying that every organisation in Great Yarmouth was wholly opposed to this move. It would not cost the Government any more to agree to what I am saying. We know that in London 5,000 fewer nurses have been replaced by a threefold increase in the number of administrators. I fear that something similar might emerge from the reorganisation that the Minister has accepted.

11.36 pm

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) and to the Minister for allowing me to intervene in the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth will know that I agree with every word he said—not because he is almost invariably right but because he lives, works and has his being in his constituency, just as I have mine in Waveney. He and I are here first and foremost to represent our constituents.

In Waveney I have not been made aware of a single person in favour of the dismembering of the district health authority. The Minister has sadly misjudged the mood of the people. He takes professional advice: some good, some bad, some with hidden agendas and some with personal axes to grind. He should have listened to the advice that we both gave him. We should be his advisers for matters to do with the coast.

We told my hon. Friend, other Ministers and the Whips that we objected to the plans from day one. I even came to London in the summer recess to tell him that. We brought a health deputation to see him, with petitions containing over 30,000 signatures. He ignored them all. The consultation exercise proved a sham from start to finish. The RHA is a sham, distant and remote. Now it is to go. Its guarantees on health care are seen as worthless.

It is not so much the RHA that people care about; it is the future of the James Paget hospital. It has been a great success story and is dear to the hearts of the people of Great Yarmouth and Waveney. The Minister has given guarantees that the James Paget shall be presumed to be the local hospital for the people of north Suffolk, not Ipswich hospital, which is more than 40 miles away.

The Minister's guarantees are being dismissed locally as another sham exercise—a fobbing off by London planners of the tiresome people of East Anglia who know what we want left alone. How can guarantees be given in an internal market? This decision has undermined confidence, the winning of hearts and minds to the NHS reforms that was going on slowly but steadily.

If the new Suffolk-only purchasers cut any funds out of the James Paget hospital, it will begin to wither. With the Norfolk and Norwich hospital in such a mess, Norfolk will follow suit and the James Paget will die. Health care on the coast will return to pre-James Paget conditions, worse than those of the third world. Thus the Government are also undermining the enormous transformation in health care east of Norwich which they have so successfully brought about in the past 14 years.

If only at this late hour my hon. Friend would have the courage to scrap the plan, or at least go for an alternative. I urge him either to delay for a year or two, until the other reforms have settled down, even if we are the last bureaucratic oddity in Britain; or to put Waveney in with a Norfolk configuration. Waveney has always looked to Norwich, not Ipswich, as our regional centre.

I, too, am in favour of economy of scale, better value for spending and skills development of staff. However, the reforms must carry people with them, not fly in their face. My hon. Friend the Minister has ignored history and culture as well as the NHS criteria. Those criteria are, first, that change must demonstrate patient care gain—the alleged £250,000 savings are figures out of the air—and, secondly, that change must be by popular consent. The plans fail on both counts. I plead with my hon. Friend the Minister to remember that he is a politician first and has become a bureaucrat only because he is a politician.

11.39 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) for his courteous approach to this subject, which I know exercises considerable feelings in his area. He was good enough to say that he accepted the basic premise of the argument for larger health authorities and that he understood well why they should be larger, should have more clout, should be better able to withstand the pressures and distortions within a particular area and should be able to find savings by reducing bureaucracy. He said that he understood all those arguments. I am glad that he realises that the retention of very small health authorities runs counter to the spirit of the reforms that we have introduced.

As my hon. Friend said, one of the factors that we have to take into account in assessing how the new, larger purchasing authorities should be configured is "coterminosity", meaning common boundaries with other authorities such as family health services authorities and social services departments. If we went for the option that my hon. Friend favours as his second preference—putting Waveney and Great Yarmouth into the new East Norfolk health authority—there would be one boundary for the Suffolk FHSA, another for the social services department and another set of boundaries for the health authority. It would be a pity to leave that anomaly unless there were good reasons for it.

I am aware of the concerns of local people because my hon. Friend has spelt them out on more than one occasion and again tonight. Particularly in the Waveney area people feel that they will find themselves denied access to the James Paget hospital. There is no reason for that. Now that health authorities are separated from hospital management they have only one function. It is to purchase, buy, commission or whatever one likes to call it, health care for everyone in the area.

There is no reason why health authorities should decide to distort the access of my hon. Friends' constituents to an excellent local hospital, change the patterns that have been built up and alter local health care which is satisfactory relative to what it was some time before the James Paget hospital existed. Not only would there be no reason to do that, but there are specific guarantees. My hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) says that the guarantees mean nothing because they are from the region. However, they are backed up by the health authorities, and have been confirmed in a letter from me. We regard them as sensible and achievable guarantees. My hon. Friend's constitutents have guarantees that they will continue to be referred to what they rightly regard as their local hospital—the James Paget hospital. There is no question of them suddenly being referred to Ipswich or anywhere else. I reiterate that.

I am also aware that people feel that the hospital is put at some risk by the new arrangements. There is no reason for that. My hon. Friend knows that I have visited the hospital twice since I took on this job. It is an excellent hospital, and it is very much loved and respected by everyone in the locality. There is no reason why it should suffer—indeed, there is every reason why it might well find that it has extra patients and demand from people outside the old Great Yarmouth and Waveney area as a result of joining the new areas to the two larger health authorities. It may mean that there is greater demand for the services of the James Paget hospital.

Reiterating the guarantees given by the region, we have also said that the funds that are now spent within the Great Yarmouth and Waveney area should be ring-fenced, which is an additional safeguard for the hospital. We have also said that the additional funds which will be forthcoming as a result of having fewer health authorities and therefore fewer overheads—fewer bureaucrats, if one likes—will be spent in that area. All those guarantees have been given.

When my hon. Friend brought the deputation of clinicians and others on 2 November, we had quite a long meeting, as he knows, and I listened very carefully to their fears about the future of the James Paget hospital. The only really substantive worry that I could identify was that at some time in the fairly distant future certain specialties might be "rationalised", as we tend to say in the health service, away from the James Paget to either Ipswich or Norwich, or both, in pursuit of cost savings. Of course, that is always a possibility in a changing health service, but if choices had to be made about a service or specialty continuing at James Paget or being provided on a larger scale in Norwich or Ipswich, a small health authority, such as one formed by keeping Great Yarmouth and Waveney together, would find itself even more tempted to take that low-cost option because it would be less able to withstand the problems of adopting or maintaining a higher cost service.

The James Paget is an excellent hospital and has a sound future. I have no doubt about that and nothing that I have seen or heard with my own eyes or ears, or from officials or anyone else, puts its future in any doubt.

Looking to the future, we have heard various guarantees and statements, designed to calm the fears of local people, clinicians and my two hon. Friends. It is up to them, the community health council, the clinical directors at the hospital and anyone else concerned to monitor that that happens and to ensure that people continue to be referred where they believe that they should be, that services remain at the James Paget hospital and that all the things that have been said about its future are upheld.

I am aware that both my hon. Friends are very disappointed at the decision. I should like to have been able to find some reason to contradict the decision of the regional health authority. I accept that there are fears, but in reality I have not found any good reasons why we should adopt what is, in effect, an anomalous option and I have therefore been unable in conscience to contradict the regional health authority, and I had to advise the Secretary of State of that.

As I have discovered in the short time that I have been in this job, the health service is littered with anomalies, ranging from large hospitals that were built but probably should not have been, to some very strange arrangements throughout the country, which may or may not have been the result of acceding to political pressures. That may be perfectly defensible, but it is not my job to suggest anomalies where there are no good health or patient care reasons for allowing them.

Both my hon. Friends have suggested that some sort of "Yes Minister" syndrome is operating here—that I have become the tool of bureaucrats and officials and that I am acting merely in the interests of bureaucratic tidiness and the usual mediocrity that is found in organisations. That is not true. The conclusions that I have reached and have conveyed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State are designed precisely to implement the policies set down by Ministers. The aim is, if possible, to establish large health authorities that will be coterminous with other agencies.

I am personally convinced that neither the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth nor those of my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney have anything to fear from these arrangements. I think that the James Paget hospital has a very bright future.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at ten minutes to Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Wednesday 8 December 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Health Boards

1. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met chairmen of health boards to discuss financial allocation.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): My noble and learned Friend the Minister of State meets chairmen of health boards regularly to discuss a wide range of strategic issues affecting the management of the NHS in Scotland. Many of those issues may have financial implications. The last such meeting took place on 5 November.

Mr. Ross: Will the Secretary of State take time to meet the chairmen of health boards? Is he aware that two trust hospitals in Scotland—one is in my constituency and the other is in the constituencies of my hon. Friends the Members for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) and fror Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams)—have already advised doctors and consultants to pace themselves, and that doctors and consultants in Dundee hospital trusts are running short of money? Is he further aware that, of all the state-registered nurses who will graduate in Tayside this year, not one will be offered a job? Is not it time that the right hon. Gentleman made more funds available so that required operations can be carried out and nurses who have gone through two years of training can get jobs?

Mr. Lang: I am aware that, since a number of hospitals in Scotland have become trusts, the efficiency with which they have delivered services has so improved that they are already achieving their targets for the whole year. That is a measure of the considerable success of the trust movement. Funding for health care has increased in real terms by almost 3 per cent. in the current year, and it is for the hospital trusts and the health board to decide whether any further resources might be available.

Mr. Ian Bruce: In my right hon. Friend's discussions with the chairmen, has he compared the allocation of funds in Scotland and in England and Wales? Have there been any statistics on the increase in the number of patients treated in England and Wales under the health reforms compared to the number in Scotland?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right to make that point. Resources for health care in Scotland are more than 20 per cent. per head higher than in England and Wales. That, however, reflects the relative position as regards the quality of health in both countries—for example, the morbidity rate in Scotland is much higher. I regret to have to say that the quality of health generally in parts of Scotland is very much lower than the United Kingdom average.

Ms Rachel Squire: Does the Secretary of State agree that the financial allocation process in the health service is being used to create not only two classes of patients but two classes of employees? For example, the previous general manager of Fife health board, Francis Gibb, who left under a cloud, has now been given a £65,000 a year job, whereas hundreds of vital, low-paid health service workers, who have given years of quality service to Fife health board, were yesterday thrown on to the privatisation scrapheap? Should not public money be used to provide quality health service for all staff and patients and not to provide jobs for the blue-eyed boys who are friends of the Tory party?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Lady's description is a travesty of the reality. Mr. Francis Gibb did not leave Fife health board under a cloud. He was seconded to the management executive between November 1991 and July 1993, where he carried out some very successful and important work setting up the national specialist service unit, which is responsible for cardiac surgery, heart and lung transplants, liver transplants and a number of other contracts worth a total of £75 million. He was offered the chance to transfer to the Common Services Agency in September 1993 to ensure continuity under a two-year contract of employment. I regard that as an extremely sensible move.

On funding of the health service in general, the hon. Lady should be aware that, after the statement which I shall make this afternoon, the increase in health care in real terms in Scotland will be almost 50 per cent. higher than it was under the previous Labour Government.

Mr. Heald: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, far from it being a case of jobs for the boys, one of the benefits of NHS trusts is that they have put nurses and nursing directors on the boards of trust hospitals, thereby enhancing their role, as the Select Committee on Employment was told only yesterday?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right. The hospital trust exercise has been enormously successful in Scotland and, by next April, some 90 per cent. of all Scottish health care will be delivered in that way.

Mr. Galbraith: Will the Secretary of State discuss with the chairman of Greater Glasgow health board the implications for its acute strategy of his decision to allow three acute hospitals in Glasgow to achieve trust status? In other words, will Greater Glasgow health board and the Government still go ahead with their plans to cut at least 1,000 acute beds, or will it be left to the vagaries and brawl of the internal market?

Mr. Lang: The development of the acute services strategy in Greater Glasgow will be a high priority for the new chairman and staff of Greater Glasgow health board. The hon. Gentleman must wait on events.

Local Government Reform

2. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make an official visit to Berwickshire to discuss reform of local government boundaries with local interested parties.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend the Minister for local government and planning discussed the Government's reform proposals as they affect Berwickshire with a delegation that included the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Secretary of State accept that in the run-up to publication of the White Paper last summer, much to the dismay and disbelief of local people in Berwickshire, the Government's policy fundamentally changed in terms of combining Berwickshire with East Lothian? Will he further accept that the people of Berwickshire feel that they have never had any sensible explanation of why the Government changed their minds? If he is not prepared to come to Berwickshire himself or to give the House the reasons why the Government changed their mind, will he undertake to look favourably on an amendment moved in Standing Committee, early in the new year, aimed at keeping Berwickshire within the borders?

Mr. Lang: I look forward to debating the issue in the Standing Committee that considers the Bill. That is the place where those matters should be further developed. The Government did not change their mind. They developed the proposals and published them in the White Paper. To some extent, we were influenced by the views of local district authorities in the area. Ettrick and Lauderdale favours a single borders authority, but the other three districts of Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Tweeddale favour an alternative arrangement, part of which, in the three-way split, was Berwickshire and the coastal strip of East Lothian. In defence of their proposals, they said:

> "This would be by far the strongest in terms of representing the variety of local communities. It remains rooted in many continuing historical associations and links."

I suppose that that had something to do with our consideration of the matter.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the people of north Tayside welcome the proposals affecting that part of Scotland? Is he further aware that some people are concerned about the absence of any mention of leisure and recreation? We presume that those matters will be properly addressed when the boundary changes.

Mr. Lang: It promises to be an interesting Committee stage, when we debate the Bill in detail.

Mr. Home Robertson: If the Secretary of State wants to discuss East Lothian and Berwickshire, he had better come to see me because I am certain that I am the only citizen of Berwickshire who is interested in East Lothian. Is he aware that the one common interest of the people of the two regions is that his low-logic, high-cost plans for local government in Scotland should be aborted at birth, and that goes for the whole of East Lothian, which includes Musselburgh?

Mr. Lang: I am never sure of the hon. Gentleman's status in this matter; perhaps he lives in Berwickshire and owns East Lothian. I understand that he, too, has been to see my hon. Friend the Minister for local government and planning to make representations. Those, too, will be taken into account when we debate the Bill in Committee.

Mr. George Robertson: Is not the Berwickshire decision just one of the many ludicrous proposals in the Government's White Paper that highlight—if it needed highlighting—the fact that this exercise in butchering Scottish local government is conducted purely in the interests of the Scottish Conservative party? Has the right hon. Gentleman not yet grasped the fact that the reorganisation is unwanted and unnecessary, that it will be disruptive to industry and commerce throughout Scotland and that it will be a huge new cost to every taxpayer north of the border? Will he stop it before it starts?

Mr. Lang: I noticed an interesting opinion poll the other day in the business community, which suggested that more than 80 per cent. of the local business community welcomed single-tier local government. Until recently, the hon. Gentleman's party was committed to single-tier local government, as are the Scottish National party and the Liberals. I had no idea that the hon. Gentleman was so frightened of the Conservative party's strength in local government. If he sees great advantage for the Conservative party in local government, it must be as a result of the policies that we propose to reform local government and to strengthen local democracy in Scotland.

Manufacturing

3. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on manufacturing output in Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): The latest figures suggest that Scottish manufacturing output in the past year is 1·1 per cent. higher than in the preceding year. Manufacturing output in 1992 increased by 9 per cent. over the 1986 figures, which represents an annual growth rate of 1·4 per cent.

Mr. Oppenheim: Are not exports from Scotland expanding strongly, and does not that show that, although the Scots may have forgotten how to play rugby, they still know how to manufacture and to sell their products at home and abroad? Is not it a little surprising that Opposition Members do not spend more time praising Scottish achievements, which are in sharp contrast to the position under the Labour party in the 1970s, when manufacturing output fell?

Mr. Stewart: I trust that my hon. Friend's confidence in England's chances in the five nations championship is misplaced, but I am sure that he is right about Scotland's manufacturing export record, which is a tribute to not only Scottish management but the work force in Scottish factories. Scottish manufacturing exports were at a record of £9·7 billion in 1992 according to a survey by the Scottish Chamber of Commerce and the Scottish CBI. That is a real increase of 6·3 per cent.—a faster rate of growth than in the United Kingdom as a whole in five of the past six years. Frankly, I should have thought that Opposition Member would be proud of that.

Mr. Chisholm: How can the Minister be so complacent when there were heavy job losses in manufacturing industry in 1992 and 1993, on top of 150,000 job losses in manufacturing since 1979? How can he be complacent about a figure of 1·1 per cent. growth in manufacturing output, which follows growth of only 4 per cent. since 1979, when the Conservative party came to power? How can he be so complacent following last week's Budget, which will knock on the head the already extremely weak recovery in the Scottish economy?

Mr. Stewart: I am not in any way complacent. Of course, challenges face Scotland and the Scottish economy. My right hon. and learned Friend's Budget has been widely welcomed by industry. The hon. Gentleman did not mention the fact that unemployment in Scotland is below the United Kingdom average for the first time since the 1920s, or that the seasonally ajusted total was 8,000 lower in October than in January. He did not mention the fact that civilian employment in Scotland has increased by 169,000 in the past 10 years. That is the reality of the Scottish economy, however much Opposition Members wish to talk down the achievements of Scottish managers and Scottish workers in facing the challenges of international competition.

Mr. Kynoch: Does my hon. Friend agree that Opposition Members seem to be oblivious of the fact that we have just come through a deep world recession, during which Scottish manufacturing industry was out there fighting and succeeding, and that the growth rates that he mentioned show a remarkable success in such times? Does he further agree that Scottish manufacturing industry has welcomed the Budget changes? Small businesses in particular welcome the changes to VAT and other areas.

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The VAT changes have been widely welcomed by small businesses, as has my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor's decision to freeze excise duties on Scotch whisky. My hon. Friend's more general point is also absolutely correct. Labour Scottish Members hate good news for the Scottish economy. They hate more jobs for the Scottish economy and they hate the fact that self-employment in Scotland is up 54 per cent. since 1979. They also hate the fact that real gross domestic product per head is up 30 per cent. since 1981. They do not wish to recognise the achievements of managers and workers in Scotland.

Mr. McLeish: The Minister is not only complacent but very confused. Over the past six quarters, manufacturing output in Scotland has gone down by 1·7 points. Does he appreciate that, according to his own figures, 20,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in the past year—a mere 80 jobs every working day? Is he aware that the extra burden of the £2 billion of Tory tax increases that will be imposed on Scotland as a result of last week's Budget will do nothing to stimulate demand? When on earth will the cosy, complacent Scottish Office attack the real problem, which is that 250,000 people cannot find a job in Tory Scotland?

Mr. Stewart: Even by the hon. Gentleman's standards, that was not very good. I do not think that he listened to my answer, which was absolutely clear. Manufacturing output in the past year was 1·1 per cent. higher than in the preceding year. He did not quote the more recent evidence from business surveys such as the Scottish Chambers of Commerce survey and the Confederation of British Industry's industrial trends survey in October, which showed an improvement in business confidence for the fourth consecutive quarter and increases in domestic and export orders in the past four months. The hon. Gentleman's constant campaign to talk down Scotland is not succeeding.

Health Care

4. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the per capita expenditure on health care in Scotland; and what analysis he has made of similar per capita costs in comparable parts of the EC.

Mr. Stewart: Net per capita NHS spending in Scotland was £717 per head in 1992-93. I have not made a detailed analysis of expenditure per capita on health care in other European Community countries.

Mr. Fabricant: I am disappointed that my hon. Friend was not able to produce figures for a comparison with other EC countries, but has he obtained figures for a comparison with at least England and Wales? It seems that the Opposition are always saying that Scotland gets a raw deal. Is that so?

Mr. Stewart: I can certainly give my hon. Friend the figures for other parts of the United Kingdom. Net per capita NHS spending is £717 in Scotland, £578 in England, £660 in Wales and £648 in Northern Ireland, which shows that, by any standards, the NHS in Scotland is extremely well funded.

Mr. Graham: Is the Minister aware that, despite that per capita rate in Scotland, a constituent of mine who attends the Paisley trust hospital must wait until 21 March for an appointment to see a urologist? That poor man, who is 78, must wait four and a half months, although he cannot walk 100 yd without going to the toilet. is the hon. Gentleman happy with that situation? He would not like it if it were his father.

Hon. Members: Answer.

Mr. Stewart: I shall answer. The health board contracted for 650 patients, but the trust expects to treat 740. That shows, first, that the hon. Gentleman's concerns are more than being met and, secondly, that the establishment of NHS trusts works in practice for the ordinary people to whom he referred.

Surplus Housing Stock

5. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet Scottish Homes to discuss disposal of surplus housing stocks.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to meet Scottish Homes to discuss disposal of surplus housing stocks, but he has issued guidance to Scottish Homes on the matter. Proposals must have the agreement of tenants, after which they are subject to his approval.

Mr. McKelvey: The Minister will know, because I have told him, that there have been a series of meetings in my constituency, called by the landlord, to discuss with tenants the options of a new tenancy with a new landlord. The vast majority of tenants have said that they would very much like Kilmarnock and Loudon district council to be their new landlord. If the tenants charter is to mean anything, and if there is to be any sign of a democratic move in that direction, should not the name of the Kilmarnock and Loudon district council appear on the ballot paper when people are given a free and democratic choice of a new landlord?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The current arrangements do not prevent a local authority from putting forward proposals to acquire Scottish Homes' stock. It is for Scottish Homes to decide whether special circumstances arise—including such matters as the number of properties involved and the location and the percentage of stock already owned by the local authority. Some 44 per cent. of the stock in Kilmarnock and Loudon is owned by the local authority. That is above the regional average and well above the national average. The objective of our policy is to provide diversity and choice. For practical operating reasons, Scottish Homes has decided that the ballot paper should contain two options: if the tenants vote against, that is the end of the matter; if they vote for, the matter will eventually come before the Secretary of State, who will have to be satisfied that all considerations had been properly thought through.

Mrs. Fyfe: Kilmarnock and Loudon district council will look at the Minister's reply with a great deal of interest. Does the Minister expect Scottish Homes' rents to rise next year from their current average of £32 a week? Is it not true that he has cut the housing support grant from £36 million to £26 million—a loss of £10 million—in an attempt to force up council house rents from their average of £26·51 per week to as much as £34·86 a week? Why should tenants pay more and more in times of falling interest rates when mortgage payers pay less and less?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In setting this year's rent increase, Scottish Homes' board considered a number of options and agreed on an increase of 9 per cent. to spend more on repairs, management and maintenance. I expect the average increase in local authority rents to be about 5 per cent. On the basis of current trends in rent charges, maintenance and management, I would say that it will not be above 5 per cent. The reduction in the housing support grant for next year reflects partly a reduced need for subsidy and partly our policy of reducing indiscriminate subsidies, such as housing support grant, so that public sector resources can be concentrated on capital investment. Some £700 million is being spent on housing benefit in Scotland, although not exclusively on council house tenants.

Sir David Steel: Is the Minister's experience as a constituency Member of Parliament the same as that of most of the rest of us? Housing problems represent the majority of problems that are raised at our surgeries. When the hon. Gentleman meets Scottish Homes, will he draw its attention to the Department's 1991 housing survey, which revealed that about 1·5 million homes were in need of repair and that the number of houses built for rent had plummeted over the past decade? Will he do a deal with Scottish Homes? Will he give it increased resources to do its job if, in turn, it will stop publishing glossy pamphlets, which expensively tell us how good it is?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Homes has a very good record in the right hon. Gentleman's area. It is doing everything that it can to bring empty houses back into use, to expand the housing association movement and to build a number of new houses. It is important to mention the success stories—the before and after—and what can be achieved. The essence of the matter is that if the private sector becomes involved, public sector funds will go very much further.

Local Services

6. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss the provision of local services.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend and I are scheduled to meet representatives of COSLA on 28 January as part of the normal consultation on local government finance matters.

Mr. McMaster: Will the Minister join me in congratulating the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams), who rejected plans to opt out Paisley grammar school by an overwhelming majority of 41? May I also take this opportunity to thank the Minister, whose personal intervention helped to ensure the defeat of those plans? If the Minister accepts the wishes of the 80 per cent. of people who voted in that ballot—as I think he does—why will he not accept the wishes of the 82 per cent. of people in Ralston and the 79 per cent. of people in Barrhead, Neilston and Uplawmoor who recently voted in a referendum to reject unnecessary, unwanted, costly and gerrymandering proposals that would bring about the destruction of Scottish local government?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman spent a good deal of time during the last general election canvassing against me in Barrhead—a fact to which I largely attribute my increased majority.

There are legal questions concerning the legitimacy of the referendum to which the hon. Gentleman referred. Those questions are currently being explored, and there is a possibility of an eventual surcharge on the local councillors who voted for the proposal. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that, in the circumstances, I can say no more about that issue specifically.

The hon. Gentleman's original question concerned local government finance. I am astonished that he did not draw attention to the generosity of my right hon. Friend's local government finance settlement this year. Per capita expenditure on local government in Scotland is substantially higher than that in England and Wales.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Will my hon. Friend confirm that, notwithstanding the scaremongering of Opposition Front Benchers, single-tier authorities throughout Scotland will be cheaper to run and more accountable to the electorate, and will save the council tax payer money?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Allegations to the contrary from the Opposition are wholly contradicted by what Labour councils actually say in their individual submissions to the Scottish Office. I will give an example. In its submission to the Scottish Office, Dundee district council—hardly a safe haven for Toryism—estimates that the council tax bill would be £14·45 cheaper

per Dundee household if there were a Dundee, rather than a Tayside, unitary authority. That is the evidence from Labour councils.

Mrs. Adams: Is the Minister aware that I loved last week's good news from Paisley grammar school? In his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster), he seemed to be telling us that he himself was opting out of democracy and was unwilling to accept the views of the people in Renfrew district who told him that they did not want the new local authorities that he proposes to set up. Will he assure me that he accepts the views of parents of children at Paisley grammar school, and also that he agrees with the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), who told me in a television programme last week that he believed in devolving power?

Mr. Stewart: Of course the Government accept the vote concerning Paisley grammar school. It was this Government who gave parents the choice to make that decision, and this Government who saved Paisley grammar school when friends of the hon. Members for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams) and for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) wanted to close it for ideological reasons. The Government gave parents a choice on their future.

Mr. McFall: The parents of pupils at Paisley grammar school have spoken for Scottish education, but who speaks for the Government? Is it the Minister responsible for education, who stated on national television that the result showed a high level of parental satisfaction with the present system, or is it the Secretary of State, who stated that 20 per cent. of the electorate voting to opt out represented a success? I concede that 20 per cent. is a solid achievement in Tory terms, but to everyone else it is a miserable failure. Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that he will clear up that confusion by the time he meets the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 28 January—and that the Government, after getting a bloody nose, will in a spirit of humility stop destabilising Scottish education and support and encourage local authorities, parents and pupils in their education efforts?

Mr. Stewart: Will the hon. Gentleman and his friends give a guarantee that the Labour party will not close Paisley grammar school? That guarantee has not been given. Labour tried it before and will try it again.

Mr. Welsh: Will the Minister guarantee to COSLA that he will not pack the Standing Committee on the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill with Conservative Members representing English seats—a guarantee that he singularly failed to give in correspondence?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman has corresponded with me on that matter, but the Committee's membership is a matter for the Committee of Selection. The hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that he and I disagree on a fundamental point: I take the view that this is the House of Commons of the United Kingdom.

Health Care (Glasgow)

7. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet the chairman of the Greater Glasgow health board to discuss the provision of health care in the Glasgow area.

Mr. Lang: I and my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister responsible for health matters meet health board chairmen from time to time, and expect to meet the chairman of Greater Glasgow health board in due course to discuss health matters in Glasgow.

Mr. Galloway: When the Secretary of State meets the new man, when will he be able to give him any assurance that he will not fall victim to the same Watergate-style skulduggery described by the Secretary of State's distinguished predecessor, Lord Younger, as being the fate of Mr. Bill Fyfe—the departing chairman of Greater Glasgow health board? How much longer can the Secretary of State pretend that he and other Ministers had no knowledge of the grisly details of that affair, when *Scotland on Sunday* revealed last Sunday that on 6 and 30 August, and in October this year, the right hon. Gentleman's most senior and trusted advisers were intervening in the matter? Will the Secretary of State answer here and now the classic Watergate question: what did Ministers know about the Fyfe-Peterken affair and when did they know it?

Mr. Lang: I suppose that the hon. Gentleman is an expert in skulduggery but I have no doubt that the appointment of Sir Robert Calderwood as the new chairman of Greater Glasgow health board—which has been widely welcomed—will be extremely successful. I can tell the hon. Gentleman also that I have looked into the matter and I am satisfied that Mr. Fyfe was told repeatedly that he could not and should not seek to terminate Mr. Peterken's employment and make the offer of a financial settlement to him. I have to conclude that Mr. Fyfe was the architect of his own downfall.

Mr. David Marshall: While the Government fiddle the health service, is the Secretary of State aware that many thousands of people in the Greater Glasgow health board area are on the waiting list for treatment? Is he aware, for example, that one of my teenage constituents was told just last week that he would have to wait two and a half years for necessary dental treatment at Glasgow dental hospital? When will the Secretary of State start putting patient care before Tory party political cover-ups and jobs for his supporters?

Mr. Lang: The budget for Greater Glasgow health board has been increased in the current year by 2·1 per cent. in real terms. That is a substantial increase, and I shall be announcing further increases later. The waiting list for long-term patients has fallen from 13·3 per cent. in June 1991 to 9·4 per cent. in 1993, so considerable progress in shortening waiting lists, especially for those with long waits, has been made.

Mr. Wallace: When did the Secretary of state become aware of the terms of the letter dated 6 August which was sent to the Treasury by the acting chief executive of the health service in Scotland, who is answerable to the Secretary of State? Did that letter state that the Secretary of State no longer had confidence in Mr. Peterken? If so, did it represent the Secretary of State's view? If not, what action has been taken against a senior official who so grossly misrepresented the Secretary of State's view?

Mr. Lang: I first became aware of the letter on 23 November. It did not say that I had lost confidence in Mr.

Peterken. I had not, and I still have not, lost confidence in Mr. Peterken. The letter was between officials in my Department and officials in the Treasury.

Mr. George Robertson: Does the Secretary of State appreciate that his total silence on this scandal in the Greater Glasgow health board over the past five weeks is both significant and deeply suspicious? Does he seriously expect people to believe that Mr. Bill Fyfe was having meetings throughout 1993 to discuss getting rid of Laurence Peterken—meetings which included the Secretary of State's solicitor and the director of personnel in the Scottish Office—and that a senior official, believed to be the acting chief executive of the national health service in Scotland, wrote a letter to the Treasury on 6 August asking for approval for a £200,000 pay-off for Mr. Peterken? Does the Secretary of State expect us to believe that neither he nor the Minister knew anything at all about that?

Who is telling the truth in this sordid tale: Bill Fyfe —the Secretary of State's personal nominee last year for running this giant quango with all the documentary evidence that he has to back him—or Ministers of the Crown, with whom ultimate responsibility for this shambles lies? They cannot both be telling the truth. Surely it is time that Ministers acted with the honour and decency that used to go with high office in this country.

Mr. Lang: I welcome the decision of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs to investigate this matter and I look forward to the publication of its report. I have also instructed the chief executive of the management executive to carry out an inquiry into the events surrounding the dismissal of the general manager of the Greater Glasgow health board. That inquiry is not yet complete, but a report will be published. I say to the hon. Gentleman—and I say it more in sorrow than in anger—that when I heard him comparing the resignation of the chairman of Greater Glasgow health board, who had lost the confidence of his non-executive board members, with 25 years of carnage, murder and terrorism in Northern Ireland, I thought that the hon. Gentleman was plumbing the depths of bad taste.

Inward Investment

8. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to encourage further inward investment.

Mr. Stewart: My Department, through the work of Locate in Scotland, is continually promoting Scotland as a location for inward investment. My right hon. Friend and I have recently undertaken inward investment missions to the far east and the United States, respectively, where discussions were held with existing and potential investors.

Mr. Riddick: Will my hon. Friend confirm that inward investment has created many thousands of jobs in Scotland and will contribute to the continued regeneration of the Scottish economy? Does he agree that one of the main reasons why overseas investors come to Scotland and, indeed, to Britain as a whole is because the British Government have refused to sign up to Labour's two job destroyers—the social chapter and the minimum wage?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right on both points. Even President Jacques Delors has admitted that there is no question but that the sensible Government decision not to sign up to the social chapter makes the United Kingdom an attractive place for inward investment from Japan and the United States as company after company confirmed to me on my recent visit.

In relation to my hon. Friend's second point, I can confirm that, since its formation in 1981, Locate in Scotland has recorded planned inward investment of £5 billion, which is associated with the expected creation or safeguarding of more than 96,000 jobs in Scotland. That is a considerable record, which I hope that the whole House will welcome.

Dr. Bray: Has the Minister read the recent report by the electronics industry in Scotland, which points out its vulnerability to the fact that it consists largely of screwdriver assembly plants, with little research and development, little marketing and little worldwide product responsibility? Has he further read the report by Scottish Enterprise and its chief executive, documenting the lack of entrepreneurship in Scottish industry? Has the Minister any comment on that after 14 years of Tory government?

Mr. Stewart: I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's interest and expertise in those subjects, and I have read the reports to which he refers. About 47 per cent. of all overseas-owned manufacturing companies in Scotland undertake some form of research and development. The Scottish electronics forum, which was addressed by my right hon. Friend earlier this week, is addressing those challenges. Of course there are challenges—let us not be in any doubt about that—but we must not, and I do not suggest that the hon. Member did, underestimate the huge successes that Scotland has had and is continuing to have in the electronics industry.

Mr. Gallie: Does my hon. Friend welcome, as I do, the Budget statement announcing the investment of about £200 million in the new air traffic control centre at Atlantic house in Prestwick in my constituency? Does he accept that my constituents express relief and enthusiasm that the service that they provide to the airline industry will continue, and does he agree that that gives an almighty boost to the economy of south Ayrshire and the surrounding area?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is right to welcome that important announcement by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor in his Budget statement. In addition, as my hon. Friend knows extremely well, because he was very much involved, the decision by Digital to centre its European operations in my hon. Friend's constituency— *[Interruption]*—well, close to the border of the constituency of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes)—is a good example of Locate in Scotland's immense success not only in attracting but in retaining key overseas investment of the highest quality in Scotland.

Mr. Beggs: Does the Minister agree that, in addition to his efforts to attract investment to Scotland, the Government must support existing industry in promoting and exporting services and goods overseas? Will he confirm the work of Scottish Enterprise and congratulate it on identifying excellent potential hydro-electricty sites in Vietnam? Is he aware that approval for those projects can create employment in Scotland and Northern Ireland? Will he urge the Overseas Development Administration to approve those projects so that work can proceed?

Mr. Stewart: I know of the hon. Gentleman's close personal interest in this matter, and I regard those projects as having considerable potential for Northern Ireland and Scotland. I had the opportunity to discuss the projects briefly with the Prime Minister of Vietnam when he visited Scotland, and I can assure the hon. Member that Scottish Enterprise is doing everything possible to put forward a positive case for the developments to which the hon. Gentleman refers.

Government of Scotland

9. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has held with the Coalition for Scottish Democracy in relation to its demand for a multi-option referendum on the government of Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I have had no discussions with the Coalition for Scottish Democracy, whatever that body may be.

Mr. McAllion: That is a pity, because a Secretary of State who governs Scotland by quango, without the support or consent of the people, desperately needs to talk to people who understand what democracy is all about. Will the right hon. Gentleman try to explain the riddle of why the Government support the Unionist status quo in Northern Ireland, on the ground that it is supported by parties with 67 per cent. of the popular vote there, but oppose the break-up of the Unionist status quo in Scotland despite the fact that that is supported by parties with 75 per cent. of the popular vote in our country? Is not the Government's support for self-determination for the Province of Northern Ireland while denying self-determination to the nation of Scotland based not on any political principle but on the grubby political fact that they need the votes of Ulster Unionists to save them from a general election and from the votes and the judgment of the people of this country?

Mr. Lang: I do not think that such simplistic comparisons do anything to add enlightenment either in Scotland or in Northern Ireland. Part of the nature of the United Kingdom is its diversity. What is important is that we maintain its unity. I am content and satisfied that the arrangements that Scotland has in the United Kingdom Parliament offer the best protection for Scotland's future in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that people who stand for election to this Parliament and come here should recognise that it is this Parliament to which they were elected and that their allegiance should not lie elsewhere unless they have declared that fact clearly, as a few do? Should not those who come to Parliament without declaring that allegiance, and then attempt to destroy it by means of bogus vehicles and sounding operations, recognise that that was not how they were elected to this place?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and I hope that the changes recently proposed in the White Paper affecting the handling of Scottish business in the House will be able to make progress early in the new year.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Following the comments of my Unionist friend the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion), and as we in England, Northern Ireland and Wales have a legitimate interest in any constitutional changes in Scotland—indeed, we are concerned about the value of such changes—can the Secretary of State assure the House that if a referendum were held in Scotland an identical referendum would be held elsewhere in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Lang: The right hon. Gentleman knows better than most the differences between the different parts of the United Kingdom. However, as his question is hypothetical, no answer of mine could have any substance.

Sunday Trading

10. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received recently about the Sunday trading law in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since December 1992, my right hon. Friend has received 11 representations, including two letters from one individual supporting restrictions on Sunday trading. He has also received two letters in support of the Shopping Hours Reform Council partial deregulation model and one letter in favour of the present arrangements.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that that shows the widespread support of the Scottish people for the present arrangements? Does he therefore agree that it would be illogical for Scottish Members of Parliament to vote to impose on my constituents restrictions from which they do not suffer and which those Members would not seek to impose on their constituents? Does he also agree that the present position in Scotland demonstrates that it is individual conscience rather than legislative fiat that keeps Sunday special?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have considerable sympathy with what my hon. Friend says. The arrangements in Scotland are working well, and hon. Members will have the opportunity to vote later today on the issues as they relate to England and Wales. I shall watch with particular fascination how the Leader of the Opposition votes, as I understand that he has reservations about English Members voting on Scottish matters.

Mr. Robert Hughes: In connection with Sunday trading, and with trading in Scotland, what representations has the Minister received about the disgraceful fact that it is now possible for planning permission to be given for alcohol to be sold in garage forecourts? An amendment was passed to make that totally impossible in England. Will the Minister take the earliest opportunity under the Sunday trading legislation to outlaw totally the selling of alcohol in garage forecourts? Is not that wrong, whatever view one takes?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Bill applies in England, but I have some sympathy with the point made by the hon. Gentleman and I will examine the matter. A number of issues in relation to the subject are under consideration. For example, hairdressers are not allowed to cut hair on Sundays, which is a restriction. That is the type of issue that we are examining.

Easter Ross

11. **Mr. Charles Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to pay an official visit to Easter Ross to assess the local economic situation; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to visit Easter Ross, but, as Minister with responsibility for the highlands and islands, I am always willing to meet the hon. Gentleman and local representatives to discuss constituency matters.

Mr. Kennedy: May I thank the Minister, following our conversations during the past week or two, for clarifying the to-ing and fro-ing between himself and the Ross and Cromarty district council? Will it be possible, probably early in the new year, for representatives of the district council to meet him to discuss their anxiety about unemployment, particularly that relating to the oil fabrication centre?

The petition that was delivered by Opposition Members this morning relates to fish farming and the dumping of Norwegian salmon on the European market. That issue affects the highlands and islands, and has a depressing effect on a key industry in the western and northern isles and on the west coast generally. Will the Minister confirm that the meeting, which I hope will take place in the new year, will be broadly based and that we will be able to discuss that issue as well as the oil sector?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I understand that action on fish farming has been taken with the Commission, and that my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for agriculture is following it up. A considerable amount has been done through Highlands and Islands Enterprise with Ross and Cromarty Enterprise to establish a Moray firth oil initiative. I recognise the problems to which the hon. Gentleman referred, but I can tell him that some 500 people who had been laid off found employment through the initiative and through retraining. I look forward to meeting the hon. Gentleman, but I stress that I have had 60 meetings in the Highlands and Islands. If necessary, I will meet him with representatives from the Department of Trade and Industry and, if possible, the Minister concerned.

Economic Growth

12. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) to discuss measures to promote economic growth in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I keep in regular touch with the Scottish Council on matters relating to the Scottish economy.

Mr. Salmond: I should like to ask a question on the Scottish salmon farming and fish farming industry which was not answered by the reply to the previous question. The Secretary of State must be aware that 6,000 jobs and £200 million on the balance of payments are at stake in an industry which provides vital employment in many rural areas of Scotland.

Why do producers in that vital sector have to go to the Irish Government for help in Europe to protect their industry against Norwegian dumping? Is the Secretary of State aware that the action of the Commission today is totally inadequate and will not help? Effective action depends on the United Kingdom assisting the Irish Government to defend the industry. When will the right hon. Gentleman start acting as Secretary of State for Scotland rather than as Secretary of State against Scotland?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is right to identify the industry as an important provider of jobs in rural areas, and I agree that about 6,000 people are employed in the industry. It is an important industry and, through meetings that I and my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for agriculture in Scotland have had with the industry, I am aware of the anxiety.

I took the matter up with the European Commissioner when a minimum import price was introduced recently, and further consideration of those and other matters is now in hand.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will my right hon. Friend congratulate the members of the Scottish Council on their work? Will he also congratulate the members of Locate in Scotland on their work and, in particular, on the fact that they have just brought to Scotland a firm that will provide 1,000 jobs in the west of Scotland thanks to their aptitude and excellence?

Mr. Lang: My hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right to emphasise those two important components of the Scottish economy. Not only did Locate in Scotland have an exceptionally good year in attracting inward investment to Scotland in a fiercely competitive world environment, but the export side has also been extremely successful—a matter in which the Scottish Council is heavily involved. Our exports were up by 9·6 per cent. in value in 1992, and by 6 per cent. in volume, to their highest ever value of £9·7 billion.

Mr. Macdonald: On salmon farming, does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the actions so far taken by the Commission are completely inadequate to defend the industry against the uncompetitive practices of the Norwegians? Why is it possible to impose a 12 per cent. import levy on farmed trout but not on farmed salmon? Why is it possible for the Americans to impose a 26 per cent. levy against Norwegian salmon entering the United States? Will the Secretary of State undertake at least to push for this sort of measure to defend the Scottish salmon farming industry?

Mr. Lang: The introduction of a minimum import price has provided a base around which the market can stabilise, although I acknowledge that many salmon farmers regard that base as too low. As I have already said, we continue to be in touch on these matters, and consideration is being given to further action.

Public Expenditure (Scotland)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): With permission, Madam Speaker, I wish to make a statement about public expenditure in Scotland. Copies of my statement will be available in the Vote Office when I sit down.

In his Budget statement my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the Government's overall expenditure plans. The same day I announced my decisions for local authority spending: both Government-supported expenditure and aggregate external finance. I am now able to announce how I propose to allocate the resources available for all my programmes. As usual, a table summarising my decisions will appear in the *Official Report* and full details will be included in my departmental report, which will be published in March.

The Government have made it clear for some time that the overall public expenditure totals announced last year for 1994-95 and 1995-96 would not be breached. Firm control of public expenditure is an essential discipline and one we are determined to maintain. Against that background this year's public expenditure settlement for the Scottish Office is fair and realistic. The net resources available to me for allocation next year exceed £14 billion —more than 4 per cent. higher than the corresponding plans for the present year. This amounts to £2,743 per head —over £50 a week for every man, woman or child in Scotland.

My plans provide for over £3 billion each year in gross capital expenditure. Of that, over £2 billion will be on the construction of new physical assets by central Government, local authorities and other bodies.

In addition to those plans for public expenditure, I expect the private sector to participate in many important projects. The Skye bridge is a good example of what can be achieved on top of the public investment programme. I plan to announce early next year the outcome of the feasibility studies on the Setting Forth proposals.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor announced in his Budget statement that we plan to introduce new contracts under which the private sector will design, build, finance and operate roads. I shall be examining our programme urgently to maximise that opportunity. The early success of the private finance initiative in Scotland is widely recognised and it confirms our reputation for enterprise and innovation. I am determined to build on this success in the years ahead.

I now turn to individual programmes. These reflect my judgment of priorities for the year ahead.

We are committed to increasing year by year the resources of the health service in Scotland, over and above the rise in inflation. Despite the many other pressures on my programme, I will meet fully that commitment. In 1994-95, net expenditure on health in Scotland will be nearly £4 billion, which is almost £200 million more than the plans for the current year and an increase of more than 5 per cent. And by next year, expenditure on the NHS in Scotland will have increased, after allowing for inflation, to half as much again as it was when this Government came into office.

My plans maintain and accelerate the Government's investment in Scotland's economic development and in training, in partnership with the private sector. To this end, I have allocated £452 million to the Scottish Enterprise network next year to pursue its key objectives, £12 million more than previously planned. It will also enable Scottish Enterprise to take over responsibilities from the new towns for meeting inward investors' needs as the new towns are wound up.

After taking account of the transfer of some responsibilities to the Scottish Tourist Board, I have allocated to Highlands and Islands Enterprise an increase of £1·3 million over the current year. In addition, our success in securing objective 1 status for them means that the highlands and islands can look forward to increasing levels of EC structural fund investment. Overall my plans include provision for almost £390 million of grants from the European regional development fund over the next three years.

In recognition of the importance of investment in infrastructure for the Scottish economy, I have chosen to use the flexibility available to me under the Scottish block arrangements to give particular priority to investment in roads and transport. I have been able not simply to maintain previously planned investment in roads and transport but to increase it to a total of £427 million next year, £20 million more than this year's expenditure. The total over the next three years will be around £1·3 billion. We shall thus be able to maintain the momentum of the trunk road and motorway construction and upgrading programme so important to our economic progress. During the next three years we will start all the remaining schemes needed to complete the A74 upgrading programme and there will be major improvement schemes for other main routes, including the M8 and the A1.

Investment in education is vital. The education budget of the Scottish Office Education Department, at £1·3 billion, will be over £130 million more next year than this year's plans. This growth reflects, among other things, the continuing increase in the uptake of higher and further education, with more students than ever before at Scottish institutions.

Expenditure on the arts will also rise next year, to £71 million. That includes provision for the Scottish Arts Council of almost £24 million and should help it to a good start under my sponsorship.

Local authorities account for 45 per cent. of all Scottish Office expenditure and cannot be excluded from the restraint necessary in overall public expenditure. I announced on Budget day my decisions on Government supported expenditure of local authorities and on aggregate external finance. Government support for local authority current expenditure, including provision for community care, will increase by 2·4 per cent. Provided local authorities adopt the approach to pay restraint and productivity required across the public sector, these resources are sufficient to maintain services and meet new responsibilities. In total my plans allow for local authority expenditure of well over £20 per week for every inhabitant of Scotland.

I have also made specific additional provision of £23 million for the funding of the new local authorities in the year before they take up formally their responsibilities. This will enable them to plan for a smooth transition.

I have increased the allocation to environmental programmes to £366 million, £6 million more than the present year. Of that, £40 million is for Scottish Natural Heritage—a 10·5 per cent. increase in the provision available to it this year, to assist it to take forward the

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implementation of European Community directives and the reports of the working parties, including those on the Cairngorms and Loch Lomond. Capital investment in the water and sewerage industry will be maintained at more than £240 million a year, with the additional provisions to cover the costs of the restructuring of the industry.

On housing, the total net provision shows an increase over 1993-94 plans to £679 million. Within this total I have given priority to capital expenditure, boosting provision for local authority investment in its own housing by 5·5 per cent. I have asked local authorities to give priority to care in the community and to tackling the problems of homelessness, housing below the tolerable standard, and dampness and condensation. The resources I am making available will enable them to do this. Scottish Homes' net provision will increase by 5·8 per cent. to £323 million.

The maintenance of law and order and the protection of the citizen are key elements of the Government's programme. I have reflected that priority by providing £466 million for the programme in 1994-95, an increase of about £13 million. That level of provision, together with the substantial resources I am allocating for local authority expenditure, will allow for the continued progress in those essential services which the public will rightly expect to see.

In making the allocations I have announced today I have had to take tough decisions. I make no apologies for that. The need to pursue sound money policies makes that essential. But what the taxpayer puts into the programmes is only the start. What matters most is what is bought with these very substantial resources of more than £14 billion. My colleagues and I will continue to seek for maximum value for money; and I expect all those involved in implementing these plans, in local authorities and in other bodies as well as in my own Departments, to do the same. The taxpayer and every consumer of public services in Scotland deserve no less. I commend the plans to the House.

Following is the table:

£ million

	1993-94		*1993-94*		*1994-95*		*1995-96*		*1996-97*	
	Estimated outturn		*Planned provision*		*Planned provision*		*Planned provision*		*Planned provision*	
	Gross	*Net*	*Gross*	*Net*	*Gross*	*Net*	*Gross*	*Net*	*Gross*	*Net*
Central Government expenditure[2] and local authority capital expenditure[3]										
Agriculture, fisheries and food	457	448	447	439	519	512	569	562	579	572
Industry, enterprise and training	643	557	629	544	646	599	658	610	666	617
Roads and transport	408	408	406	406	427	427	430	430	440	440
Housing[4]	1,021	665	1,021	665	1,029	679	1,014	675	990	661
Other environmental services[4]	488	364	484	360	496	366	503	379	492	382
Law, order and protective services	476	454	476	453	491	466	499	472	501	472
Education[5]	1,202	1,202	1,172	1,172	1,306	1,306	1,359	1,359	1,383	1,383
Arts and libraries	54	54	54	54	77	77	77	77	74	74
Health	3,917	3,795	3,888	3,766	4,089	3,961	4,245	4,114	4,365	4,231
Social Work services	63	63	63	63	67	67	69	69	70	70
Other public services	220	180	220	180	225	184	227	185	224	183
Total central Government and local authority capital	8,948	8,189	8,860	8,102	9,371	8,643	9,649	8,931	9,784	9,086
Provision to match receipts from the European regional development fund	—	116	—	120	—	124	—	128	—	137
Central Government support to local authorities' current expenditure[3][5]	—	5,235	—	5,190	—	5,275	—	5,392	—	5,482
Nationalised industries financing limits	—	35	—	35	—	22	—	22	—	23
Total expenditure within the Secretary of State's responsibility[1]	—	13,574	—	13,447	—	14,021	—	14,428	—	14,728

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[1] The totals shown differ from those in the Financial Statement and Budget report. The figures in that document included provision for the Forestry Commission. Provision for the Commission is £94 million in 1993-94, £95 million in 1994-95 and £94 million in each of 1995-96 and 1996-97.

[2] Including public corporations other than nationalised industries.
Also includes grants to local authorities for the technical and vocational education initiative (TVEI).

[3] Central Government support to local authorities comprises income from non-domestic rates, revenue support grant, and grants to local authorities for specific purposes apart from grants for TVEI.

[4] Figures for 1995-96 and 1996-97 reflect the timing of wind up of New Town Development Corporations.

[5] From 1994-95, the careers service (£13·6 million a year) is included in the Education line. Prior to that it was local authority expenditure.

[6] Figures may not add due to rounding.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): We have just seen from the Secretary of State the same confidence trick that we saw last week from the Chancellor of the Exchequer with his Budget. When we look behind the figures, expose the creative accountancy and blow away the blizzard of hype, the truth is a whole lot different and much nastier.

The statement is part of and in addition to the Budget which will cost every family in Scotland an extra £10 a week in tax from next October and £16 a week from the following April—the biggest tax hike in British history—and now we are to have massive real cuts in public expenditure as well.

The Secretary of State for Scotland spoke about taking tough decisions. I suggest that the easiest decision that the Government took was to break their election promises with such enthusiasm. The truth is that after an election in which they promised low tax and more spending, the Scottish people will pay more and get a lot less for it—more tax and less spending. It is no wonder that, apparently, the Secretary of State for Scotland is unwilling to go on television this evening to debate the figures. I certainly would be reluctant to do so if I were putting forward such a case.

The basis of this statistical juggling act is hidden in the Chancellor's own Budget Red Book. On page 17 of the Red Book on the unified Budget, the Government admit that they expect inflation to go up next year by 3·25 per cent. The Government freeze people's pay, but still expect them to bear the brunt of an inflation rate of 3·25 per cent.

Only those who believe that inflation will not affect Government spending will believe the figures and the gloss we have just had from the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State said just one thing with which I agree. Local authorities account for almost half Scottish Office expenditure. In real terms, in addition to the 3·25 per cent. inflation that the Chancellor is predicting, in the next three years Scottish local councils will get £330 million less than they get now—a huge and damaging cut to their budgets which must mean fewer jobs, poorer services and, inevitably, a massive hike in council tax bills.

As if that were not bad enough, we have what can be described only as a deception on the course of local government reorganisation. In March this year, the Secretary of State's highly expensive consultants Touche Ross forecast that the costs and savings of the reorganisation would balance out. Of course, that was to be discredited and abandoned within days of publication.

Two weeks ago, at this very Dispatch Box, the Secretary of State for Scotland accepted a figure of £200 million as the cost of reorganisation to the taxpayer. It is there on the record; it is in *Hansard* for even the Minister for Local Government to try to read and understand. He said that only two weeks ago, but today's statement tells us that it will cost £70 million, not a penny of which will be in the budgets which he is now going to slash by £350 million over the next three years.

The only explanation for that is that there will be big bills for council tax payers as a consequence of reorganisation; and the higher the band, the bigger the bill. Who would buy a used calculator from this bunch of Ministers? When one looks at the figures in the various areas that the Secretary of State for Scotland outlined in his long statement, the glossy picture looks very different from the reality. On law and order, the Conservative party, which claims a special reputation on law and order but which has governed during an explosion in the Scottish crime rate, proposes that budgets be slashed by 1·3 per cent. in real terms in the next year alone.

On housing, where there are problems of homelessness and housing dampness, which even the Secretary of State acknowledges in his statement to be serious, and in respect of which every Member of the House knows that our constituents face real and increasing problems, budgets will be slashed over the next year by 1·8 per cent. in real terms.

On education, again the Secretary of State claims that he has specially given protection, but we know from the Chancellor's Budget statement last week that students in every university and college will have their grants cut next year and that the threat of students having to pay a proportion in tuition fees is more real than any Minister is presently prepared to admit.

Even on health, the Government boast about their record, but the Secretary of State for Scotland published a report yesterday that shows how seriously different the problems of health are in Scotland. He knows—as do the House and the country—that costs rise faster than inflation, yet for the health service in Scotland next year he is providing a miserable increase of 0·4 per cent. in real terms.

In the light of the tough decisions that the Secretary of State for Scotland says that he has had to take, and in the light of his exhortation about value for money, will he explain why the budget for the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will increase by 15 per cent. in cash terms—£64 million—in the next year? It will be interesting to know why, because if it was good news I should have thought that it would be in his statement.

This year's unified Budget, of which this expenditure statement is a part, has been a disaster for Scotland and Britain. Nineteen in every 20 families will be hit by its tax increases. The unemployed and the sick will be specially targeted for penalty. The cost of living in Scotland will rise sharply and all our public services—housing, law and order and everything that is provided by local councils—will be cut substantially. It is in the light of that reality that today's glossy fiction will be judged, and it will be judged harshly indeed.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) started talking about a confidence trick. Confidence? Yes, because I believe that that is the right pattern of expenditure and it is a substantial sum of resources for Scotland. But trick? No. It is the hon. Gentleman who is playing tricks, because some of his figures bear no relation to reality.

The hon. Gentleman talked about massive real-term cuts. Perhaps he would like to identify precisely where they are. Inflation is currently running at 1·7 per cent. It may well rise from that figure before the end of 1994-95, but the Chancellor indicated in his Budget speech that he expected it to be around the lower level of 1 to 4 per cent.

As to going on television this evening, I was under the impression that I was going to spend quite some considerable time on television after this, and I look forward to the occasion. *[Interruption.]* I shall debate with the hon. Gentleman any time he likes. I am debating with him now and am scoring rather a lot of points off him. If he can contain his soul in patience, I have a good many more points to score.

The hon. Member for Hamilton talked about local authorities and claimed that we were contemplating a cut in real terms. He had to stretch his expectation over a three-year period to do that, but he knows as well as I do that the figures for years two and three in the survey are provisional. For next year, the increase is 3·41 per cent., and if one removes the net additional items for local authority activity, it is still an increase of 2·23 per cent. in Government-aided expenditure.

As to the cost of reform, the hon. Gentleman is now accusing me of arguing in favour of £200 million. I said in the debate that I would accept the figure of £200 million of the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) if he would accept what that meant. Clearly, he is not willing to do that as, while his hon. Friend has gone down to a figure of £70 million to £80 million, as reported in today's *Glasgow Herald*, the hon. Gentleman has gone up to over £600 million. Let me try to help the hon. Gentleman through it, as it might be worth spending a little time on it.

We are making provision next year for costs of £5 million for local authorities to begin to prepare for reform. The year after that, we are providing an extra £25 million,

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plus £23 million for the shadow authorities. The year after that, in 1996-97, it will be £55 million. By then, we shall have savings of £40 million coming through, giving a net cost of £15 million. That means over the three-year period a net cost of £45 million, but the savings thereafter will go on year after year, to the benefit of local council tax payers in Scotland.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of the explosion in crime, but he cannot have looked at the Scottish figures recently. If he had, he would have found that they show crime having fallen right across the board for a considerable period. Nevertheless, we are planning an increase in the spend on police from £37·7 million to £39·8 million. That is a rise of 5·6 per cent., which is an increase even by the hon. Gentleman's pessimistic anticipation of inflation levels. I can understand why the Labour party expects inflation to be high. After all, inflation averaged 15 per cent. throughout its period in office from 1974 to 1979.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of cuts in education, but we are increasing education expenditure by no less than 11·4 per cent. That is a substantial increase which will cover the expansion in higher and further education.

On health, the hon. Gentleman argued that we were going for a real terms increase of only 0·4 per cent. The gross figure is 5·2 per cent. but, in real terms, even at the pessimistic inflation figure of 4 per cent., that would still be an increase of 1·1 per cent., nearly three times the figure estimated by the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Gentleman accused me of concealing good news about agriculture. I am never one to do that, so I will happily tell the House that the agriculture programme is going up from £439·3 million to £511·7 million—a substantial increase of around 16 per cent., reflecting the reform of the common agricultural policy.

Those programmes and proposals for the year ahead represent a realistic and relevant planning of the disposition of finances in Scotland to help to continue the economic recovery and the improvement in social conditions.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Now that we have got through the initial exchanges, let me caution the House. We are not in the middle of a debate. The Secretary of State is here to answer questions. I am sure that he will do so directly, and I am sure that the Back Benchers whom I call will put their questions briskly.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in the economic circumstances of Europe today, where many Europeans are looking forward to spending three weeks out of four on the dole, particularly in Germany, his budget for spending in Scotland will come as a surprise to those people but be welcomed in Scotland?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is the more creditable that we have secured those resources for Scotland against a background of public expenditure overall being brought under control and the public sector borrowing requirement being brought down sharply, thus increasing confidence and the prospect of continuing economic recovery, out of which will come further resources in due course to continue to sustain the development of our programmes.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): As the Secretary of State said that he had exercised his judgment about priorities, we may judge whether his priorities are fair and realistic. Given that we have been told so often of the importance of substantial increases in investment in water and sewerage in a short time scale, how can he justify the fact that there is to be no increase in such investments by saying that they are not a priority? How does he perceive it as fair and realistic to expect a fireman or policeman to increase productivity? To what extent will the squeeze on local government expenditure allow local authorities to meet the Prime Minister's priority of expanding nursery education?

With regard to the agriculture and fisheries budget, how much has been taken out of the less favoured areas by cuts in hill livestock compensatory allowances and farm conservation grants? Will he confirm that funds will still be available for decommissioning the Scottish fishing fleet next year?

Mr. Lang: I am not sure which of those questions to answer, but, given your stricture, Madam Speaker, I shall have to be brief.

The figures for water and sewerage are increasing from £237 million to £243·7 million. The hon. Gentleman will understand that, as there is no longer a base line figure in the English and Welsh expenditure programmes on which the formula can operate, the capacity to increase resources under that heading is limited. That is why I looked to the private sector to increase resources in due course. Nevertheless, the resources enable 19 new suppliers, 91 improvement schemes to be developed, 56 major sewerage schemes and 69 new or improved treatment works over the next 18 months. That is a substantial commitment.

The hon. Gentleman will also no doubt be pleased to know that our commitment to continuing to increase the resources for the tariff rebate subsidy will increase next year by 25 per cent. over the current year's plans.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his statement? Does he agree that the greatest costs that we suffer are because of those people who are unnecessarily employed by local government, and is not it time that we did something about it? The Opposition should stop complaining that local government provides employment. It does not. It merely provides people with an income.

Mr. Lang: My hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right. Local authority expenditure accounts for a substantial proportion of Scottish Office resources. I looked back at figures for previous years and discovered that, despite their continuing claims of lack of resources, local authorities have continued to expand their numbers of personnel by no fewer than 9,000 in the past five years. Available resources have continued to increase year by year in real terms. We are right to look to local authorities to run a tight ship and to deliver services effectively and efficiently over the next few years.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): If the Secretary of State is serious about saving public money, why is he so hell bent on foisting on the Scottish people an expensive and unwanted reorganisation of local government that even the Government admit in their own White Paper will mean transitional costs of up to £196 million? Even in the long term in some parts of Scotland such as the Central region there will be no long-term savings at all. Will the Secretary of State abandon his expensive, gerrymandering proposals and refer the entire matter of Scottish local government reorganisation to an independent commission?

Mr. Lang: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman did not listen to my answer to an earlier question. Although the costs of reform may reach the level that he said, they will be offset rapidly by substantial savings that could be as high as £60 million a year. It is significant that the Labour-controlled council of Dundee has estimated savings for its council tax payers from the single-tier structure of more than £14 per household. I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman's new authority, when it is established, will estimate similar savings.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): Will my right hon. Friend cut through the tripe that we are hearing from Opposition Members and confirm that the public spending that he announced today represents the highest single sum available to any Secretary of State in Scotland's history and represents a figure of £50 per week for every man, woman and child living in Scotland?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right; it is a substantial increase. What matters is that we get value for money for the taxpayer who provides those resources. That is why I am looking to all those who are responsible for spending those resources to achieve the maximum in efficiency and investment that will yield good returns in the delivery of the services that they provide.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On the trunk roads programme that he has announced, the Secretary of State mentioned the M74, the M8 and the A1, but not the long overdue A77-M77 link. Is that link included and, if not, why not?

Mr. Lang: The full roads programme has not yet been decided and announced. I hope that it will be possible for that scheme to get under way. There are certainly resources available.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement. Is he aware that my constituents will welcome the real increases in health spending that is now 50 per cent. greater than in 1979, as well as the increased spending in agriculture? May I suggest that he may find the solution to the figures of the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) in the fact that he is talking about second-hand calculators that he has perhaps bought from the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) and that perhaps the hon. Member for Hamilton should buy a new calculator?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The figures for health expenditure are certainly substantial—an increase in cash approaching £200 million. That will enable a 2·5 per cent. increase in patient activity to take place and a building programme of some £156 million.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): Will the Secretary of State say something more about the roads programme? When will his Department's procedures in relation to the extension of the M80 between Stepps and Haggs be concluded, and what is the likely date of the commencement of the work?

Mr. Lang: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the answer to that question today, but I can tell him that there are 14 major projects currently under construction in Scotland and that the resources I have announced today will allow 11 new starts in the next three years.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Unlike the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), who seemed to revel in doom and gloom, albeit somewhat inaccurately, may I express my welcome for my right hon. Friend's statement and especially for the further drive towards the equalisation of the uniform business rate? Is there an estimate of when the uniform business rate across the United Kingdom will finally be arrived at?

Mr. Lang: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. The need to harmonise business rates in Scotland arises from the high spending records of mainly Labour-controlled local authorities over the years. However, the £60 million that we have injected into the problem for the forthcoming year brings to £440 million the total of Government resources that have gone into bringing down business rates in Scotland. That is a substantial sum. We are now getting close to harmony with England and Wales, which I hope will be achieved in the next year or two.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will the Secretary of State confirm that the Scottish Office is to continue to fund the mental illness specific grant? May I point out that a relatively small sum of money will be needed over the next three or four years but that such funding is especially important to those who suffer from traumatic brain injuries? May I go further and ask for an increase in the grant so that the rehabilitation needs of our fellow citizens suffering from such injuries can be advanced? It is a relatively small sum of money, but it is badly needed by the traumatic brain injury units.

Mr. Lang: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I can not only reassure him of the survival of the mental illness specific grant but tell him of a proposed increase from £7 million to £10 million. That is an increase of about 40 per cent. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that that meets his concern.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): Will the Secretary of State confirm that, when inflation is officially estimated to run at 3·5 per cent. next year, it is his policy and that of Chancellors to expect every public service worker in Scotland to have no increase in pay for the next three years and that he will judge his policy to be a success if he cuts workers' wages in that way?

Mr. Lang: First, I wish that the hon. Gentleman would not be so gloomy about the rate of inflation. I know that the Opposition are not familiar with low inflation, but inflation is low and, as has been clearly proved by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor, shows every sign of staying so. The Scottish Office provision for direct running costs next year is zero. I expect the Scottish Office to achieve any increases in running costs through efficiency savings. If we are prepared to do that in Government Departments, we can expect local authorities and others to achieve the same efficiency savings.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): Will the Secretary of State assure the House that the miserly increase in health expenditure, which, incidentally, is not adequate to cope with demographic shifts or increased technology, will not be spent on more managers with large, fast cars paid for at the expense of patient care? If public sector and health service workers are to have a pay freeze for the next three years, will there also be a freeze on managerial wages, fast cars and perks?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman was here for Scottish questions, so he will be aware of the fact that hospital trusts are now delivering patient care treatments more quickly and successfully than was the case before the trusts were established. It is in anticipation of the need to deliver more patient treatments that we are increasing the resources of the health service.

The hon. Gentleman talks of "miserly" expenditure, but I recall what happened under the previous Labour Government when health service budgets, capital spending and nurses' wages were cut by 30 per cent. After allowing for inflation, we have increased health spending by 50 per cent.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Is the Secretary of State aware that the Library estimates that, after allowing for changed responsibilities, the Government's support expenditure for local authorities will fall during each of the next three years? Does the right hon. Gentleman deny that? Is he further aware that the Library estimates that in the year 1996-97 Welsh Office spending will rise by 3·5 per cent. more than Scottish Office spending? Does that mean that the Secretary of State for Wales is competent, or that the Secretary of State for Scotland is incompetent?

Mr. Lang: I am not responsible for expenditure levels in Wales. The settlement achieved by the Scottish Office is well up in the range of Government departmental settlements. As for expenditure levels in local government, the grant-aided expenditure will rise to £5,260 million, which is an increase of 2·23 per cent. net of the items being added to the authorities' responsibilities. As to overall expenditure, in Scotland it is some 30 per cent. higher per head than in England or Wales.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): Given the apparently large increase in spending on agriculture, can the Secretary of State explain why support for crofters and hill farmers in less-favoured areas in the highlands and islands is to be cut next year? Surely those are the most marginal and hard pressed of the farming communities.

Mr. Lang: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman shares my satisfaction that the incomes of hill farmers, particularly in the beef and sheep sectors, have risen very substantially in the last year or two. Support for them has also increased. The suckler cow premium will be up £14 million and the sheep annual premium will be up £28 million. Against that background, it is not unrealistic that the hill livestock compensatory allowance should be reduced by £9·5 million. There are many other demands on taxpayers' resources, but it is estimated that the agricultural programme in general will be substantially increased next year by more than 16 per cent.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): The Secretary of State made no reference in his statement to community-based housing associations, which do a good job in Scotland, particularly in the inner city areas. Will he clarify what his statement means for those associations? Will they receive an increase or a decrease and, if so, of how much? Will they be able to continue their essential work of housing rehabilitation, or will they be restricted to new building in conjunction with the private sector?

Mr. Lang: There will certainly be continuity of our commitment to housing associations. When I tell the hon. Gentleman that the Scottish Homes budget will go up by 8·5 per cent. net, he will realise that the resources for housing generally next year are very substantial.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Is the Secretary of State aware that there will be no merry Christmas for the thousands of people who are homeless in Scotland? The last time we debated the issue, my constituency ended up with two more houses. Thousands of homeless people come to see every hon. Member. When will the Secretary of State give the people hope? When will houses that people can rent and afford to buy be built? When will the Secretary of State stop playing Scrooge and give our constituents a happy Christmas?

Mr. Lang: I am happy to oblige the hon. Gentleman now, even though it is a little early. Perhaps I should give him a new tie for Christmas, in view of the one that he is wearing.

The net capital programme for housing will be up by £25 million, or 4·3 per cent., next year. The local authorities' net capital programme on their home stock will be up 5·5 per cent. Those are substantial increases by any standard.

Mr. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh, Leith): Given that the overall United Kingdom public spending settlement this year is the most savage and draconian of any in the lifetime of the Government, with overall cuts in real terms of 1·3 per cent. and cuts in the public sector capital investment of more than 10 per cent., will the Secretary of State say whether he has bucked that trend or merely concealed it? Will he tell us in simple terms the percentage change in overall expenditure, comparing this year's outturn expenditure with next year's planned expenditure? Will he tell us the percentage change in public sector capital investment, given the crucial nature of that for both employment and economic activity in general?

Mr. Lang: We do not know what the current year's outturn will be, because we are still in the middle of the year. I can tell the hon. Gentleman, however, that the £14 billion overall programme represents a 4·3 per cent. cash increase. Our capital gross spend will be over £3 billion, which represents a 5 per cent. increase.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Is the Secretary of State aware that, if we had proper railway services in Lothian and Fife, there would be no need to contemplate spending millions of pounds of public money on a second dual carriageway and a second road bridge over the Firth of Forth? The A1 dual carriageway clearly needs to be extended, and I welcome that part of the right hon. Gentleman's statement, but it would be helpful if he could give us an idea of the completion date for the extension of the dual carriageway towards Haddington and Dunbar.

Mr. Lang: I hope that it will be possible to make a start on the Tranent-to-Haddington section of the A1 in 1994-95. As for the railways, let me point out that huge expenditure went into upgrading the east coast line, which is of great interest to the hon. Gentleman and his constituents. Moreover, we propose to develop the west coast main line using private sector finance. Private sector finance should enable us to build still further on the progress that we are making with public resources in developing our transport infrastructure.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Will the Secretary of State confirm that, although the figures that he announced for housing spend may represent an increase on the planned spend for next year, when they are compared to the housing expenditure outturn for this year—and when the real level of inflation is taken into account for next year—they will almost certainly represent a cut in the Scottish housing budget?

According to the Department's own figures, over the 18 months to June this year Scottish local authorities were forced to sell just under 28,000 council houses to sitting tenants, while being able to complete fewer than 1,000. That represents a net shortfall of 27,000 council houses. How can the right hon. Gentleman possibly justify a cut in the housing budget at a time of record homelessness, and record dampness and condensation in the Scottish public sector housing stock?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman seems determined to try to confuse matters by comparing outturn with planned expenditure. If the outturn figures are different from the planned figures for 1993-94, it is equally likely that the outturn figures for 1994-95 will be different. I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree that the sensible comparison is between planned figures for 1993-94 and planned figures for 1994-95. On that basic, the resources for housing should be more than sufficient to meet the needs.

Points of Order

4.11 pm

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Can you assist the House in deciding whether the rules governing the broadcasting of our deliberations here extend to tribunals that the Government set up outside? You will know, Madam Speaker, that Lady Thatcher is giving evidence to the Scott inquiry today, but no broadcasters will be present. Next month, the Prime Minister will give evidence to the same inquiry; again, no broadcasters will be present.

It seems extraordinary that, although when the Prime Minister speaks to the nation in this place his words are broadcast, no broadcasters will be present when he speaks to a tribunal that he himself set up. The public want to know what happened in the Iraq arms trade affair. Do the rules affecting this place also affect tribunals?

Madam Speaker: We make rules only for ourselves in the House. Our Select Committee on Broadcasting lays down the regulations; those regulations cover only us and our operations in the House.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Further to the point of order that I raised yesterday, Madam Speaker. Will you confirm that, following the Opposition's failure to table an amendment to the Budget motions on the Order Paper, and following last night's vote on the amendment to the law, it will now not be possible for the Opposition to table an amendment on that issue at any stage during the passage of the Finance Bill?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is clearly well aware of our proceedings here, as his point of order yesterday showed. He will know that the issue that he has raised will be a matter for the Chairman of the Committee debating the Bill.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Let me make the position quite clear, in case the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) misheard me. We have now finished debating the Budget in the House, and the point that he raised will be a matter for the Chairman when the Bill is in Committee.

Mr. Riddick: I am grateful to you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will be aware that right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House have campaigned over a number of years on behalf of British nuclear tests veterans who were exposed to radiation at Christmas Island, Maralinga and other locations. Many have campaigned longer than myself.

On 11 November, I received a reply from the Prime Minister saying that a study commissioned by the Ministry of Defence into radiation exposure and its effects on service men would be published next spring. I have discovered that the National Radiological Protection Board has already notified people outside the House that it intends to hold a press conference tomorrow to reveal the report's contents. Is not that matter—which affects 20,000 ex-service people who obeyed instructions when undergoing national service—so serious that a statement

[Mr. Gordon McMaster]

should be made to the House? Today, the Glasgow *Evening Times* reveals the conclusions of the board's report, yet the House is not to be told.

Madam Speaker: That matter is not for me at this stage, but I am sure that members of the Treasury Bench heard the hon. Gentleman's comments.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your ruling. Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition said during Prime Minister's questions that the Budget resolution as framed denied the House the right to vote on value added tax on domestic fuel. Later, in the debate on the amendment of the law, the shadow Chief Secretary, the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman), said:

> "The first vote at the conclusion of tonight's debate will give us the chance to vote down VAT on gas and electricity."—[*Official Report*, 7 December 1993; Vol. 234, c. 230.]

Who was correct—the right hon. and learned Gentleman or the hon. Lady?

Madam Speaker: The Speaker has great responsibilities, but is certainly not responsible for the utterances of any right hon. or hon. Member.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it appropriate to raise at this stage a point of order on the Sunday Trading Bill?

Madam Speaker: Perhaps the hon. Lady will wait until we are in Committee, for that is the business of the Chairman of Ways and Means.

Mr. Riddick: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It is absolutely genuine.

Madam Speaker: Order. Am I to take it that the hon. Gentleman's other points of order were not genuine?

Mr. Riddick: Perhaps I did not express myself clearly earlier. I entirely understand that it is for the Chairman of the Committee on the Finance Bill to decide what is put before that Committee, but when the Bill returns to the House—for example, on Report—I imagine that you, Madam Speaker, will have to decide along with your advisers whether an amendment on the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel can be accepted. Would you be able to accept such an amendment after last night's vote on the amendment of the law?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman's point of order is real, but at this stage it is hypothetical. Whatever advice I receive, I make the final decision—as I think the hon. Gentleman knows. When the time comes, I shall be prepared to do so again.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 14th JANUARY

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Richard Alexander
Mr. Michael Clapham
Mr. Oliver Heald

Orders of the Day

Sunday Trading Bill

(Clauses Nos. 1 and 2 and Schedule No. 4)

Considered in Committee

[MR. MICHAEL MORRIS *in the Chair*]

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): It may be for the convenience of the Committee if I make a statement on how I intend to chair today's proceedings.

The Committee will see from my provisional list that there will be a single debate on the selected amendments to clause 1. Underlying that common debate are five competing proposals, each with a principal amendment to which is attached one or more related or consequential amendments. Details are set out in the Note on the selection list.

The procedure at the end of the debate will be as follows. The Committee will first dispose of the principal amendment then before it, amendment No. 35. If that amendment is agreed to, all the other amendments will fall except those related to amendment No. 35—that is, amendments Nos. 7 and 8—which will then be decided on. If amendment No. 35 is not agreed to, the Committee will turn to the next principal amendment, so that each of the principal amendments—Nos. 35, 1, 2, 3, and 21—will be taken in turn. Once one amendment is agreed to, the Committee will go directly to the amendment or amendments related to it and the remaining principal amendments will fall. If a principal amendment is disagreed to, we go at once to the next one.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I accept your ruling in this matter—I do not disagree with it in any way. However, having seen your list of amendments and having listened to what you said, it is not clear to hon. Members who may be outside the House at present with which amendments we are dealing. As I understand it—and you may correct me—amendment No. 1 relates to total deregulation, the next one is Keep Sunday Special, and the next is the Shopping Hours Reform Council. It is important that hon. Members should enter the right Lobby for the right reason. If there is any way in which you could make it more clear which amendment is which, because it is not stated in your list of amendments, it would be helpful.

The Chairman: First, hon. Members should be in their places and those who are not here have only themselves to blame if they are confused. Secondly, I urge hon. Members to read the Note. It is not for the Chair to describe what particular amendments are colloquially known as; it is for the Chair to abide by the rules of the Committee. Nevertheless, the Note that I have written is there for all to see. We are starting with amendment No. 35, not amendment No. 1. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is clear on that point.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. My point relates to an issue that concerns hon. Members who do not have a problem with an extension of Sunday trading but who need to look carefully at the employment protections offered in the Bill to help us to make a final decision on which clause we wish to support. It seems wrong that those of us who are taking that line cannot make an informed decision because the Committee will not be debating the employment protection aspects of the Bill in schedule 4 until after we have had the votes on the three different options. That puts those of us who do not object to extra trading on Sundays but who have serious worries about the efficacy of the employment protections offered in the Bill in a difficult situation. Would you consider changing the order so that we can have a debate on the employment protection aspects of the Bill before voting on the three different options? *[Interruption.]*

The Chairman: Order. I would like to rule on that point of order and then see whether another point of order is necessary. First, it is the job of the Chair to take the Bill in the order that it is laid down. Secondly, only a business motion can alter that order, and that business motion must be tabled the night before. As matters stand this afternoon, the Chair is duty bound to take the order as it is laid down.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I would be grateful for your guidance. If by chance none of the recommendations is accepted by the Committee, what will happen? If I am right in saying that the matter will then be dealt with by a Committee upstairs, how will the composition of that Committee be determined, given that the House overwhelmingly voted for the Second Reading but that it did not necessarily mean that the hon. Members who voted for that Second Reading agreed on the approach to the options that should then be taken?

The Chairman: The composition of the Committee is a matter for the Committee of Selection and has absolutely nothing to do with me, but hon. Members should be clear that the Bill has had a Second Reading so, of what decisions or non-decisions are made tonight, nevertheless the Bill will proceed to Committee.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. It refers to the point of order that my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) raised a moment ago. I accept your ruling, but do you advise the Committee that it will be quite in order at the end of the day for the Committee, if we do not believe that satisfactory provision is included in the Bill for protection of workers, at a later stage—whether it be today or in Committee upstairs—to reject the Bill on Third Reading or, indeed, in the House of Lords?

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman's supposition is entirely correct.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Further to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle), if she is very concerned about the clauses which, perfectly properly, according to your ruling, cannot be taken until after the other vote has been taken, she would be well advised to vote for what is colloquially known as the Keep Sunday Special option.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. As I understand it, the advice that you are giving to the Committee, following the point of order by my hon Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle), is just that, namely, that if anyone has any reservations about protection for workers' right not to work on Sunday, they should vote for the Keep Sunday Special option. I hope that the House fully understands that and acts upon it.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not put words into my mouth. I am not giving any advice to any hon. Member on how they may or may not choose to vote. I call Sir Peter Emery to move amendment No. 35.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Mr. Chairman, I rise——

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): O a point of order, Mr. Morris. Would you please give us an explanation—if you have already explained, I would not mind if you were to repeat it—as to why amendment No. 35, tabled by the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), has taken precedence over the other options as contained in the Bill?

The Chairman: It might help the Committee if I explained that. It is a principle of the arrangement of amendments offered at the same point in a Bill that proposals to leave out some words and insert others take precedence over amendments simply to leave out words. Page 488 of the current edition of "Erskine May" makes that plain. The amendment paper before the Committee follows that principle, correcting yesterday's notices of amendments, which did not.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. May the Committee have some ruling from you? We know that we are debating the five options today. The most powerful retail lobby outside is saying clearly that if we do not vote on the option that it prefers, it will continue to break the law. What is your guidance to the Committee and to those lobbyists outside?

The Chairman: That is not a matter for the Chairman of Ways and Means this evening; it is a matter for the courts.

Clause 1

ALTERNATIVE SCHEMES FOR REFORM OF LAW RELATING TO SUNDAY TRADING

4.23 pm

Sir Peter Emery: I beg to move amendment No. 35, in page 1, leave out lines 5 to 17 and insert

'Schedules *(Prohibition of trade in shops during Sunday morning)* and 3 to this Act shall come into force on such day as the Secretary of State may by order made by statutory instrument appoint (in this section referred to as "the appointed day").'.

The Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 1, in clause 1, page 1, line 5, leave out from beginning to 'sections' in line 7.

No. 2, in clause 1, page 1, line 5, leave out from beginning to 'Schedules' in line 10.

No. 3, in clause 1, page 1, line 5, leave out from beginning to 'Schedules' in line 12.

No. 21, in clause 1, page 1, line 6, after 'following', insert

'in respect of each local authority area'.

No. 4, in clause 1, page 1, line 8, leave out from 'effect' to end of line 23.

No. 5, in clause 1, page 1, line 11, leave out from 'such' to end of line 17 and insert

'day as the Secretary of State may by order made by statutory instrument appoint (in this section referred to as "the appointed day")'.

[The Chairman]

No. 6, in page 1, line 13, leave out from 'such' to end of line 17 and insert

'day as the Secretary of State may by order made by statutory instrument appoint (in this section referred to as "the appointed day")'.

No. 25, in page 1, line 15, at end insert

'and different orders may specify different appointed days'.

No. 7, in page 1, line 18, leave out from beginning to 'sections'.

No. 26, in page 1, line 20, at end insert

'in the relevant local authority area'.

No. 8, in page 1, leave out lines 21 to 23.

No. 29, page 1, line 21, leave out from 'unless' to end of line 23 and insert

'the local authority concerned have passed a resolution to the effect that such an order should be made in respect of that local authority area.'.

No. 32, in page 1, line 23, at end add

'(4A) An order under subsection (4) above shall be laid before each House of Parliament and shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House.'.

No. 34, in page 1, line 23, at end add

'(4B) In this section "local authority" has the same meaning as in Schedules 1 and 2 to this Act and "local authority area" shall be construed accordingly.'.

Sir Peter Emery: At last, the House can decide. Everyone has known for too long that the present regulations concerning Sunday trading are a nonsense and, what is more, they have brought the law into disrespect many times. I hope today to be able to demonstrate that it is possible for us to make a sensible, common-sense and easily understood decision, which I hope that my amendment allows us to do.

It has been said that my amendment was put in at the last moment. I am sorry that, because I was on parliamentary duty at the meeting of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe parliamentary assembly, I could not be here for the Second Reading, but the amendment was tabled immediately on the conclusion of Second Reading. It was altered because it was tabled before I knew that the Government were going to amend their own Bill, which they had just published. Because the Bill had been amended I had to restructure my amendment so that it would do exactly the same as had always been intended. My amendment had to take account of the Government amendment.

4.30 pm

My amendment is simple and straightforward, and does only two things. It says that we should tighten the law to ensure that only a few special shops are allowed to open on a Sunday morning before 1 o'clock, but that after that time there would be complete deregulation.

I shall take the House through the details, because even I could not arrange for the schedule mentioned in the amendment to appear on the Order Paper today. I must therefore take the House clearly through what the schedule says. Basically, paragraph 2 says:

> "A shop shall not be open on Sunday for the serving of customers before 1 p.m.—unless. . . it is a special shop",

or is registered for the Jewish Sabbath. Paragraph 3 defines quickly and simply what a special shop would be:

> "A shop is a special shop by virtue of this paragraph if . . . the shop is a newsagent's shop and is open only for the sale of newspapers registered at the Post Office and published only on a Sunday"—

that is designed to ensure that everybody can still get their Sunday papers if they want to—

> "the shop is a registered pharmacy and is open only for the sale . . . or otherwise . . . of medicinal products or surgical appliances . . . the shop is a nursery or garden centre and is open only for the sale of plants, flowers and garden supplies and garden accessories".

That exemption could not be extended to allow the shop to sell food, or to compete in any way other than as a garden centre. A shop would also be special if:

> "the shop is a petrol filling station . . . the shop is at a designated airport . . . or . . . the trade or business carried on in the shop consists wholly or mainly of . . . the sale of meals or refreshments for consumption on the premises",

or alcohol

> "for consumption on those premises."

In other words, the place has to be a restaurant or cafe.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): If I went to a newsagent to buy a newspaper at 10 o'clock on a Sunday morning, and decided that I needed to buy a couple of pints of milk at the same time, would my right hon. Friend's proposed arrangements allow me to do so?

Sir Peter Emery: No. That is clear; there is no doubt about it. The schedule says clearly that the shop must be:

> "open only for the sale of newspapers registered",

and that is all that would be allowed.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): As the Government seek to impose fewer and fewer regulations, does not my right hon. Friend believe that the ideas that he suggests would herald a welter of new regulations, and give rise to the most preposterous situations?

Sir Peter Emery: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will listen to the whole of my speech before commenting, because the arrangement that I believe that he favours—complete deregulation—will not obtain the necessary majority to stand part of the Bill. In that case, the best that he can do is to support my amendment. I at least provide deregulation for half the day, and that is what he should urge me to do.

I envisage that the amendment will be completely and simply understood; its whole purpose is to provide unrestricted simplicity. The amendment is necessary because I do not believe that a majority exists for the three options offered in the Bill. What philosophy have I tried to adopt? I may be old fashioned, but I believe that the greatness of Great Britain has been based on Anglo-Saxon Celtic Christian philosophy and action. I believe——

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire) *rose*——

Sir Peter Emery: May I finish my sentence?

People who believe in that philosophy, although they may be in a minority, have the right to have their views heard. When we consider the protection of ethnic minorities in other ways, surely the rights of the Christian minority have to be considered.

Mr. Fabricant: Is the thrust of my right hon. Friend's argument that Christians will be more likely to go to church if his amendment is carried?

Sir Peter Emery: I have not used that argument in any way and my hon. Friend knows that. If my hon. Friend were to go to any of the Christian churches—be it Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist, Church of England or even some of the Catholic churches—they would urge that there should be protection for Sunday, and that Sunday should be different from the other days of the week.

The Keep Sunday Special campaign protects the whole of Sunday, but that is against the wishes of many people who wish to go shopping on Sunday. I believe that they have the right to be considered, and my amendment goes a long way towards doing that.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Peter Emery: I will give way once more, and I suggest that I do not give way again until I come to the conclusion of my speech. If I have not answered questions by hon. Members by then, I shall be delighted to give way.

Mr. Banks: Will my hon. Friend explain the difference between allowing people to go to a garden centre on Sunday and prohibiting them from going to a DIY centre or a centre which specialises in the sale of furnishings or carpets?

Sir Peter Emery: The decision is not easy to make, as the hon. Gentleman will recognise. There is a great demand from people who can garden only at the weekend to be able to go to a garden centre, and, as I understand, there is considerable demand for that to be an exception in the Bill.

I believe that people should be allowed to arrange their lives as they want to. Therefore, there is particular strength to the argument of those who wish to see complete deregulation. I accept that; there is no doubt about it. If there were to be a referendum on the matter, that view would probably carry the day.

I am arguing that there are minorities which deserve to be protected. My amendment tries to provide a balance between two sections of society, and it will be able to cope with the problems which may arise. I was asked when I appeared on television about shops in stately homes. It seems that a noble Lord might well be able to go to church or to stay in bed, but he would not have to look after his shop in the morning.

What are the weaknesses of the alternatives? The weakness of the Keep Sunday Special campaign is that it does not take into account the vast number of people who want to be able to shop on Sunday. That is a real weakness, and I am sorry about it. The people involved in the campaign claim—wrongly, I believe—that they should regulate people's lives. I believe that if people wish to shop on Sunday, they do not expect the law to stop them doing so.

I have outlined the case made by the Church and there cannot be one hon. Member who has not had a host of letters from religious organisations demanding that protection be given so Sunday can be different from other days. The amendments relating to the Keep Sunday Special campaign are nonsense in many areas. First, what about the extent of the regulations on the square footage of shops? Who is to do the measuring? How will it be carried out? Who will check it? What is 280 sq m? Is it 17 by 18 sq yds? That is about the size of the centre of the Chamber.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) mentioned garden centres, but I note that video recordings are to be sold. What about tapes, records and the machines used to play them on? Are they in or out? What about a florist? Can it sell only cut flowers and plants; and what about artificial flowers? In fact, small shops in general are an area of contention.

The Keep Sunday Special regulations are too detailed, and the House should not be attempting to go in for more detail. We need a simple conclusion to this matter.

I come now to total deregulation. I have already said under cross-questioning that the weakness of this option is that it does not pay due regard to the large number of people who have a right to be considered. It does not seem right to me that we should ride roughshod over such people, and my amendment would go a long way to ensuring that that does not happen.

In some ways my amendment attempts to replace the third alternative. The Shopping Hours Reform Council proposal attempts to bridge the differences between Keep Sunday Special and complete deregulation, but fails to do so. It is not as simple or as sensible as my amendment, for the following reasons.

Which of us wants to load on to local authorities the necessity of keeping a register of everything that goes on? Local government already complains that it is given too much to do by central Government with too little money to do it. I see no point in making local authorities responsible for this additional workload.

Furthermore, who will decide what constitutes the allowed six hours out of eight? Who will check? Who is to know precisely how many hours a shop stays open? To those who favour keeping Sunday special I should point out that my amendment at least keeps it special until 1 pm, whereas the alternative we are discussing would allow opening from 10 am. Some bigger shops would be allowed to open too—but how big?

The great advantage of my amendment is its simplicity and its lack of regulations to be enforced——

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford): I find my right hon. Friend's argument confusing. In attempting to keep Sunday special in the morning he has fallen into the trap of allowing certain elements of trade to go on, which is not so special. Why is it, in his logic, that those who wish to eat cannot buy food, whereas those who wish to read or garden occupy a superior state?

Sir Peter Emery: People who want to eat in a restaurant can do so—the amendment allows for that. I am sorry; if people want to go to a grocer's shop, they will have to wait until 1 pm.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that his proposals are more restrictive for newsagents than the provisions in the Shops Act 1950, in that they would prevent them from selling until 1 pm many things that they can legally sell now?

Sir Peter Emery: I had not intended that. If it can be proved to me, we can alter it easily enough in Committee, because it is more a Committee point than a general one —[HON. MEMBERS: "We are in Committee."] Indeed we are, but I meant when we go into Committee upstairs, as opposed to a Committee of the whole House. The Government themselves may want to tighten up certain legal niceties there.

I do not say that my amendment is watertight, but I do say that the principle is right. My proposal will be just as open to amendment in Standing Committee as any other.

Dame Angela Rumbold (Mitcham and Morden): I commend my right hon. Friend's efforts to try to find a way through many of our problems with Sunday trading, but I am anxious to know how, under this amendment, the many corner shops run by people who are not Christians will be monitored. Does he really believe it to be a good thing that such shops will be closed, the more so since they serve the needs of the elderly and others who cannot get to the larger stores at any time?

Sir Peter Emery: I ask my right hon. Friend to come to my constituency, where she would learn that those who most strongly oppose deregulation are the elderly. They are not asking for reform; they want to ensure that at least Sunday morning is kept special, and they would be happy to go along with what I have said.

Mr. Cryer: The right hon. Gentleman has been rather scathing about regulation, but if, as his amendment proposes, mornings are to be kept free, there must be some regulation to ensure that shops do not open on Sunday mornings. Would there not have to be a check on newsagents to ascertain that they sold only newspapers? The right hon. Gentleman is therefore not against every sort of regulation to make sure that Sunday is kept special, at least in part.

Sir Peter Emery: I always enjoy crossing swords with the hon. Gentleman; it is fun. His point is relevant to some degree—but only to a small degree. My amendment provides for fines of £50,000 for those who break the law —that would apply under any of the options, I believe. Mine is no different.

The verdict on all this, sent to many Members of Parliament and giving us the views of Mr. Anthony Scrivener QC, was rather interesting. The legal opinion is that the Keep Sunday Special option in the Bill

"presents no more difficulty in interpretation or enforcement than many other statutes currently in force".

I am disappointed; I was hoping for something more simple than what is in force, given our difficulties with so much of the current law. We want to avoid complication at all costs, and that is exactly what my amendment proceeds to do. It is a common sense approach and an approach that can be understood by everyone. There are no ifs or buts about it. It requires no local government registration and little or no real monitoring—and it discards worries about floor size.

On the subject of floor size, what would happen if a 280 sq ft shop that was trading successfully wanted to expand by adding another 30 sq ft? Would it be outside the regulations then? Does that make sense? Should businesses be prevented from the benefits of expansion? That is clearly nonsense.

4.45 pm

The KSS option is designed to protect the whole day, but I do not believe that that option and that for total deregulation command majority support in the House. In that case, my amendment should attract the support of certain Opposition Members because, of all the alternatives, it offers the best chance of keeping Sunday special until 1 pm rather than until 10 am, as offered in the third alternative.

If hon. Members have any doubts about whether the KSS option will fall, they should, at the outset, go through the Lobby in support of my amendment. That is the best thought that I can offer. If hon. Members wish to save some part of their preferred option they should line up behind me in support of my amendment. Similarly, those in favour of total deregulation will not win, so they should support my amendment, which offers partial deregulation for half of the day.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Would it not be better to turn the argument the other way round? If people want to keep Sunday special in any way, the only proper means of doing so is by voting for the KSS option.

Sir Peter Emery: That argument could be put, but it does not make sense. Under my amendment, hon. Members will get half of what they want rather than none of it. I have a high regard for the hon. Gentleman, but I am afraid that he will not win tonight, so the sooner that he supports my amendment the better for him.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Can my right hon. Friend tell me whether his idea could be amended in Committee to allow all small shops but no large shops to open in the morning? Such a simple proposal would command a great deal of support.

Sir Peter Emery: There is nothing in my schedule to prevent such an amendment from being made. It would have to be selected by the Chairman and carried by the Committee. I cannot, therefore, give an absolute answer to my hon. Friend except to say that, were I to serve on the Committee, I would listen to the argument and judge whether it was acceptable. The argument may well make good sense.

There is no doubt about the fact that my amendment is a compromise. Compromises are not necessarily disadvantageous and many a time good British compromises have proved to be right. I believe that my amendment represents a fair solution, which meets both points of view. It is a common sense solution and it has a simplicity about it which none of the other amendments offers. I ask the House to support my amendment.

Mr. Pike: I do not intend to support amendment No. 35, but I wish to discuss the other amendments selected in the group. I must make it clear that I will support the Retailers for Shops Act Reform-Keep Sunday Special compromise proposal when we vote. I will not, therefore, spend much of my speech on that of the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery).

My view has changed little since we last debated this issue in 1986. On that occasion, the Government were defeated by 14 votes on the Shops Bill, which originated in the other place.

Today's Bill was given its Second Reading last week and we are now debating the proposed options. My hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) was right to raise a point of order about the difficulties that many of us face in trying to debate any of the options, because, when deciding whether to allow the Bill to proceed, the overriding factor must be acceptable protection for workers. Given the Government's track record on pay and trade unions, I have grave doubts that they will deliver a Bill with acceptable protection for workers. I shall say no more about that because that matter will be dealt with in the debate on the next group of amendments.

I agreed also with the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who said that if there was any doubt about the protection to be offered to workers, hon. Members who might be minded to go further than the RSAR-KSS option should support that option as the minimum one, because the overriding factor was worker protection.

Mr. Sheerman: I do not intend to criticise my hon. Friend, but I should like to jog his memory. He said that he has not changed his mind much since the 1986 debate, but, at the end of it, we agreed that some change to Sunday trading legislation was necessary. We agreed that do-it-yourself centres, garden centres and small shops should be allowed to open so long as workers were offered adequate protection. I must remind him that our opinion has changed a great deal. The option that we prefer represents real, flexible change that will help the consumer.

Mr. Pike: My hon. Friend is right and that is why I advocate the RSAR-KSS option. I know that my hon. Friend and I have been persuaded by the wisdom of it, but those hon. Members who wish to go beyond that option and who care about worker protection should think carefully about doing so. They should be wary of going further and they should not be conned by the Government. Therefore, although they might not vote for the RSAR-KSS option on the grounds advocated by my hon. Friend and by me, they should do so for slightly different reasons. Given the Government's track record, those hon. Members should provide workers with the safeguard offered by that option.

I was a member of the Committee on the Bill that became the Local Government Act 1988 and the present Home Secretary was the Minister responsible for the legislation. I always recall that when I moved a particular amendment he said that I always wore my GMB union hat. He said that I wanted council workers to be paid double time on a Sunday. Such a comment is fundamental to today's debate because the right hon. and learned Gentleman was opposed to such payments then and he is still opposed to them. That is why we should not support the option advocated by him.

Mr. John Marshall: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, USDAW, has sent a letter to a number of hon. Members, which states:

> "Your support is crucial to ensure the six hour option receives a clear majority support."

Does he accept that USDAW and the Transport and General Workers Union support the option advocated by the Shopping Hours Reform Council and not the option that he supports?

Hon. Members: Not true.

Mr. Pike: I will never listen to anyone from the Conservative party who tries to use the trade union movement to influence our view. What the hon. Gentleman has quoted is a load of rubbish. [HON. MEMBERS: "It is in the letter."] I have seen that letter, but I am also aware that particular motion was not carried at USDAW's annual conference. I do not want to fall out with USDAW. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] No, I do not.

Conservatives often accuse the Labour party of jumping when the trade unions so demand and suggest that we are under their tight control. On a free vote, however, the Labour party is completely at liberty to advocate a particular case, unlike some Conservative Members who have been paid by the Shopping Hours Reform Council, which has spent substantial amounts of money to try to persuade hon. Members how to vote on the issue.

Mr. Fabricant: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I support the Shopping Hours Reform Council. Is it not an absolute slur on certain Conservative Members to say that those who support the Shopping Hours Reform Council have been paid by that organisation, when we have not been? Moreover, if we had been, and we have not, we would have made a statement in the Register of Members' Interests.

The Chairman: Order. That was a helpful point of order and I am quite sure that hon. Members on both sides of the Committee listened to what the hon. Gentleman said.

5 pm

Mr. Pike: I was not casting any slur but was simply referring to the vast amount that has been spent by that organisation to persuade people which option they should support in the debate. If anybody believes that Sainsbury and Tesco have put money into SHRC for the benefit of their workers or the public, he is kidding himself.

Mr. Donald Anderson: If my hon. Friend wishes to test the credibility of the claim of those large stores to be acting in the public and consumer interest, he should look at the way in which they used legal devices—the planning laws—to attempt to stop the warehouse development in east London. Had they been so interested in consumer protection, perhaps they would have taken a different view. Surely that undermines the credibility of their claim to be acting in favour of the consumer and shows conclusively that they are concerned with their market share and not with the public interest.

Mr. Pike: My hon. Friend makes a valid point, as he always does on these matters. The vast control being gained by a small number of supermarkets in the grocery retail trade in Britain is a growing worry to many of us. Four big supermarket chains are controlling an ever-increasing share of the market. They now tell manufacturers what size products should be and what cuts of meat there should be. They are controlling the market, not in the best interests of the public but because they can make substantial profits.

In the debate to which my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) referred, the point was made that one additional shopping day would not increase the amount of trade. The same financial limitations apply whether we have six or seven shopping days.

The superstores trade successfully because they sell a higher volume of products in relation to the number of staff they employ. Contrary to the claim that superstores create jobs, if one were to analyse the position across the board, it would become clear that superstores lead to job losses. I am sure that, if they were allowed to trade on Sundays, they would not save jobs or create employment and there would be bigger job losses.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Pike: I shall make one point before giving way as it ties in with what my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield said.

One retailer in my constituency, Christopher Redman of T. Redman and Co. Ltd., wrote to me, saying:

[Mr. Pike]

> "In asking for your support, I would also ask you to bring your influence to bear in seeking a speedy resolution to this important piece of legislation. We have lived with the nonsense of the 1950 Shops Act for long enough."

I believe that there is an overwhelming view that, provided we can get an acceptable solution with worker protection, we should remove the Shops Act from the statute book.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, in April, London Economics published a paper stating that there would be a net loss from deregulation of 20,000 jobs? I hope that the hon. Gentleman will find that helpful.

Mr. Pike: I thank the hon. Gentleman for making such a valid point.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): The hon. Gentleman referred to the interests of consumers. Does he agree that, if all shops, including food shops, were allowed to open on Sunday, inevitably the cost of living of ordinary families would increase? The extra opening hours on Sunday, with their added wage costs, including overtime, would proportionately be far in excess of the extra trade generated in food and that would increase prices, to the detriment of the standard of living of ordinary families.

Mr. Pike: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point. If workers are to be given proper remuneration for working on Sundays, exactly that will happen. We will avoid that only if shops are not prepared to give workers the payment that they should get for Sunday working.

Before I became a Member, I worked in a glass factory which had to operate seven days a week. I am not totally against the principle of working on Sundays, but that was clearly my choice and I was remunerated very well for working them. The hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) makes an important point.

I shall now get into the main thrust of the debate and say why I believe that the Keep Sunday Special-RSAR option should be given the approval of the House.

I want to go back to the letter from Mr. Redman which states:

> "Total or partial deregulation would have dire consequences not just for hard working retailers like me, but for our customers, many of whom lack the ability to get to a superstore regularly —and in any case, like popping into their local convenience store. It is part of the fabric of community life".

That is a crucial part of the debate. We should not assume that in 1993 everyone in Britain has a motor car and can get to a superstore.

If superstores are allowed to open on Sundays, more public transport will be needed, but, once again, elderly, disabled and sick people will be disadvantaged. They will not be able to take advantage of Sunday opening and more corner stores and grocers' shops will disappear.

So many corner shops have disappeared over the past few years. They are an important part of the fabric of the nation, and we have a duty to ensure that they remain in existence for the sick, the disabled and the elderly.

Dame Angela Rumbold: I am most confused by what the hon. Gentleman said. If fewer people can get to the superstores because they do not have transport, he does not have to worry that superstores will be crammed with people on a Sunday, nor does he have to worry about the small stores. Surely, in any event, the people about whom he is concerned will shop in corner stores.

Mr. Pike: If more trade is attracted to the superstores, there will be less trade for the corner shops. I accept that a large proportion of the people to whom I referred may not use corner shops. However, some of the people who use superstores also use the corner shops at certain times. If they do not do so because they go to a superstore on Sunday, they will make the corner shops vulnerable, some of which will go out of business.

Mr. Marland: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Pike: I shall carry on for a while as I am mindful of the time and I know that many hon. Members wish to speak. I shall give way again in a few moments.

I want to make one strong condemnation of large stores such as Sainsbury and Tesco and others that have chosen to break the law to change it. We live in a democratic society and with an elected House of Commons and this place makes the law. It is for those stores to operate within the law. I disagreed with the poll tax, but I never supported the breaking of the law. I believed that the way to change it was through the ballot box. I asked the management of Sainsbury, and others who believe that it is right to break the law, whether it was right to break a law to try to change it, because once one goes down that dangerous path one is on a road to anarchy, which is unacceptable.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does the hon. Gentleman find it remarkable that a quite senior person at Sainsbury wrote to inform those working under him that promotion prospects would definitely depend on their being able to work on Sundays? That was immediatley disowned—I brought the matter up in the House, so it is on the record—by the chairman of Sainsbury when he realised that that chap had let the cat out of the bag.

Exactly the same happened with W. H. Smith. One of its managers at Milton Keynes wrote a similar letter, which, of course, was immediately disowned, but relatively senior people are sending out such letters, showing that they are going to disregard the law. It is only because the cat has been let out of the bag that the top brass are denying it.

Mr. Pile: I thank the hon. Lady for making that point. It is rare that the hon. Lady and I agree on any issue, but on this issue I agree with her 100 per cent.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate) *rose*——

Mr. Pike: I shall give way to my hon. Friend in a moment.

I referred to pay but I did not refer to the choice that faces workers. The Bill will offer workers no protection. We know that it will affect promotion prospects. Job applicants will be asked whether they are willing to work on Sunday and those who are not will not get jobs.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): My hon. Friend is right to emphasise the fact that the issue of law and order is fundamental to the debate. Does he recall that, on Second Reading, I asked the Home Secretary to make it unequivocally clear that, if the Committee accepted the KSS-RSAR option, he would strictly enforce its decision? I received no reply to that request, but I hope that I shall today. Nor did I receive a reply to the suggestion that, before we vote tonight, Ministers should seek an undertaking from the major lawbreakers that they will abide by any decision of the House of Commons.

Mr. Pike: My right hon. Friend makes a valid point. We all know that the challenge of the superstores and the big trading groups was taken to Europe and to the House of Lords. They knew that what they were doing was illegal under the 1950 Act. They were playing for time, but because they had money, and were able to make more, they were prepared to drag the system along.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I must correct the suggestion made by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary did not reply. My right hon. and learned Friend made it perfectly clear that local authorities would continue to be responsible for enforcing the law, which is one of the KSS-RSAR options. If the right hon. Gentleman and those who support KSS or any of the other options had wanted them enforced in any other way, they would have suggested different options.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): That is the Pontius Pilote stance.

Mr. Pike: The Minister fudges the issue. It confirms what my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) said. He repeated what has been said many times when questions have been asked about enforcement—that it is a matter for local authorities. The Government should have given a lead. The Home Secretary should have given a directive that authorities should carry out the law of the land—it would not have been out of order for him to do so.

Mr. Lloyd: I have said from the Dispatch Box many times, as has my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, that all members of the public and all organisations should obey the law, including the law on Sunday trading.

Mr. Pike: The Minister may say that, but the Government did nothing to make it happen. My right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe is absolutely right when he says that they are unlikely to do so again.

We should be asking Sainsbury, Tesco and others—if the option that they do not want is carried today—whether they will accept the will of the Committee and, ultimately, accept the Bill when it is enacted.

5.15 pm

Mr. Marland: I thought that the objective of the debate was to try to tidy up the law, which local authorities will have to enforce once it has been sorted out. It is precisely because the law is in such a mess that we are having the debate. I wanted the hon. Gentleman to give way earlier because he said that we live in a democratic society and that he is a democrat. I hope that, before the end of his speech, he will say a few words about the millions of people who want to shop on Sunday and, when they have the opportunity of voting with their feet, do so by shopping on a Sunday. It would not be fair if he did not say something about them as well.

Mr. Pike: The hon. Gentleman has confused two issues. He should allow me to make my own speech and make the case that I am trying to make.

If he doubts that Sainsbury and Tesco knew that it was illegal for them to sell probably 80 per cent. of the items that they sold under existing legislation, he is kidding himself and misleading the Committee. I know that he is not stupid enough to believe that they did not know what items they could or could not sell.

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Surely the core issue is that, with the best will in the world, more often than not local authorities do not have the resources to investigate and, ultimately, to prosecute. It behoves the Home Secretary to ensure that local authorities have the power to enforce the law.

Mr. Pike: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point. So often, the Government put responsibilities on local authorities, such as to administer mandatory grants and so on. We could have a long debate on that, and if we did, you would rule us out of order, Mr. Morris. The Government place responsibility on local authorities but do not give the finance to carry out their responsibilities.

I shall refer to another letter that I have received on breaking the law, not from a constituent but from Rev. Ray Skinner, the rector of the St. Lawrence church in Morden. I do so for sentimental reasons—I was married there 31 years ago to the very day. The final paragraph is relevant to my point. It says:

> "If the big Stores, through their recent wilful breaking of the law can change it to their own advantage, what example is this to previously law-abiding citizens? No law, or lax law may cost less to enforce than good law in the short term, but please do not vote for the god of money. Please, vote for the 'KSSC/RSAR' option."

That underlines the point that I am trying to make.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Has the hon. Gentleman received letters from people who are employed on Sunday by the stores to which he referred, saying that they need their earnings to pay the mortgage, because they are students or because of other factors? Does he not think that, despite the fact that one is bound to be concerned about people who are in that position, immoral, indirect presssure has been exerted on Members, and that that pressure should not have been exerted because it has been brought about by illegality?

Mr. Pike: The hon. Gentleman has made a point that I was not going to make in my speech. However, because I wish to deal with the issue honestly, I accept that I have received some letters that made that point. I have also received letters from people who are employed by Sainsbury and by others, which say that the story that they are told by management is very different from the reality. They are under considerable pressure to work on Sundays. If one is fair and balanced about it——

Ms Glenda Jackson: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Pike: If my hon. Friend will just let me finish my sentence, I will gladly give way to her, because I know that she has been trying to make a point for some time. I have letters from both groups, a number of which make it clear that people are under considerable pressure.

Ms Jackson: Only today, my office received a telephone call from an under-manager in a retail store, who would give neither his name nor that of his employer. The message that he wished to impart, which is of particular significance as the Committee is debating the issue today, is that he was told by his manager that if he refused to work on Sunday, he could give up any hope of promotion.

Mr. Pike: I thank my hon. Friend for that example. It underlines our fears about what will happen. We all know that those dangers are real and that no Act of Parliament can prevent abuses from taking place. Even if the Government were generously minded on employment protection issues—they are not—it would be impossible for such protection to be enforced.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way, as he has already given way many times. Is it not interesting that hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber, including myself, have received letters from the employees of perhaps the two most successful and dynamic retailers—Marks and Spencer and the John Lewis Partnership—saying, thank God, that their organisations have no intention of opening on Sundays?

Mr. Pike: The hon. Gentleman makes another valid point. The case presented by both managers and partners in the John Lewis Partnership is a good one. I think that the workers are in some way involved in the management of John Lewis. Although I do not know the details of that scheme, I know that it is unique.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Does my hon. Friend agree that, even if an incredibly unlikely event were to occur and proper worker protection were written into the Bill, there would be no prospect, if Sunday became a free-for-all as some Conservative Members wish, of protection for the associated workers who would be put under increasing pressure to work on a Sunday?

Mr. Pike: My hon. Friend makes an important point. Clearly, if the SHRC option or total deregulation were to be carried today, there would be pressure on car park attendants, delivery people, bus drivers and others to work.

I appeal to my hon. Friends who have any inclination to vote for deregulation or for the SHRC option to understand that, once we have breached the principle that Sunday is special, people who have to work on Sundays—as I did—will be unlikely in a few years to get double pay. Once Sunday is just an ordinary day, employers will not want to pay anything special for it. Deregulation would be the thin end of the wedge. It would lead to a breaching of an important principle that has applied for a long time.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Pike: I shall not give way for a while now because I have been extremely generous so far.

I want to refer to a few letters from my constituency. P.D. Lees, the general manager of Warburton's, a family baker, has said:

> There is no doubt that if our customers, the most important of which are the large multiple retailers, were to open seven days they would expect bread deliveries on Sunday. Competition in the industry and the power of these key customers is such that it is very unlikely we would be able to resist. Margins in the industry are so slim that the considerable extra cost in distribution and production which would result would have to be passed on to our customers."

In a slightly different way, the hon. Member for Twickenham was making the same point—that the customers will pay for the privilege if we go along with deregulation.

Mr. Fabricant: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Pike: The hon. Gentleman has already intervened once.

I have used the example of bread; as well as baking bread, that firm sells it. If we have deregulation or the SHRC option, not just the corner shops but the character shops that make Burnley different from Blackburn, Blackburn different from Caerphilly and Caerphilly different from Chester will be under attack. They give towns their character. They give a personal service in a personal way, whether in a specialist sausage shop in Clitheroe—I know that a number of people went in there when there was a by-election in that area—or in a shop run by a greengrocer, a baker or a butcher. Specialist shops are under threat. They will gradually disappear from our high streets, with a resulting loss of character, if either of the proposals is accepted.

I have another letter, from the Bishop of Blackburn, Alan Chesters. He says of the Bill:

> "In my view, it effectively removes any safeguards to the character of Sunday. It would also have a severe effect on the well-being of small shops, which provide a vital service to so many, particularly those without a car or too old or frail to venture far for their shopping. Many elderly people, lone parents and people on low incomes are dependent on local shops. During the last thirty years, the number of independent grocery outlets has fallen from 116,000 to 32,800. Many of those which still survive depend upon the custom of those who 'top up' on their main shopping."

Such shops are vulnerable and might go if we voted for deregulation.

Marks and Spencer has said that, if the vote goes the wrong way, it

> "will lead to the closure of thousands of small shops, the further decline of the High Street, less consumer choice and higher prices."

Those who do not believe that that is true are kidding themselves.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): The hon. Gentleman has quoted Marks and Spencer. Does he know of any plans that it has to close its shops in Scotland?

Mr. Pike: We are not debating Scotland. I accept that Marks and Spencer has recently opened a couple of shops there. I am not speaking on behalf of Marks and Spencer. I am telling the Committee the good reasons why the company is against the principle of the extension of Sunday opening in England.

Mr. Sheerman: Perhaps my hon. Friend will allow me to help him. It is well known that Marks and Spencer does not wish to trade on Sunday in Scotland. It has been forced, although it does not want to be forced, by market share——

The Chairman: Order. The Bill does not relate to Scotland.

Mr. Pike: You underline the point that I was making, Mr. Morris. We are not dealing with Scotland.

Marks and Spencer has made the point clearly that, if we accept deregulation or the SHRC option, small shops and specialist shops will not survive. For example, the National Association of Health Stores has sent a letter to all hon. Members, saying:

> "Free for all Sunday trading would place a further burden on these individuals. Many would not survive and the very special services they provide to the community would be lost."

That again underlines the case that the specialist shops will disappear. I have here a letter from Timpson Shoe Repairs Ltd., saying:

> "Within five years, cobblers will start to disappear. In 10 years, half of them will be gone—forever—but will it be for the better?"

Kwik Save has three stores in my constituency. Graeme Bowler, the managing director, says:

> "My very recent experience of retailing in Australia confirms that the combination of large new out-of-town retail developments and a move to deregulate trading has a devastating effect on high street, village communities and the many small traders whose livelihoods depend on them."

Iceland has said:

> "Be under no illusion. Schedule 4 of the Sunday Trading Bill 'Rights of Shop Workers' offers absolutely no protection."

That is right. Workers will suffer and consumers will pay the price for deregulation. If we do not go for the KSS-RSAR option, we shall make a sad mistake and the people of this country will blame us for years to come.

Dame Angela Rumbold: I wish the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) a happy wedding anniversary. The church in which he was married 31 years ago is in my constituency and is especially beautiful. I am sure that he has many fond memories of that day, and may he see another 31 years of happy marriage.

I listened carefully to what has been said on amendment No. 35 moved by my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). I wanted to support it because if anyone could come through the debate and suggest a solution that was both workable and answered all the various questions that have arisen, I was willing to listen. Like many right hon. and hon. Members, I have spent a great deal of time thinking about the issues that surround Sunday trading.

I have said on a number of occasions that the most important task that faces the House is to ensure that we pass a law that is enforceable. The present situation is nonsensical. Most right hon. and hon. Members feel extremely uncomfortable with the fact that people are unable to work the existing law and instead are breaking it. None of us wishes to see that continue.

I must declare immediately that the most sensible decision would be in favour of total deregulation. I know that a number of hon. Members will take a different view. I am perfectly willing to listen to their arguments and perfectly willing to accept that hon. Members on both sides of the House will not be able to bring themselves to vote for total deregulation. I ask them only to listen to the points that I wish to make.

If we wish to have a law that is easily enforceable, we should pass a law that does not contain any regulation, under which people can act on their own behalf and make decisions whether to open their shops. There would then be no need to worry who enforces it, whether the Government or the local authorities. Retailers would simply assess demand and ask themselves, in view of that demand, whether they wanted to open on some Sundays, every Sunday or not open on any Sunday.

5.30 pm

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): How does the right hon. Lady see her option of deregulation fitting in with the enforcement of proposals for employment protection and the protection of those workers who will be working on Sundays?

Dame Angela Rumbold: The hon. Lady will be able to debate that issue more closely later. I am comfortable with the way in which the Bill currently stands for the protection of people who may or may not wish to work on Sundays. That issue seems to be set out clearly and does not present a problem to me; the notion that causes problems is the idea that we should in some way have to set out in great detail exactly who may shop on Sundays, where they may shop, what they may buy and into what type of store they may go. It is for that principal reason that the House should consider the possibility of total deregulation to make a clear and understandable law.

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): Whatever the rights and wrongs of the argument, no restriction on what people can or cannot buy is implied in any of the options before the Committee. It is a type of shops approach, not a type of goods approach.

Dame Angela Rumbold: I wish that that were so. Unfortunately, after carefully reading the schedules it seems to me that there are a number of restrictions on what people can buy because the schedules say what can or cannot be sold.

Mr. Couchman: May I rebut the suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff)? One category of shops that would not be allowed to open is antique shops. Browsing around antique shops is a classic leisure time activity and people will not buy antiques at motorway service stations or in tobacconists. People will not be able to buy antiques on Sunday, so my hon. Friend is quite wrong.

Dame Angela Rumbold: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that clarification.

Mr. Sheerman *rose*——

Dame Angela Rumbold: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman later, but first I wish to make a little progress.

A great deal has been made of the issue that Sunday is a special day of the week. It is no secret to hon. Members who have listened to previous debates that I do not like shopping at all and that little would persuade me to go shopping on a Sunday. Having said that, I know how I can choose to make my Sunday a different day and I do not see that it is my job as a legislator or as an individual to say that nobody else may shop on a Sunday. If people want Sunday to be a special day—many of us want to choose how we spend days at weekends, although a large number of people work—many of us would choose according to the needs and wishes of our families. Parliament should allow people the opportunity to make that decision for themselves.

Why do we as legislators have not only to tell people whether they can open shops on Sundays, where they can shop and what they can buy, but to tell them that they are not allowed to buy certain items on Sundays? It seems an extraordinary business. It is almost like sitting on a local authority planning committee and then on the development control committee and starting to think about whether people can put their dustbins behind or in front of the back door. I thought that as legislators we had grown a little more than that in this great Parliament. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will think about that issue a little more.

Mr. Marland: We have heard a lot about added costs if shops open on Sundays or have restricted Sunday opening. Does the right hon. Lady agree that the difficulty with cost will be due to the policing and patrolling of those shops, big or small, to determine whether they are selling

[Mr. Marland]

goods that are not allowed? Would not that cost the taxpayer and the shopper a great deal of money compared with total deregulation, which will not cost anything?

Dame Angela Rumbold: I want to come on to that issue as my third point. I was especially concerned at Opposition Members saying that they felt that the Government and not local authorities should police whatever system the Committee chooses. As a democrat, I am perfectly prepared to accept the will of the Committee, whichever way hon. Members vote. I want to see that carried to its logical conclusion and I most certainly want to see it vigorously enforced.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Anyone who reads the Second Reading debate in *Hansard* will see that the Opposition challenged the Government on the issue that they should not and must not stand aside if a decision of the House is trampled on by people whose motive is to steal their market share from law-abiding retailers. The right hon. Lady says that she does not want to instruct other people. She sent a letter to all Members of Parliament saying:

> "Option 1: Total Deregulation—Yes. Option 2: Regulation/Restriction (KSSC/RSAR)—No. Option 3: Partial Deregulation (SHRC)—Yes"

She has been telling hon. Members to do that in the debate. I hope that they will make up their own minds.

Dame Angela Rumbold: All of us would accept that when one is sometimes asked for guidance, one is entitled to give that guidance and that people are willing to accept it. It is entirely up to hon. Members to make up their own minds. I simply tell them the answer to the question asked. I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman should object to that. His argument about local authorities is fallacious. If Parliament decides to opt for one of the options requiring policing by local authorities, we must recognise that those authorities are the vehicle through which that policing will be done. That is perfectly right and proper. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that that is the way in which many laws at local level are enforced. I think that the majority of hon. Members would understand and accept that.

Mr. Sheerman: The right hon. Lady is misleading the Committee through her interpretation of the contribution of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). What he said on Second Reading and what we have said earlier today was not that we want central Government to be in charge; of course, regulation should work through local authorities. We want it made clear—and we wanted it made clear when she was a Minister—that it is as wrong for the rich fat cats such as Sainsbury, Tesco and Argyll to break the law democratically as it is for a youngster to burgle a house or steal a car. Whatever the circumstances, the law should be honoured. Ministers have not stood up and said that the law must be obeyed, whoever administers it.

Dame Angela Rumbold: I believe that it is wrong for people to break the law—it is wrong for the large stores and the very small stores to break the law. As I acknowledged when I was a Minister, small stores have been breaking the law. All those which have been opening on Sundays have been breaking the Shops Act 1950. Many stores have also been breaking it in terms of the products that they have been selling. That was the case under the Labour Government, right up until now. That is undeniable. We should have a law that is enforceable, which is why we are holding this debate today. It is interesting to see how difficult it is to get hon. Members to agree.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the issues to be considered is the cost of goods sold by the various shops? Is she aware that, in my constituency, one can buy a bundle of branded groceries for £13·74 at Food Giant, a shop that the Keep Sunday Special campaign would close, but that at 7-Eleven, which the campaign would allow to remain open, the same bundle of goods costs £18·35? Why should my constituents be deprived of the right to buy cheap milk, bread and other goods in order to keep some hon. Members happy?

Dame Angela Rumbold: My hon. Friend makes a sensible point. My solution would resolve the problem. I suspect that if there were total deregulation such matters would come to a natural conclusion.

I am deeply disturbed by some of the impositions that we would place on local authorities if we opt for one of the regulatory options. It is true that local authorities have been under considerable pressure for a number of years to manage their affairs effectively. It is interesting to note that, while a number have tried to enforce the 1950 Act, others have merely said that it has been impossible for them to police the Act efficiently. My concern is that a restrictive option such as the KSS-RSAR option would place an even greater burden on local authorities as they would have to employ more people to police the Act. There would be armies of people rushing around the streets trying to ensure that shops were not selling what they should not be selling. It would therefore cost a fortune merely to ensure that the legislation was being observed, and it would not be too long before the House was again forced to consider a law that it had become almost impossible for local authorities to monitor.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Surely, the essence of local authorities' objection is that, if they seek to enforce the Act not against individual stores but against the major retailers which are together seeking to defy the law, they put so much of their council tax payers' money at risk. For example, is the right hon. Lady awere that if Kirklees council had lost its case against Wickes in the House of Lords, perhaps on a technicality, it would have risked in excess of £250,000 of its own money? No local authority would dare to risk such a large proportion of its resources. The Government were opting out of enforcement but, had the Attorney-General so wished, they could have stepped into the place of the local authorities. While the right hon. Lady was at the Home Office, she did precisely nothing to help.

Dame Angela Rumbold: The hon. Gentleman has made my case for me about the law as it stands, showing the difficulties that there have been in enforcing it. I hope that he will now help us. To a certain extent, the debate is about how we can reduce the burden on local authorities. We are asking hon. Members not to make life more difficult for them or put them into a similar position to that of Kirklees council.

5.45 pm

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): My right hon. Friend is using two arguments. She says that she wants no regulation on Sunday trading, but she then says that it is difficult to enforce regulation in any case. We should at least be honest in this debate. Is it her true position that, even if the regulations were quite straightforward to enforce, she would not want them enforced because she believes in total deregulation? Is she merely using that idea to buttress her argument without believing in it at all?

Dame Angela Rumbold: That distorts what I said and, if I may say so, it is a rather disgraceful remark. I have made it absolutely plain that if the House favours one of the most restrictive options, I should be one of the first to ask that there should be solid and strict enforcement of it through the local authorities. I very much resent the implication that I was asking the House to break the law —I most certainly am not.

Ms Glenda Jackson: Further to the issue of costs to local authorities, if there is to be deregulation, and if the market giants take over not only their own share but everyone else's, surely there will be a denuding not only of the small corner shop but of town centres. That would have a deleterious knock-on effect on local authorities, not least in terms of what they can raise in rates. It has already happened in parts of central London. There is a concomitant to turning central shopping areas in the inner cities into deserts: they also become crime ridden, which has further enormous knock-on effects.

Dame Angela Rumbold: I understand the hon. Lady's point, but I do not agree with her. There has not been a massive restriction on small shops as a result of what has happened in the past three to four years. Part of the reason for town centres being denuded is not Sunday trading but planning legislation which has encouraged the large stores to move out of town. The notion of encouraging large stores to move out of town is as much a cause of small shops having problems in town centres as is pedestrianisation, which is a monstrous idea.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Like me, the right hon. Lady is a patron of the National Organisation of Asian Businesses. Earlier this year, she co-sponsored with me a reception in the Members' Dining Room, which was attended by the Prime Minister. She made a speech supporting the Asian business community. In relation to what my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) said, a sizeable proportion of inner-city shops are owned by members of the Asian community. Has the right hon. Lady considered the effect of her proposals on Asian small shopkeepers? Can she continue as a patron of that organisation, knowing that her solution would devastate many small Asian businesses?

Dame Angela Rumbold: I do not accept what the hon. Gentleman says. If I did, it would clearly be very difficult for me to sustain my patronage of that organisation. Asian business men have prospered and many have opened shops recently. They are doing extremely well, and nothing in my proposal would damage their prospects.

I am aware that many hon. Members want to participate in the debate and that it is unfair for one speaker to take up too much time, so I will quickly move on.

It is important that someone mentions the issue of employment on behalf of those people who wish to work on a Sunday. Currently, some 140,000 people work in shops on Sundays, about a third of whom work only on Sundays and not during the rest of the week. They are, in the main, women. They choose to work on a Sunday because it is the one day on which they can leave their children and families safely with their partner. In that way they contribute to the finances of the family and are able to buy little luxuries—or simply contribute towards a decent standard of living. I do not see that it is any part of my job as a legislator to prevent them from taking such jobs.

Under the more restrictive option, a number of those women would be deprived of the opportunity to work on a Sunday. Hon. Members should think carefully about that as a substantial number of women and families will not thank them if they do not consider that issue before voting today.

Mr. Lord: As an ex-Home Office Minister, has my right hon. Friend seen the report by a firm called London Economics, commissioned by the Home Office and published in April this year, which shows that not just part-time employment but the whole jobs scene would lose 20,000 jobs if we had total deregulation?

Dame Angela Rumbold: If we go for a very restrictive option, we shall lose considerably more than 20,000 jobs. That might not make a difference to those who do not wish to see or understand the difficulties that some women have. Those women are working to keep their families together and to ensure that their children have the same things as other children in school, but they can do so only on a Saturday or a Sunday. It is my duty to bring that issue before the House.

We have entirely ignored the views of the shoppers. We shall not be able to explain to those people who currently shop on a Sunday why in future some garden centres will be unable to open on a Sunday, and why those that are open will be able to sell only certain goods. It will not be easy to explain to the people who come into our advice bureaux why some do-it-yourself stores that have been selling goods for a long time will have to close, or why, if they are open, they will not be able to sell certain products on a Sunday. I can imagine the kind of complaints that this will bring in our postbags, and the irritation that it will cause.

Those are some of the points that I ask my hon. Friends and also the Opposition to consider before casting their votes today. It is extremely important to remember that a number of people have approached us, written to us and put to us all the points raised this afternoon and this evening. We have to weigh up those judgments and make a decision on behalf of our constituents. It is a burdensome but very important decision that we as individuals must make. We must choose with extreme care, not believing only those people who have written to us but judging for ourselves what our other constituents will say.

Sir Peter Fmery: I have listened carefully to what my right hon. Friend has said. There is great strength in her argument and I understand it. If she does not succed in her argument, will she not throw her strength behind my amendment?

Dame Angela Rumbold: I have listened to my right hon. Friend's argument with great interest and weighed it

[Dame Angela Rumbold]

up very carefully, as I will the arguments of other hon. Members. My right hon. Friend knows that I am hoping that my proposal for total deregulation will win the day.

Mr. Ray Powell: Let me follow the speech of the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) with a few remarks concerning her activities on the contentious issue of Sunday trading.

The right hon. Lady served on the Committee that considered a Bill that I promoted earlier this year, and she tabled some 122 amendments. She participated in a debate on Friday 14 May, and on that occasion she tabled a further 99 amendments. Having been afforded every opportunity in Committee to make whatever amendments she wanted, she tabled 99 amendments and 13 new clauses.

I was fortunate that my Bill was the third Bill drawn out in the ballot immediately after the election. In a free vote on a Friday, the Bill had a majority of 214 and went to Committee. The right hon. lady made a special request to serve on the Committee and, because of her activities and her interest—and because I thought that she had learnt a lot in the Home Office as the Minister responsible for shops—I thought that she would make a good contribution to the debate in Committee, and I agreed that she should be appointed.

Dame Angela Rumbold: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Powell: I have not reached the point yet.

Every hon. Member is responsible for his own actions. If I had served for four years in the Home Office as a Minister with responsibility for shops, and if during that time I had not lifted a finger to try to introduce legislation to alter the Shops Act 1950, I would not have the gall to come to the House and spend 25 minutes criticising the suggestions of the Shopping Hours Reform Council—or even criticising the Keep Sunday Special or the Retailers for Shops Act Reform options. It is galling that the right hon. Lady should do that having not introduced, or made any attempt to introduce, any legislation while she was at the Home Office.

Before the right hon. Lady intervenes, I would like her to explain the point that my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) made about a letter that was sent to me. I do not know how it arrived in my mail, but it did. We should be accurate in any correspondence that we circulate to other hon. Members. If, as the right hon. Lady suggests, she is going to have an advice centre in the Lobby tonight, will she make sure that the advice she gives is correct? In the letter she asks hon. Members whether they are going to participate in the vote on Wednesday, and concludes by saying in the last paragraph:

> "Please be in the House on Thursday."

We have a responsibility to ensure that when we circulate letters to hon. Members on an issue such as Sunday trading our advice is correct, so that when hon. Members go into the Lobby we retain some credibility for knowing how we will direct them in the vote.

I have a mischievous mind. Will the right hon. Lady tell me whether she has been asked by the Government to do a whipping job in the Lobby tonight because of her experience as a Minister in the Home Office and her role in the Conservative party as a chairman? It is a free vote, and no Whips are supposed to be employed in the Lobby tonight.

Dame Angela Rumbold: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way; it is most kind of him. I was a little surprised to learn that it was the hon. Gentleman who had appointed me to sit on the Committee dealing with his private Member's Bill. I had suspected that the Selection Committee was responsible, but I may be entirely wrong.

A number of the amendments that were tabled at that time were either accepted before the time came to discuss them, or accepted with slight alterations. Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that that is the case?

6 pm

Mr. Powell: I serve on the Selection Committee, but I also promoted the Bill. Because of the majority that the Bill received in the House on the Friday when it was first debated, only four hon. Members who were opposed to it were allowed on to the Standing Committee. I received a number of requests from hon. Members who opposed the Bill: indeed, one Conservative Member—he is now sitting only three seats away from the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden—complained bitterly about his exclusion. Having explained that, I should like to hear an explanation in regard to the letter, which was plainly circulated with the primary aim of confusing people.

I myself have no wish to confuse the Committee further, but I hope that the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) will explain why amendment No. 35 arrived on the agenda in his name at such a late stage. If he had arranged to be paired tonight, he would be in Russia. It is passing strange, as Enoch Powell would say, that an amendment should be tabled on the eve of a debate to ensure that everyone is confused about the voting.

All the groups involved have circulated letters among their supporters, suggesting that they vote for one of the three options. Overnight, however—no doubt following advice from the learned Clerks—a new amendment has been conjured up. The night before last, no one had seen it. Did the Government promote that amendment in order to confuse the issue even further? Organisations such as Keep Sunday Special and RSAR decided to present a combined option to help the Committee to make its decision respectfully and properly. That limited the number of options to three.

Sir Peter Emery: I strongly object to the hon. Gentleman's implication. First, he is incorrect: the amendment was tabled, in my name, the moment after Second Reading. It was not a new amendment. If the hon. Gentleman had been present when I began my speech, he would have heard me say that. I explained then why amendment No. 1 had become amendment No. 35: it was tabled before the Government had tabled their amendment to alter the way in which the Bill would operate. Following the alteration brought about by the Government's amendments, I had to redraft my own amendment.

I thoroughly object to the suggestion that I should have been elsewhere. I am meant to be leading a delegation to the Parliament of the Confederation of Independent States in Gorky at this very moment, observing the Russian elections, but I felt that my duties to the House came first. I shall leave on the first plane tomorrow, but now I am here to do what I believe is right—not sponsored by the

Government, or by anyone but myself. My constituents know my views, and could tell the hon. Gentleman that I have held them for many years. Perhaps he will withdraw his implication.

Mr. Powell: I made no allegations. The right hon. Gentleman suggested that I might not have been present for his speech, but I have been present since the beginning of the debate: if anyone should withdraw an allegation, it is the right hon. Gentleman. I know that I am short, and on occasion it may be necessary for me to stand on my seat to catch the Speaker's eye; however, I am not so short that Conservative Members sitting below the Gangway cannot see me when I am in the Chamber.

As other hon. Members have spoken for as long as 35 minutes, I had better proceed with my speech. Undoubtedly, most hon. Members are now suffering from "Sunday trading fatigue", and we hope that after tonight's vote the deluge of mail from a wide range of interest groups will cease. I believe, however, that no hon. Member should be in any doubt about the issues involved, and it behoves me to spell them out. They are embodied on page 9 of the Government's document on Sunday trading, which explains the Keep Sunday Special campaign option. The campaign agrees that the Shops Act 1950 is out of date and contains too many anomalies, arguing that

> "there is a strong case in favour of an improved regulatory scheme. There are at least three arguments which point towards limiting shops opening on Sundays".

The first is

> "To guarantee a common day off for the family and community activities, including church worship."

The second is

> "To ensure rhythm in people's lives, balancing work and recreation."

The third is

> "To protect vulnerable sections of the retail workforce and those employed in ancillary services from pressure to work unusual hours."

As we all know, those are the arrangements advocated by Keep Sunday Special under the REST—"recreation, emergencies, social gatherings and travel"—proposals, and they appeared in my Bill in the spring.

I am proud of the arduous and industrious campaign that Keep Sunday Special has waged throughout the year, after waiting since 1986 to promote a reasonable and effective measure in place of the 1950 Act. I am also proud of my loyal and trustworthy friends in the organisation, who helped me tremendously in my endeavours to promote my Bill. I am grateful for the support of the many right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House who served so well on the Standing Committee. Despite certain pressures from many quarters, they have remained convinced of their cause, and have continued to advocate their principles relentlessly. They did so not for profit, personal gain or exploitation but out of sheer and sincere conviction and neighbourliness. With the help of thousands outside the House and of many in the House, and with the help of prayers from religious organisations, I feel confident that the Keep Sunday Special-RSAR option will be rewarded tonight with a tremendous victory.

The main argument against seven-day trading is that the additional costs of servicing the community at the existing level would increase the price of goods to the public, which would be inflationary. Also, increased police, health and safety inspectorate and transport cover would make additional demands on Government expenditure. What causes most dismay and alarm, however, is the devastating, octopus-like, outreaching effect that seven-day trading would have on crime and the enormously increased cost of that to the community.

Law and order become effective when individuals act responsibly and with integrity, and are not dominated by self-interest and expediency. Promoting those qualities is one of the tasks of the churches. While many question the effectiveness of the chuches, it would be fatal to underestimate the value of their work—which is inseparable from law and order. While the former is a seven-day operation, on Sunday special emphasis is placed on promoting ideals. Making Sunday just another day would greatly hamper the effectiveness of the churches' work.

Any of the deregulation options would have that effect, because in most large cities—and this touches on the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz)—85 per cent. of retail businesses are owned and run by Asians. Twenty-five per cent. of their profits come from Sunday turnover. They work long hours and provide a valuable service to the community. If total deregulation or the SHRC option is implemented, the majority of Asian shop owners will be forced out of business, with disastrous social consequences for themselves and for their customers. The elderly, infirm, those without transport, and those without the money to bulk-buy weekly would be disadvantaged. I cannot emphasise strongly enough that this is a battle for their survival.

Small stores are already under pressure from the recession, fluctuating interest rates, and competition from superstores and hypermarkets. In the past 30 years, the number of small, neighbourhood stores has fallen from 145,000 in 1950 to 36,000 today. If total or partial deregulation were to occur, corner stores all over Britain would disappear and vandalism would raise its ugly head, bringing increased crime. Our inner cities would resemble the downtown areas of Los Angeles, New York and Chicago—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] That is a worrying prospect.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): My constituency has several small stores in a thriving inner city. I believe that it is the fourth most profitable shopping centre in Britain. However, small companies are experiencing difficulties. One business man contacted me recently to say that his three small butcher shops in the city lost 20 per cent. of their business after large stores started opening illegally two years ago. He fears that, unless Parliament enacts legislation to protect small firms, he will have to close his business.

Mr. Powell: My hon. Friend's constituency contains the largest number of shops of any constituency in the whole of Wales. He knows from his connections with the Co-operative movement of the problems faced by small grocers who provide a community service. If we are not careful about how we vote tonight, they will be lost.

6.15 pm

Mr. Sheerman: There were a couple of gasps when my hon. Friend cited American examples. As I have recent experience of the situation in the United States, I can tell the Committee that 800 towns and cities there have a gang warfare structure. American experts say that the power of big, efficient retailing has wiped out inner-city retailers and brought crime to those districts. That is already happening

[Mr. Sheerman]

in my constituency. A Sainsbury store opened there only one year ago and already 18 charity shops and the market are struggling. My hon. Friend's point about America was absolutely correct.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I do not address this remark only to the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), but if there are any more interventions of that length, many hon. Members who hope to catch the eye of the Chair will not be successful.

Mr. Powell: I appreciate that my hon. Friend made a lengthy intervention, but it was important to the debate. Senators from all over America on visits to the House have told me, "Whatever you do, keep Sunday special. We have lost it in America, and would love to return to the days when we could enjoy the tranquillity of Sunday."

Mr. John Marshall: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that there is much more church-going in the United States than in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Powell: We have suffered a crime-ridden society since 1979, but there is much more crime in America than in this country.

Once Sunday shopping is deregulated to any extent, it will be irreversible and the damage will have been done. Small shops and stores will close for ever, and we shall become used to Sunday being just another day. Family life will suffer, supermarkets will increase their domination of the food trade, workers will have even more fragmented leisure time and a Sunday off will be only a memory for retail workers.

I am convinced that right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the Committee are not prepared to let the Government or anyone else kill off our tranquil Sunday with total deregulation. I am equally confident that the Committee will oppose deregulators whose goal is to reward those firms that have blatantly and relentlessly broken the law to achieve a monopoly of the retail trade on not only Sundays but all 365 days of the year. The Shopping Hours Reform Council option is not a compromise; it is the wolf of deregulation in a cynical sheep's clothing.

I received a letter from Unison, which now has 1·25 million members. I understand that the letter has been circulated to all hon. Members. It refers to a contentious issue that has yet to be resolved—the question of employment protection. I realise that we will have a debate shortly on the whole issue of employment protection. However, the issue is of grave concern to those who want to make decisions tonight. Some hon. Members must go into one Lobby or another not knowing whether they will do so because they support a principle argument that I have explained to the Committee or on the basis of whether people who will be employed on a Sunday will have certain protection.

I hope that hon. Members will forgive me for reading an excerpt from the letter from the general secretary of Unison, Alan Jinkinson, which was sent to us on 6 December. I quote:

> "there is confusion surrounding the proposals in the Sunday Trading Bill and in particular the issue of employment protection . . . the Bill now contains a measure of 'protection' for current and future shop workers in terms of non compulsory working on Sundays. However, our legal advice is that the provisions in the Bill will be more or less unworkable and ineffective. The clauses on employees being able to opt in or out of Sunday working are complicated and are likely to cause serious confusion. More importantly, unscrupulous employers will be able to exploit the weaknesses in the legislation and use a range of excuses to get around the rights of individuals not to work on Sunday. The Government's proposals for employment protection in the Bill are therefore illusory. The Bill also does not contain any provision concerning double time payments for Sunday working. Premium payments are an important compensation for those who have to work on Sundays and the neglect of any reference to payment in the Bill is an important omission."

I read that part of the letter because there might be some confusion regarding my association with the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers as one of its sponsored Members, and because of its recent decision to support not Keep Sunday Special but some other organisation. Let me make it abundantly clear that the executive council of USDAW took the decision, not the collective membership. Having explained that, I must emphasise that USDAW still supports employment protection and double time for all workers on a Sunday.

Earlier this year, employment protection was included in my Bill, together with the request for double-time payments. I am glad that the Committee which dealt with my Bill agreed in principle to employment protection and double-time payments being embodied in my Bill.

Ms Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): I ask my hon. Friend to acknowledge that an amendment relating to double-time payments has been tabled. The weaknesses in the employment protection scheme that exists in Britain as a whole, to which my hon. Friend alluded, were known to hon. Members and, indeed, were known to him at the time that he drafted the employment protection provisions for his private Member's Bill. Does he acknowledge that, on the face of the Bill, employment protection—whether it is weak or strong, or however one might define it—will apply to all the options in the Bill? It is clear that if there are weaknesses, they apply equally to all the options.

Mr. Powell: My hon. Friend makes a good contribution. Mr. Lofthouse, I hope that you are watching the clock and will give me injury time because of the length of interventions.

On Second Reading, I referred to an employee of Woolworths who was told that, if he was not prepared to sign an agreement to work on a Sunday, obviously he would lose his job. The personnel director of Woolworths Mr. Leo McKee, sent me a haughty letter saying:

> "the Terms and Conditions you cited would seem to refer to a booklet that was withdrawn by Woolworths over a year ago and is now obsolete".

I have not yet replied to the letter, which is dated 3 December. If some hon. Members have a copy of the letter, I can assure them that the document to which I was referring was a contract compiled by Woolworths which the worker was asked to sign by a date in late November. It was not a booklet of terms and conditions; it was a contract that the man was asked to sign.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) raised the question of employment contracts. If we have total deregulation or partial deregulation without ensuring that we have real employment protection and double time for workers, we will be selling poorly paid workers in the retail industry throughout the country down the river.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): Does my hon. Friend acknowledge that the more shops are open on Sunday, the less opportunity there will be for workers who do not want to work on Sunday to seek jobs in other companies and therefore the more pressure there will be on them?

Mr. Powell: I agree with my hon. Friend. I wish her sincere best wishes in her quest to become the president of USDAW once again. I hope that the members of USDAW will support her in that quest.

I am grateful that the Chair afforded me an opportunity to speak last week and has done so again this week. I am aware of the pressure to call as many hon. Members as possible in such an emotive debate. Therefore, I shall conclude my remarks by appealing to hon. Members once again.

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): As my hon. Friend concludes his short speech on this issue, perhaps he would like to comment on what happened when betting shops were deregulated with regard to employment protection in that sector.

Mr. Powell: Mr. Lofthouse, I am sure that if my hon. Friend catches your eye, you will give him an opportunity to raise that matter. But I see that you are checking the clock.

I appeal to all hon. Members once again: let our communities, our children and our grandchildren enjoy what we have been fortunate to enjoy—the tranquillity and comfort of one day in the week that is special. Let us treasure our Sunday for as long as we can. I ask hon. Members to vote for the Keep Sunday Special and RSAR proposals tonight.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): The hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) concluded his speech with some important references, and he drew the intervention of his hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock), the Front Bench spokesman on that issue, in connection with employment protection. I should just remind the House of what Anthony Scrivener QC said in his opinion, commissioned by the John Lewis Partnership in this connection, in relation to the amendments which the Government have brought forward on employment protection:

> "There is no problem in dealing with a situation where an employee is openly dismissed for refusing to work on Sundays but that is not how it is likely to happen. That reason will not be stated openly and an employee will know that various excuses can be given for dismissal which may not be the real one. The appreciation of this fact alone puts the employee at risk to pressure and there is nothing that can be done by way of wording which can remove this apprehension."

Nothing that can be done by way of wording? There is something which can be done to support and protect the employee, and that is to make and to keep Sunday special.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend know that there are already contracts circulating? I have one in my hands now, which says:

> "If it is decided that your branch will trade on a Sunday or a bank holiday you may be asked to work on these days. Your employment is subject to your full agreement on this condition . . ."

That is a firm called Contessa in Wolverhampton. It is similar to the Smith's contract. Such contracts are being circulated all over the country.

Mr. Alison: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for supporting me. I make the point, which I believe is relevant and of significance to us all, whichever side of the argument we are on already, that there will be no serious employment protection in the future other than by keeping Sunday special and having a regulatory framework of shopowners.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): *rose*——

6.30 pm

Mr. Alison: I have noted that the First Deputy Chairman wants us to make shorter speeches. I will give way to my hon. Friend a little later, but I want to make progress. I want to strike a note of harmony with my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold)——

Mr. Paice: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Alison: I am sorry, I cannot give way.

I fear possibly drawing or crossing swords with my very real right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). My right hon. Friend is distinguished by being a colleague of courage and of discretion. One has to have both courage and discretion to be Chairman of our parliamentary Procedure Committee. I fear that on this occasion, in bringing forward another option for Sunday reform, my right hon. Friend has shown that he is exceedingly courageous but a little less prominent in discretion because he has managed somehow, by introducing what he calls a simple solution, to introduce a final solution. He has produced a final solution which effectively buries in the same grave the sponsors of the Shopping Hours Reform Council and those who support Keep Sunday Special.

Let me illustrate that by drawing attention to what happens to DIYs, the great vogue theme in all Sunday opening. This is what happens to DIYs under the proposals of my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton. Everyone knows that one needs to have DIYs open on Sunday mornings because if one is going to do any DIY one does it after one has been to the shop and bought the goods. DIY is something that one does in the afternoon. Miraculously, my right hon. Friend, courageous but lacking in discretion, has brought forward a proposal for DIY that manages to close them in the morning, which is exactly when we want them open.

Sir Peter Emery *rose*——

Mr. Alison: I will just complete this. Even more miraculously, at the same time, not only did he manage to frustrate the shopowners by making certain that DIY stores are shut in the morning, but he then managed to totally frustrate the owners of DIY stores by letting them open only in the afternoon. There is no business for them in the afternoon. They have lost all the trade. They do not want to open on half a day. My right hon. Friend has miraculously, therefore, outraged those people who want to use DIY shops and those who want to sell goods to the consumers of DIYs.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden and I would unite and say that my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton has got it precisely wrong. The theme of the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton is a good one; it is to try

[Mr. Alison]

to keep Sunday special. When he is convinced that his option is not acceptable from either side of the great debate, I hope that he will at least vote for the Keep Sunday Special option.

Sir Peter Emery: It is always possible for people to make errors and it would be quite possible in Committee for the DIYs to be added. If that is done, will my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) support my amendment? If that is the only thing wrong with it, I am delighted to give way to him.

Mr. Alison: I would recommend that, as my right hon. Friend is so keen to modify and improve options in Committee, he takes a ride on the Keep Sunday Special slogan, where he will find plenty of opportunities in Committee to introduce a variation on his own special theme, namely, that DIY shops should shut in the afternoon but open in the morning. We can then have a debate on a total Honiton reverse option, which is best done when we come to consider in Committee upstairs the Keep Sunday Special procedures because I think that my hon. and right hon. Friends and colleagues in all parts of the Committee are now getting a bellyful of the various options before us.

I shall summarise the Keep Sunday Special approach by saying that I believe that it is a positive Sunday shop-opening framework; it is not a Sunday shop-closing framework. I emphasise that it does something helpful for shoppers and at the same time it does something helpful for Sunday.

Mr. Couchman *rose*——

Mr. Alison: I will give way to my hon. Friend if I can get on a little bit. My hon. Friend, incidentally, has a bee in his bonnet about antique shops. Antiques, under the Keep Sunday Special proposals, will be saleable—antiques will be saleable in DIYs. *[Interruption.]* My right hon. and hon. Friends mentioned that they had not studied the scope. I am glad to have the opportunity to make the point.

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Alison: Let me complete what I am trying to say on the subject.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton and other honourable colleagues have not appreciated the flexibility of the framework in the Keep Sunday Special proposals, which uses the phrase "wholly or mainly". If the smaller kind of DIY shops choose, because they think that there is a market for antiques, one will be able to buy antiques in a DIY shop. *[Interruption.]*

The Chairman: Order.

Mr. Alison: Hon. Members do not appreciate the extent to which there is genuine flexibility in the Keep Sunday Special proposals.

Mr. Paice: Is it not the case that the REST proposals, on which the KSS-RSAR proposals are founded, have been around for four or five years? They have been through the course with the Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell). Is it not a bit late to start talking about amending the proposal in Committee and changing this and changing that? Surely by now it should have been perfect. Has not the proposal gone so far from keeping Sunday special that it has lost any intellectual integrity and is a complete and utter mishmash?

Mr. Alison: As my hon. Friend would expect, I totally disagree with his analysis. Since the original Bill that was introduced by my right hon. Friend Baroness Thatcher was thrown out, it has been possible to bring those proposals forward only through the vehicle of private Members' legislation. We know that my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden suddenly found it desirable to introduce 99 amendments the last time that we had an attempt to legislate in private Members' time. So the integrity has not yet been properly tested. It is about to be tested tonight, and I am convinced that the general view of the Committee will overwhelmingly favour the framework of law that gives great scope for opening shops, but still reflects the fact that most people want to keep Sunday as a special day. Under the Keep Sunday Special proposals, there will be more opening of shops than is permitted now, and a wider range of goods than is now available will be sold. But at least there will be some sort of regulatory framework to protect home, family, leisure and the general pattern of life that we know.

Dame Angela Rumbold: I have been especially troubled by one aspect of the Keep Sunday Special proposals—the fact that they allow the four Sundays before Christmas to be totally deregulated. That does not seem consistent with the rest of the group's views. Moreover, the very people whom it claims to protect—small shopkeepers —are to be deprived of the best four weeks of trading, because there will be a free-for-all on the four Sundays before Christmas. Will my right hon. Friend explain the logic of that?

Mr. Alison: That is easy to explain. We are trying to establish a reasonable balance for life on Sunday. If we allow four Sunday openings out of the total number of Sundays in the year, there will be 48 Sundays left, on which there will not be a free-for-all. In all conscience, is that not a reasonable balance?

Dr. Spink *rose*——

Mr. Alison: No, I must get on. It is not fair to other hon. Members if I give way too much.

Everyone has his own favourite poll on the options before us, and there is one poll that I believe conveys the real flavour of the attitude of the great mass of the British public in the world outside this rather hyped-up——

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): The English public.

Mr. Alison: The English public, then.

For the Harris Research Centre survey of 1989 respondents were asked to list the five most popular things to do on a Sunday—*[Laughter.]* I know from long parliamentary experience that if one talks of asking people to list the five most popular things to do on a Sunday— [HON. MEMBERS: "DIY."]—one must immediately continue, without leaving a gap for hon. Members to fill. Let me tell hon. Members, including my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn), who I know will sympathise, the list of what people prefer to do on Sundays—*[Laughter.]* These are serious matters.

Number 1 on the list was:

"Spending time with husband/wife and children (21 per cent.)"

Number 2 was:

"Having a quiet day at home with the papers or television (15 per cent.)"

Number 3 was:

"Visiting friends or relatives or having them visit (12 per cent.)"

Number 4 was:

"Having a day out visiting the seaside/country or historical town (11 per cent.)"

Number 5 was:

"Going to a Church service (8 per cent.)"

The idea that the Keep Sunday Special proposals are being swept along by Church-oriented pressure groups is nonsense.

The activities that I have mentioned are what people like to do on Sunday. Shopping came 11th. Only 1 per cent. of respondents listed it as the thing that they would most like to do on a Sunday.

6.45 pm

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend accept that that poll was taken before supermarkets opened on Sundays? Does he also accept that many more people shop in supermarkets on Sundays than go to church?

Mr. Alison: That is a highly unlikely statistic, which I do not believe could be proved. Ten per cent. of the population goes to church on Sunday, and I doubt whether they could all be crowded into the supermarkets that open on a Sunday.

To help my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) get his riposte in perspective, I shall tell him about a slightly more up-to-date poll, which came from NOP in September 1990 and is cited by the John Lewis Partnership in its broadsheet. The question asked in that poll was singularly straightforward and unweighted:

"Are you inconvenienced by most shops being closed on Sunday?"

People were asked to say whether they were inconvenienced "a lot", "a fair amount", "a little", or "not at all". Only 5 per cent. said that they were inconvenienced a lot, and only 8 per cent. that they were inconvenienced a fair amount; 22 per cent. said that they would be inconvenienced a little, and 64 per cent. said that they would not be inconvenienced at all; 1 per cent. said, "Don't know".

The argument that there is a huge amount——

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Alison: No, I am sorry to say that my hon. and learned Friend has given away his identity by the way that he is dressed this afternoon, and this is not a Scottish Bill, so I shall not give way to him.

Mr. Dykes *rose*——

Mr. Alison: I am afraid that I must get on. My hon. Friend will understand that allowing too many interventions is not fair to others who wish to speak.

To say that there are hungry shoppers frustrated almost to the point of suicide because they cannot get into shops all over the place on Sunday is a ludicrous misrepresentation of what is happening in the outside world. The idea is irrelevant and untrue. The great mass of the public is not seriously inconvenienced at all by a restrictive shopping regime.

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Alison: No, I am afraid that I must get on.

What I say is expecially true in the light of the positive options offered by the Keep Sunday Special procedures. There may be restricted shop opening, but there will be a rational framework for shops, based on the principles of REST—recreation, emergencies, social facilities and amenities, and transport. The whole range of shops offering such services will be open and able to trade.

We must think about the down side, and the problems that will arise if there is total deregulation, with no regulatory framework. Mr. David Sieff of Marks and Spencer put the case vividly in the *Evening Standard* last night:

"Sunday trading does not make the retail cake bigger."

Instead it involves spreading the profits of six days' trading over seven days' costs. Prices would have to increase, premium rates of pay on Sundays would have to be dropped, and large shops would tend to increase their market share at the expense of smaller convenient village shops. Exactly what David Sieff forecast—and itemised in his article—would happen. for example, as he wrote:

"Already, nearly 2,000 small stores have gone out of business in the past two years since the large supermarkets began regular Sunday trading."

That is a significant number.

Another way of describing our proposal is to call it the KSSC option—the "keep small shops competitive" option. On the other hand, the Shopping Hours Reform Council option could be described as the SHRC option—the "superstores hoping to rake in cash" option. That is the reality that we are debating. KSSC proposes that a flexible and increasing range of shops would be able to open on Sundays, whereas the Shopping Hours Reform Council would sweep regulations away and bring about a massive free-for-all.

Sunday opening would not be restricted to shops. It would extend to banks, building societies and estate agents. If Sunday is to be like any other day, why should not everybody open on Sunday? All those who, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South said, cannot shop on Sundays will not be able to shop on Sundays because they will be forced to work in their own premises.

I resisted giving way because you asked for short speeches, Mr. Lofthouse. I apologise for speaking as long as I have. I hope that hon. Members and right hon. Members will keep Sunday special.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am grateful to the Chairman, Mr. Lofthouse, for announcing at the beginning of the debate that my amendment No. 21, with its consequential amendments, would be selected for a vote.

I wish to address the Committee on the basis of two principal points. The first is the amendment as a fall-back, and we may need a fall-back position, and the second is in its context as one of the earlier votes. There will be a series of votes later, as the Committee knows. There is the total deregulation option, the Keep Sunday Special option with little deregulation plus the four Sundays, and there is the six hours between 10 am and 6 pm option.

I argue that if all of those are defeated we shall be left either with the law as it is—that is clearly a nonsense, and few people voted against Second Reading—or something that would bring into effect the option to decide at a local

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

level. I beg the Committee's indulgence to consider whether that might not be, for many people, the second best option available. There is strong evidence for that.

Logically, it would have been better to have a vote on the local option first, but procedurally that is not possible. I would ask the Committee to accept that also.

I will first state my preferred position, so that there can be no dissembling about it. I voted for the Bill on Second Reading and I believe that the present law is a nonsense which needs to be reformed urgently.

I also think that the law-breaking that has happened is indefensible. The right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold), who was a Minister, and also the Attorney-General and others who were in office when shops started opening on Sunday did not make it clear enough that what was going on was unacceptable. Had the Government called in the managing directors and the chairmen and chairwomen of the boards and formally made it clear that it was unacceptable, there might have been far less Sunday opening of big stores.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: I must continue. We may have only until 10 o'clock for the debate.

I will declare all my interests. I share many of them with most of my colleagues, but one or two may be unusual and it seems reasonable to put all of them on the record.

Like all hon. Members, I represent many small shops, market stalls, markets and big shops. Sadly, like many hon. Members, I also represent many unemployed people who want to work. My constituency has one of the highest unemployment rates in Britain. Like many hon. Members, I represent shoppers and employees. I also represent large, good, clean, efficient and pleasant stores. Those stores include the Tesco store which opened two or three yars ago at Surrey Quays—a store which is currently opening illegally on Sundays. Tesco did me the courtesy of asking me to meet the employees of that store last Sunday to hear their views. Lastly, the registered headquarters office of J. Sainsbury plc is also in my constituency.

No option will please all of the people all of the time —that is self-evident. We must do what is for the best, not just in the short term but in the long term.

I am for keeping Sunday special. It is important to me as a Christian, but I can arrange to keep my Sunday special without the law. It is not on that basis which I argue the point. I do not claim special protection for my faith, nor for the faiths of others. Much more importantly, I believe that it is in the interests of our society as a whole—for people of all faiths and people of no faith—that we have a common context for our work and for our leisure. That context should have an order to it and it should respect the pattern of work and leisure. It should build in a guarantee that, on one day at least, there is a presumption in favour of something other than work.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: I will not, for the reason which I gave earlier. I do not want to use up too much time.

I listened carefully to the speech of the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden, who argued for the deregulation option. The right hon. Lady has been a Home Office Minister.

One cannot reasonably argue that deregulation is good in principle—or else one would argue that deregulation is good for health and safety at work, for pubs which could open at any time day or night, or for speed limits. That is an invalid argument. One cannot say that one person's freedom to choose does not have an impact on other people's freedoms. That is a dangerous argument which the right hon. Lady made. One cannot argue for regulation to be left to local authorities and yet argue that they cannot do the enforcing, which is one of the difficulties of the present law.

The Minister argued that we live in a market economy. In a market economy, the big fish eat the little fish, and the little fish increasingly are no longer there. [HON. MEMBERS: "Not necessarily."] Not necessarily may be correct, but the big fish have the power and the capacity more often to eat the little fish. Lastly, one cannot say that deregulation is necessary for women in particular, or workers in general, to have Sunday work in order to get a better deal. I would say to Tesco and Sainsbury's that if they are so concerned about workers' rights, they should pay the workers double time on a Saturday. They could certainly do that, and there is no need to get them in on Sunday to give them double time.

What would more Sunday trading mean? It would mean more transport on our roads. It would mean that there would be a greater incentive to spread the business of six days over seven, and that is what is happening. There would be a greater incentive to work every day and there would be greater pressure on people not to have a day of rest at all. More people are doing so, including hon. Members it may be said. Many people wish that they did have more spare time, but they cannot now find a way to do so. There would be a greater incentive to spend money on seven days—money which some, regrettably, may not have. There would be a greater incentive to advertise more and to appeal to people's commercial interests. There would be greater pressure both on and from children and young people. There would be more pressure for more people. Simply, there would just be more pressure.

It is important that we listen to the voices of leaders from all faiths—Christian, Jewish and others—who share the views of a letter to *The Times* which was headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and which was printed on the day of the Second Reading. The letter said:

> "Commercial pressures already loom large enough in our society. Sunday affords space for the nurture of other values, pursuits and dimensions of family life in a more restful atmosphere. On the grounds of not only religious conviction but also pastoral experience, we believe that the spiritual, psychological and physical health of our nation would be poorer if there were no longer one common day in the week which was substantially different from the rest."

I say amen to that.

What has been the experience in Scotland under a different regime? I spoke to my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), who speaks for my party on Scottish affairs, before the debate. He told me that the number of people who shop on Sunday has gone up. What happened in Scotland will happen here. When I was at my local Tesco last Sunday listening to the views of Sunday shoppers, some of them said that they liked shopping there on Sunday because it was quiet. It is not so quiet as it was when it first opened on Sundays two years ago. In five or ten years' time, Sunday will be much more like a Saturday, a Friday, a Thursday or a Wednesday. I gather that that is the general experience in Scotland, too.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: I will not give way, but only because time is limited. The reality is that the amount of shopping might be little today, but once the door is open there is no turning back.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Rubbish!

Mr. Hughes: It is not rubbish, and I will give the reason for that in a moment. The local authority option—the fall-back position—at least allows a turning back, because local authorities will be able to change their minds. If we vote for the Honiton option, or if we vote for six hours now, then we will be asked later to vote for longer.

Of course it would be convenient for all if shops were open on a Sunday. It would be convenient if they were open when we finish here at 2 a.m.—indeed, some of them are. If the shops were open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, it would be convenient for some people and there would be people in the shops. Especially in urban areas and city centres, that would be convenient for at least some people. Convenience is not the most important argument, however, and I hope that we shall resist it.

I am convinced that, whatever the best practices and best intentions of the best managers may be, given the choice between employing someone who says that he or she will never work on a Sunday and someone else who says that he or she will, there will be a great deal of hidden pressure to appoint or promote the person who agrees to work. He or she will be a more valued and useful employee. Let us be honest: in this place we prefer to employ staff who are willing at least occasionally to work anti-social hours.

7 pm

Marks and Spencer and Iceland both agree with me that deregulation kills small shops. The opening of the new Tesco in Surrey docks has meant that shops in the market square in the Blue in Bermondsey have been under more pressure. Their profits have declined, some have closed, and some market stalls are struggling. That is fact, not speculation.

Deregulation will not ultimately help people who cannot get to out-of-town big shops. Such people want to go next door, but they will find when they do so that next door is no longer there.

Mr. Couchman *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman, who has a clear view in favour of deregulation which he has often presented. I, on the other hand, did not speak on Second Reading, and this is my first contribution to the debate.

I do not say that there should not be shopping on Sunday. I do not argue for an unrealistic world. The Honiton option is unrealistic; it decrees that everything shall be closed on a Sunday morning, and people will be able to buy only newspapers. That is not an acceptable option.

I am arguing against large shops and for small shops. I am arguing against more traffic, more pollution, more consumption of fuel and more damage to the atmosphere, and I am arguing for a quieter and more pleasant existence in urban and rural Britain. Above all, I am arguing against big profits for the few and in favour of the greater number of people who need a little profit to be able to survive.

The Keep Sunday Special proposal is that on four Sundays before Christmas shops may open. That is realistic, as most people do need to shop more then—the evidence for that is clear. People shop more in December than in any other month of the year. Let us therefore respect that fact and respond to it. It is no good being strongly dogmatic and failing to take account of the real world.

Mr. David Congdon (Croydon, North-East): That defeats your own argument.

Mr. Hughes: Not at all. I am arguing for the best possible conclusion compatible with people's reasonable demands. That conclusion is that we should keep Sunday special for as many weekends of the year as possible. Regardless of whether people are religious, many of them celebrate at Christmas and go shopping more in December as a result. That, too, is a fact.

I hope that we defeat the Honiton option and the total deregulation option. I hope that we will then vote in favour of the third opion—the KSS option. But that may not happen, as there may be a coalition against it. We shall then face the prospect of the six hour opening option between 10 am and 6 pm on Sundays—not many shops would open at different hours anyway. If this last option is rejected too, I ask the House to consider that it might be better to leave the decision to local councils.

I thought about whether I could propose a valid amendment for a local referendum—the precedent was set by the Welsh decision-making process on Sunday drinking—but I cannot validly propose the idea in this Bill. My local council decision option is at least better than keeping the law as it is.

There are different views in different communities. For instance, in my urban London constituency I am sure that there are stronger views in favour of Sunday opening, even though I do not believe in that, than are held in rural Herefordshire or rural Suffolk. We should respect that diversity. England and Scotland are already different—as are different areas in Switzerland, for that matter.

The enforceability question is also important in this context. Those who should decide about the local rules should be those who are legally obliged to carry out the enforcement. If they think that they cannot enforce a tight option, let them decide as much, and vice versa.

This option would also allow a change of mind. If, say, Southwark council decided to vote for six hours between 10 am and 6 pm but after five years the local community said that that was a pain—the traffic was awful, and so on—the council could change its decision. This is a way of turning the clock back. Either way, local authorities will be able to decide what is best for their areas.

Some communities are multi-faith, multi-cultural and multi-racial, others are of predominantly one faith, one culture and one ethnic background. That is the glory of Britain, and let us respect it. Local environmental issues also vary. A supermarket may be sited next to a lot of houses in one area but far from them in another.

The Sunday drinking precedent worked well in Wales, where Sunday drinking has been allowed in one district but not in another. That solution respects local views and

[Mr. Hughes]

allows local people to participate in the process. Local communities can get involved in the debate. I am worried about legislating with one answer to meet the breadth of views being expressed in this debate. How much better it would be if the issue could be handled in a non-partisan manner by local people. I do not believe that Parliament should enforce one view on the communities of widely varying local authority areas. If a certain community wants to keep Sunday special, let it do so. If shops opening in another community will cause a nuisance to residents, let them decide.

Dame Angela Rumbold: Would the hon. Gentleman clarify how he envisages this working? I can understand how it would work in a country district, but I am confused as to how it would work in a big metropolis, where there would be far more pressure for everyone to go for one option or another. It would be difficult for local authorities to hang on to their communities under the hon. Gentleman's proposal.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has fairly described my proposal as the least worst solution. What the right hon. Lady says holds true only for London, because all the other metropolitan areas are one local authority. Uniquely, London is not.

I ask colleagues what the greater good is. My answer is a cycle of work and rest, upheld by us, within which people can make as many choices as possible. As for my "least worst" option, if we cannot come to another conclusion, I suggest that the decision should be taken by local communities. We should certainly not leave them under the present nonsensical law. I hope that the Committee will agree that this is an acceptable fallback, if we need one. It is better to allow people to have their say than to perpetuate a nonsensical law.

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in the debate. We are all aware that Sunday trading is one of the most vexed issues to come before the House in recent years. I have never known a time when a larger number of hon. Members had yet to make up their minds. I like certain parts of some proposals, but, as I will explain, none of them completely mirrors my own ideas.

The issue is made more difficult for us by the voting arrangements, because the first amendment to command a majority wins all. That means that we will never know whether another option might have commanded a bigger majority had we been able to vote on it. That puts us in an unusual procedural position.

We all agree that the existing legislation is full of anomalies. We all agree that it is a bad precedent for the law to be flouted, especially when law breaking is carried out by prestigious major companies, which should behave within the law. Sainsbury and Tesco would be quite happy to seek redress from the law if their windows were smashed. They expect the law to be respected when it defends their interests, but they are prepared to break it when their profits are at risk.

Ms Glenda Jackson: The hon. Gentleman has underlined a point made in a letter from one of my constituents, who pointed out that, although the big retailers are not prosecuted for opening illegally on Sundays, someone caught shoplifting in one of those stores most certainly would be prosecuted.

Sir David Mitchell: The hon. Lady has summed up exactly the point that I was trying to make.

I believe that Sunday should be a day for leisure and for the family. Our Good Lord said:

> "Six days shalt thou labour . . . But the seventh day is the sabbath".

I believe that the modern effect of that instruction is that we should have a day free from stress in which we can recharge our batteries and sustain family life.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir David Mitchell: I will not give way to my hon. and learned Friend because long speeches have been made and I want to make a brief one.

If one accepts the idea that Sunday is a day for leisure and for the family, it logically follows that the businesses that should be open should be those that enable people to enjoy leisure pursuits and enjoy a family day. That means almost all the businesses, apart from supermarkets, which now open normally on Sundays.

Full deregulation is said to be popular, but we need to keep its effects in mind. It is important that the House is aware that the danger is that that opinion may lead to short-term popularity and long-term damage.

The village and corner shops rely heavily on Sunday trading. We already know that many of those shops are trading at the margin. It will not take much to tip them over into loss-making concerns. Their closure would mean that a facility upon which local communities rely would be lost.

Local communities in villages or urban areas rely on the corner shop because of their convenience. They are convenient for the elderly who may have difficulty in travelling to supermarkets, especially if no bus service operates. They are convenient to the less well-off who cannot afford to travel some distance to supermarkets for their shopping. The loss of the village shop is too high a price to pay, and once it is paid it will never be possible to get that shop back.

It is also important to draw attention to the effect of Sunday trading on prices. Joe Public's spending power will not be any greater because of trading on seven days instead of six; he will simply spread his spending power over that time. Similarly, shops that decide to open for seven days will find that their costs will increase, and eventually they will be passed on to the consuming public.

The restrictive solution, which allows shops under 3,000 sq ft—a reasonable size—to trade on a Sunday, is worth considering because it would include the village shop, the corner shop, the newsagents, video shops, chemists, florists, tourist shops, farm shops, sport centre outlets, theatre and cinema shops and petrol station shops. Those shops that are not bound by any size restriction include off licences, take-aways, cafes, public houses, pharmacies, vehicle hire shops, motorway service shops, airport shops, post offices, undertakers, wine warehouses, garden centres, DIYs and motor supplies shops. They will be able to open on Sunday for the sale of leisure goods. No restrictions would be imposed on Sunday markets. On any basis, that means that a great amount of shopping could be done on a Sunday by those who particularly wanted to do so. For that reason, I am against the concept of total deregulation.

Partial deregulation would allow supermarkets to operate for six hours. Today, those supermarkets that are breaking the law open for eight hours. Once it is legal for all to trade, the amount of available business will barely be enough to fill six hours and no supermarket will want to trade for more than that time. What we have been given in the supposedly split-the-difference solution is total deregulation to the extent that the supermarkets want to have the opportunity to trade on Sundays. The law breakers now trade for eight hours, but when everyone is allowed to trade I am sure that, given the business available, six hours would be sufficient.

7.15 pm

I believe that the KSS-RSAR amendment is a little too restrictive, but I shall vote for it because we will be able to make further changes to it in Standing Committee and on Report. We can offer a more relaxed formula for Sunday trading, which is what I would like, but if we voted for total deregulation there would be no turning back. Therefore, I hope that the Committee will vote for the more restrictive of the three options and, having done so, that it will seek to amend it as the Bill completes its further progress through the House.

Ms Janet Anderson (Rossendale and Darwen): We all agree that the Shops Act 1950 is in desperate need of reform. It is important to reflect on exactly what has happened in recent months.

Hon. Members have made it plain that they do not condone law breaking and nor do I. I share the concern that has been expressed about the fact that the Government should have stepped in sooner to try to make it easier for local authorities to enforce the law. I hope that what has happened has made it plain to us that it is the responsibility of Parliament to pass a law now which is enforceable, workable and meets the wishes and needs of the majority.

There is no doubt that the majority of the public want shopping choice to be extended. They want to be able to shop on Sundays. If they did not want to do so, there would be no point in shops opening.

Most hon. Gentlemen may rarely be responsible for shopping for a growing family. They should understand, however, that women, and working women in particular, value the extra choice that Sunday shopping offers them. Several months ago the organisation Working Women for Sunday Shopping was established. Its co-ordinator wrote to me recently to report:

> "Since Working Women for Sunday Shopping was launched last month I have been inundated with letters from women questioning why legislation should dictate what they can or cannot do on Sundays. Poll after poll has shown that working women want the shops to open on Sunday. 83 per cent. of those surveyed by MORI said they would find Sunday trading convenient—69 per cent. want to see more shops open. The majority of women are now active in the workforce, very many are juggling the competing demands of home, work and family —seven day opening is a necessity for them, not a luxury."

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Anderson: If the hon. and learned Gentleman will forgive me, I will not give way because many other hon. Members wish to speak.

One of the problems that has been apparent throughout the lengthy debate on Sunday trading is that those who want to keep the shops shut have been the most vocal. For a long time they have told us that the shops must be kept shut in the name of employee protection. They said that the Government would never agree to the voluntary principle for Sunday working and that workers would be forced to work if shops were open.

Now, an albeit reluctant Government have included a guarantee of voluntary working. They have changed their tune again. Before the Minister of State beams too broadly, I must tell him that I have serious reservations about the Bill's proposals and I hope that we will be able to toughen them in Standing Committee. As he will also know, it is a priority of Opposition Members that there should be a principle of double time for Sunday working.

Those who want to close shops on Sundays say that such protection is meaningless and that there are higher principles at stake than the thousands of shop workers who will lose their Sunday work if shops shut. Shop worker unions which unanimously reject that message are simply the tools of management rather than genuinely representing their members' views.

I should like to read an extract from a letter from the deputy general secretary of USDAW to Members of Parliament. USDAW should be congratulated on listening to the views of its members. The letter says:

> "If you wish to follow the Shop Workers' Union position, you will need to vote as follows:—
>
> Total deregulation (1st Vote) . . . No
>
> Keep Sunday Special (2nd Vote) . . . No
>
> 6 HOUR OPTION (3RD VOTE) . . . YES
>
> Many thousands of USDAW members are currently working on Sundays and, provided that working is entirely voluntary and they are paid at double-time rates, they wish to continue to have that opportunity.
>
> If the KSS proposals were to go through this would deny many of our members the opportunity to work and would have a significant effect on their income. USDAW members are mainly located in the large stores and large companies and there is little organisation, if any, in small shops and the majority of them do not pay double-time and may not have even followed the Wages Council rates."

Mr. Sheerman: I have great respect for my hon. Friend, but that is not what I heard. Perhaps it is a total calumny against USDAW, and I have a lot of friends in USDAW, but is it not a fact that Tesco marched the executive of USDAW in and said, "Change your mind or we will recognise another union"? That is why USDAW changed its mind; it had nothing to do with principles.

Ms Anderson: I am glad that my hon. Friend raised that point as it is a misconception that has been doing the rounds in recent days and weeks. I have seen the statement from the USDAW executive which categorically states that the union held a meeting with 96 of its shop stewards, 93 of whom said that their members wanted to work on Sunday.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: My hon. Friend has just read out some correspondence addressed to Members of Parliament from the union USDAW. Let me read a short extract from a letter from USDAW sent to me on 16 December 1992 saying:

> "The Shopping Hours Reform Council. . . after all, is backed by employers who have already ridden rough shod over the current law protecting shopworkers from Sunday working and we have no confidence in them when they say they are prepared to protect shopworkers in the future."

What has changed?

Ms Anderson: I thank my hon. Friend for raising that point. I shall tell him what has changed since that letter was written. The major retailers to whom it refers have made a statement saying that they would be happy for the voluntary principle and the entitlement to premium pay to be written into legislation. Clearly that has had some effect.

Those who want the shops shut tell us that Sunday shopping destroys family life. Yet what causes most disruption to family Sundays—an open pub or a branch of Boots? Most people do not live in 1950s-style happy families who come back from church to a Sunday roast. Many people cannot afford a Sunday roast these days. There is a huge diversity in the way people live their lives in the modern world and, although that nostalgic view may be tempting to some hon. Members, shutting shops will not bring it back.

Mr. Lord: Is the hon. Lady aware that the Home Office commissioned what I hope is an unbiased report into the effects of the various options we are considering on jobs in the retail trade? It did not concentrate on part-time or full-time jobs, but stated that, if the KSS proposal is accepted, there will be 5,000 more jobs in the retail industry. If partial deregulation is accepted, there will be 5,000 fewer jobs in the retail industry and total deregulation would mean 20,000 fewer jobs in the retail industry. Surely the hon. Lady must be concerned about that.

Ms Anderson: I am extremely concerned about jobs. That is precisely why I shall be supporting the six-hour option. We estimate 80,000 Sunday-only jobs would be lost under the more restrictive option.

We are told that the restrictive option will help small shops. They should try telling that to small shops that depend on their Sunday trade and would be forced to shut on Sunday. It will destroy the attractiveness of tourist destinations and rip the heart out of ethnic minority shopping areas which are dependent on the percentage of their groceries goods. The idea that browsing in a second-hand book shop on a Sunday afternoon is a threat to civilisation is absurd.

Some people will say that, if Members of Parliament vote for Sunday shopping, they will be giving in to commercial lobbying.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Before my hon. Friend leaves the point about small shops, may I ask her whether she agrees that the issue is not that there has been a decline in the number of small shops over many years? It has had nothing to do with Sunday trading but with the development of very large stores. To reverse that, we would need to close very large stores not just on Sundays but on every day of the week. There is now a different shopping pattern. Several years ago, two superstores opened in my area. There has also been a small increase in the number of small shops. The small shops are mainly Asian and not necessarily against Sunday opening. People go to the big stores for the weekly shopping and down the road to their local shops on Sunday. That is what I do.

Ms Anderson: I thank my hon. Friend for his helpful intervention. He is quite right.

Many people suggest that Sunday shopping will be giving in to commercial lobbying. However, there are commercial lobbies on every side of the argument. For every Tesco arguing for opening, there is an Iceland arguing for closure. Then they say that they will allow shops that people want to open. That actually means the shops that men want to open. DIY stores and motor accessory shops will be allowed to open, although the wording of the Bill is so restrictive that real DIY shops probably will not be able to open. Any outlet selling alcohol will be allowed to open, but supermarkets and clothes shops uniquely threaten family life and therefore must shut.

I understand and accept that few want Sunday to become just another day of the week. That is why I believe that hon. Members on both sides of the House will reject total deregulation. However, Sunday is special because it is the day when people have most choice about what they do. Some go to church, others play sports, others visit friends and family while others simply laze about with the Sunday papers. That will not change if people are allowed to shop as one of their Sunday alternatives.

Sunday is still special in Scotland, yet shops are free to open. That is why I hope hon. Members will support the partial deregulation option. It is the only option before us tonight which reconciles the wishes of those who want to shop with those who want to work—particularly women —and at the same time make sure that Sunday will remain just a little special.

Sir George Gardiner (Reigate): I shall try to speak more briefly than some earlier in the debate, to whom we listened with fascination.

A pervading theme so far in the debate has been that Sunday should be a special day. Many go further and argue, as Christians, that the law must reinforce the requirement in chapter 20 of Exodus, which was quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell).

I understand that many church worshippers wish to obey that injunction in their weekly lives reinforcing the special nature of Sunday. I consider myself a Christian and a somewhat irregular churchgoer and regard Sunday as a day different in character from the rest, but the question that I ask myself is what moral right have I, as a Member of Parliament, to dictate to the rest of the population how they must spend their Sundays, especially as a majority of them do not wish to abide by that literal injunction of the ten commandments.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my hon. Friend accept that Parliament constantly dictates to the citizens of the country on almost every subject under the sun?

Sir George Gardiner: It does, but if we can define areas where we need not do so, I do not see why we should.

Sunday is special, as the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms Anderson) said. It is special for different people in different ways. For some, it is special because it starts with an act of collective worship. For others, it is a day of leisure and relaxation, perhaps visiting a garden centre in the morning and planting the produce in the afternoon. For others, it means a walk or a drive in the country, perhaps stopping at a village antique shop or at a farm shop. For others, it is a day when the whole family can go and choose a suite of furniture.

7.30 pm

For many—some 5 million—Sunday offers the chance to do the family shopping in a supermarket without the hassle of trying to concentrate everything into Saturday.

For some 80,000 people, including students and part-time workers, it offers the chance of earning some money, often at premium rates, using a different day of the week for leisure activity.

I therefore ask myself, if millions of citizens wish to shop on Sunday, and so many shopworkers are eager to serve them, what moral right have we to stop them? That is why I support amendment No. 1, the complete deregulation option, but which I have always called the free-choice option. I do not believe that free choice would destroy the special nature of Sunday. It has not done so in the United States, Canada, southern Ireland or Scotland.

Mr. Hartley Booth (Finchley): Does my hon. Friend accept that there is a clash of choices and that people whose houses are disturbed on Sunday—or indeed Saturday—mornings should have a choice to have their house and premises quiet?

Sir George Gardiner: Highways legislation should cover the position of such people.

Free choice has not destroyed the special nature of Sundays in a variety of countries, including Scotland. To hear some bishops talk, one would think that Scotland was some heathen land where family cohesion has been smashed into oblivion. Scotland has had free Sunday choice for years, and Sunday shop opening there has settled to a level that meets the public demand. The same would happen here if we approved the free-choice option. Throughout large parts of England, it already has.

A further advantage of the free-choice option is that it would add almost nothing to the cost of administration that would have to be borne by local councils and ultimately by council tax payers. I shall vote for option one.

If that fails, I will most certainly oppose amendment No. 2, the Keep Sunday Special option. I cannot comprehend how the Bill's sponsors can seriously advocate replacing one set of ridiculous and unenforceable rules with another. The KSS "type of shop" approach would create many more anomalies.

As the Consumers Association has pointed out, and I shall quote a couple of extracts from its report, under the KSS option

> "toys or books could be bought from a newsagent, but not from a toy or bookshop; meat or bread from a small supermarket, but not from a butcher or baker. Auction houses, antique shops, clothes shops, record shops, book shops and any number of other shops will be unable to open, regardless of size, unless they are in a hospital, harbour, seaport, hoverport or airport."

On the "type of shop" approach, it continues:

> "A convenience shop, under 280 square metres, with a principal trade of groceries and confectionery, will be unable to open unless it also sells domestic cleaning materials. A chemist shop such as Boots, whose trade may include medical products and surgical appliances but not as its main trade, will be unable to open to sell nappies—yet a small neighbouring DIY store could. And a video shop will be able to sell or hire soft-porn movies, but a bookshop could not open to sell a bible."

Do we really want to return to such a clumsy, bureaucratic and repressive system?

Dr. Spink: I took advice this morning, and the advice is that all of these matters—the type of shop, type of goods, time of opening and the size of shops—can be dealt with by amendments in Committee upstairs. My hon. Friend should join the Committee and deal with such matters.

Sir George Gardiner: If all the objections of the Consumers Association are to be met, as my hon. Friends have said, the Bill will require hundreds of amendments to be tabled in Committee. I cannot see how one can defend that.

Those who argue the KSS option wish to restrict working on Sundays. It would involve a vast increase in Sunday working for an army of environmental health and trading standards officers, scurrying to and fro with their measuring lines checking floor sizes and whether the shops that were opened were dealing in the exempt categories of goods listed.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir George Gardiner: No, I want to be brief and will not take any further interventions.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy estimates that the KSS will cost local authorities £12 million. I must warn hon. Members that if they pass that option, they must be prepared for a flood of protest from constituents who are part of the 5 million who are now able to shop on Sundays, or from the 80,000 who will lose their jobs in consequence. Do not be surprised if those people take their revenge. If the free Sunday choice option fails, I shall support the SHRC compromise. Short of free choice, that will most closely meet the needs of my constituents.

Overall, I appeal to hon. Members: please let us treat our constituents as adults. They are quite capable of deciding how to spend their Sundays, so let us not be seen by them as agents for repression.

Mr. Donald Anderson: The hon. Member for Reigate (Sir G. Gardiner) has put his finger on the problem—the essence of the debate is whether we want Sunday to be special, and therefore try to promote, encourage and accept it for all sorts of good social reasons, or whether, either immediately or in a creeping way, we are prepared to erase all the differences that now exist on a Sunday. I believe that there is some value in having a day that is separate and unique and that that is proper for all the people of our country. Parliament and the public should encourage that and not have creeping deregulation. When shopping was first allowed on Good Friday, perhaps 20 per cent. of shops opened; now, 100 per cent. of the shops are open, and the tide has come completely over the difference. That will be the effect of the right hon. Gentleman's proposal. He should keep his eyes open. If he wants that, so be it, but I believe that the great majority of our people do not want it.

We shall understand the four options that are now before the Committee only by understanding the context within which the debate has developed since 1976 when, based on the Auld committee report—against all the odds, as the Government had an overall majority—the Government proposal for total deregulation was defeated on Second Reading.

After that, the stores embarked on a softening-up process, in which the Government colluded. To start with, they opened only on the four Sundays before Christmas. Having tested the Government that far and realised that not only would there be no opposition but there would be connivance, they went all the way. The subject was then passed to the European Court of Justice as a delaying device, knowing the way that that court——

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well, because I have told him so from the Dispatch Box

[Mr. Peter Lloyd]

before, that the Government did not take the case to the European Court. In the court, the Government argued that what the law meant was entirely a matter for this country. The hon. Gentleman is wrong, and I hope that he will withdraw that remark.

There has been no collusion. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the law requires that the regulations be enforced by local authorities. The law must be changed before any other agency can enforce them. We are debating a change in the law now. The option that he supports—KSS—is modelled on the campaign that has been fought. It does not include a provision to allow any other agency apart from local authorities to enforce it. The hon. Gentleman is therefore speaking in favour of an option that would rely on local authorities to enforce it and it would not be for the Government directly to do so.

Mr. Anderson: I believe that the Minister is not a lawyer. He should be aware that, at any stage, the Attorney-General could have taken over by taking out injunctions against those major stores that defied the law. He must be aware that the Shops Act 1950 deals with the situation where a local authority takes action against a store. It does not deal with a conspiracy among a large number of stores collectively to break the law. The Government could have stopped that either by the Attorney-General taking out an injunction nationally against those stores or, knowing that local authorities could not risk their limited moneys in major legal actions, by being prepared to indemnify local authorities against cases that would put them at risk.

Earlier, I gave the Minister the example of the Kirklees case, which, as he knows, was considered by the House of Lords. Had Kirklees council lost that case, it would have been liable for £250,000-worth of costs. That is clearly well beyond the resources of a local authority, which could not afford to risk so much. The Government colluded by doing nothing when they might have done something. They allowed law breaking on a vast scale.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman, who I believe is a lawyer, knows perfectly well that the role of the Attorney-General in such matters is as a Law Officer, not as a member of the Government, and my right hon. and learned Friend explained his position from the Dispatch Box. The law, as passed by Parliament, adequately allowed local authorities to enforce it and there was no proper role that would allow him to intervene.

The Kirklees case resulted [illegible] the judgment that local authorities would be responsible for the losses of stores that those authorities closed by injunction if the European Court decided that the law was incompatible with Community law. That decision was overturned on appeal, so there was only a certain period when the point that the hon. Gentleman makes, and claims is a general point, would have applied. As an excellent lawyer, he would know that.

Mr. Anderson: Does the Minister suggest that the Government could not have agreed, had they so willed, to indemnify local authorities against the costs thrown away by seeking to enforce the law?

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I am saying that the hon. Gentleman had heard the Attorney-General's speech from the Dispatch Box. He said that it would not be proper for him to intervene, that there was no proper basis on which he should intervene and that the law passed by Parliament, which made local authorities responsible for enforcing it, was adequate. The hon. Gentleman has said, quite rightly, that I am not a lawyer, but my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General is. The hon. Gentleman's argument was with the then Attorney-General and I am sure that his successor in office now would be able to repeat the position that the then Attorney-General took.

The hon. Gentleman pretends that the Government have powers to enforce the law, when the law passed by Parliament quite clearly says that it is for local authorities to enforce it. We wish to change the law and that is why we have introduced the Bill. Any hon. Member, or campaigning group, can suggest different modes of enforcement. The hon. Gentleman's preference does not include any such change. I wonder why not.

7.45 pm

Mr. Anderson: The Minister makes my point. Had he so willed it, the Attorney-General could have intervened, but he chose not to do so. As a result, the big stores have been allowed to get away with it—the same stores that would have been the first to take to court a single mother who shoplifted in one of their supermarkets. They rely on the law when they want to do so and disobey the law when they choose to do so. The claim by the big stores that they are concerned about consumer choice is a little less credible in the light of their action when trying to prevent United States' warehouse companies from coming here to increase choice.

The normal principle of law is that when a law breaker, by law breaking, adversely affects the interests of a third party which loses financially, the law will intervene to compensate that third party. Stores such as Marks and Spencer and John Lewis have obeyed the law and lost substantial sums as a result. I say again that the Government have connived at that loss and, by the way in which they have encouraged acceptance of the deregulation option, they are encouraging those who have defied the law so wilfully for so long.

The Government have tried to encourage support by, for example, offering worker protection. At a fairly late stage, they included schedule 4, as if they had a real commitment to worker protection. I practised a little in employment law and I can tell the Minister that that protection is illusory. Not only are there great delays in hearings before industrial tribunals but there is no legal aid, as he will know. Only those who are unionised will be likely to have any support. Damages will be limited. I am convinced that the only real protection for workers would be afforded by an option like the Keep Sunday Special option.

The *Financial Times* report on the way in which Sainsbury puts pressure on its managers was immediately repudiated, and tactically and wisely reversed, but who knows what Sainsbury and others will do if their option is successful today?

My answer to the hon. Member for Reigate, who is consistent in that he supports the free market ideology, is that he and his friends are prepared to put that free market ideology above their concern for law and order. I would have been more impressed had I heard him urging the major stores, when they selectively obeyed the law, to obey all the laws. They have put that ideology above their concern for small shopkeepers, whose decline in numbers would be accelerated massively if there were total deregulation, and above their concern for the family.

I am confident that one certain feature of total deregulation and the working of one member of the family on a Sunday would be to increase pressures on the family. It would create a negative future for family life, along with all the other pressures. Behind the disintegration of the family and the pressures on the family is the concomitant evil of increasing criminality. One of the joys of the Jewish family and the Indian family is that a day is set aside for family members to be together. Part of the Jewish community's respect for the law derives from the high value that is placed in the Jewish community on the family.

With all respect to the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), I believe that there are only two major options: either deregulation or an attempt to preserve the special nature of Sunday. Deregulation is the aim of the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary. Just as in 1986, I am convinced that people do not want total deregulation.

Alas, the BBC and others fall into the trap of calling the Shopping Hours Reform Council option a compromise. It is a compromise only in the sense that it would mean deregulation by stages. If the majority of the people who support the SHRC were honest with themselves and honest to hon. Members, they would say that they want total deregulation. They realise that there is not a majority in the House of Commons for total deregulation, so they are attempting to persuade others that they are taking deregulation as far as they want. They should be honest. There is no relevant stopping point to deregulation. If it is six hours, why not make it seven or eight hours?

What would be the Government's position if, by some mischance, the SHRC option were to win a majority, and the Standing Committee were composed, as it must be, of a majority of those who voted in favour of the option, who then altered the provision from six hours to seven or eight hours and took the road to total deregulation?

With respect to the right hon. Member for Honiton, his motive is not the same as that of those who have proposed the so-called compromise; it would amount to a staging post on the way to total deregulation. The right hon. Gentleman's motive is different, although the effect of his amendment would be the same. As there is no natural stopping point, if the opening time were 1 o'clock, why not make it 12 o'clock? It is similar to the Home Office's approach to the opening hours of licensed premises on Sundays. Initially, the Home Office said that it should be 2 o'clock, then it thought, "What is another hour between friends?" Slippage occurred. This issue could go down that same slope.

The deregulation option is proposed by those with a self-interest, in contrast to the KSS option which is supported by those who see the issue as a matter of public interest. I am proud to come from a Christian background and I believe that the Old Testament ordinances in this matter, as in many others such as hygiene, are still relevant to people. We would be acting against the interest of mankind if we sought to disregard them in this context or in others. It is important for the human condition that a day is set aside for recreation. Let it be the same day on which families can choose to stay together. It would be wrong for Sunday working to become a way of life. There would be adverse social consequences for the vulnerable, those without cars, the disabled and so on. There would be major pressure on city centre shopping and it would, of course, accelerate the existing trend of pressure on small, convenience shops, to their detriment.

If the SHRC were to win today, it would be a triumph for a sectional, highly financed lobby over the public interest. Marks and Spencer has lost a lot of money by obeying the law, unlike those major stores behind whom some Conservative Members now stand. I stand with those hon. Members who admire shops such as the John Lewis Partnership and Marks and Spencer which, to their financial detriment, have decided to obey the law. I hope that Conservative Members also admire those stores. The KSS option is the only one that is likely to create a balance by preserving Sunday and all its pleasures as a special day. I believe that that is right and that it is what our people want.

Mr. Rowe: I shall be brief and hope that the Committee will forgive me and allow me to escape soon after I sit down as I have an important appointment elsewhere. A small but important group of people have a totally principled view about Sunday, and I have enormous respect and admiration for them. They do not shop or travel or expect services from other people on Sunday. That small group of people can genuinely say that they are standing on a solid ground of principle.

In almost every other case such principles have been so distorted that it is difficult to claim a principled stand. For example, it is strange that many of my Christian friends and acquaintances write to me and speak in passionate terms about how wrong it would be to have many people working on Sunday. About 8 million people work on Sunday, and many of them provide inessential services to my Christian friends who think nothing of taking journeys, entering cafes and restaurants or doing a whole range of other things that they need not do but choose to do. Therefore, that element of principle has disappeared.

If those in the Christian community want to persuade Parliament to act in their best interests, they need to mobilise and persuade more people of the truth of their belief—which is my belief. Having done so, they will exercise the kind of power that I would like to see them able to exercise in a democratic society. As a small minority, it cannot ask Parliament to legislate for its purposes as if that were somehow a duty.

I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) for providing me with a way out of my dilemma. I was inclined to support the partial deregulation option because, although it has no special ground of principle, it gives a slight edge to small shops, which I have a great yearning to preserve. I have become increasingly dissatisfied with my position and feel that many of my constituents yearn for a day that is marked off from other days in a way that they can recognise and be able to use. For example, there is great force in the argument that if every day is exactly the same, any suggestion that premium payments will survive is a myth. Such payments will survive for a little while but they will slide away, like so much else.

I worry about the KSS's desire that the big shops should open for the four Sundays before Christmas. If most of Advent is deliberately used for shopping and Christmas is taken to be nothing special, the shops may find that, when Christmas has lost virtually all its meaning, the public will

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not spend any more in December than in any other month. Why should they if Christmas has become like any other time of the year?

Ms Glenda Jackson: The hon. Gentleman mentions the introduction of Christmas during the weeks of Advent. Surely he must be aware that most supermarkets start introducing Christmas, by way of Christmas cards, wrapping paper and specially wrapped boxes of chocolates, as early as September or, in some instances, almost immediately after Easter.

8 pm

Mr. Rowe: The hon. Lady is right to suggest that Christmas becomes more like fashion every day. I understand that in February it is already too late to buy summer fashions as they have all gone.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton has provided me with a way out of my dilemma. If he were to clean up his act—if I may put it that way—he would have a satisfactory solution. In its present form, his proposition is wrong in that it contains another list of anomalies, as do the other options. There would be no anomalies if he agreed that shops below a certain size, which can be defined in Committee, should be able to open to sell anything that they choose on Sunday morning, as well as in the afternoon if they choose to stay open, and that shops above a certain size should not be allowed to open until Sunday afternoon. That would mean that the large number of people mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth)—those who value having at least part of Sunday free of the heavy traffic and noise that the rest of the week brings and who are just as entitled as anyone else to have some peace—would at least know that Sunday mornings were different from the rest of the week. They would not suffer as much disturbance as usual if they chose to have a long lie-in. It would also allow the elderly and frail and those who cannot drive to have access to their local shops.

It is worth bearing in mind that only about 17 per cent. of women over 65 have a driving licence, which is a minute proportion. If local shops were kept open, it would be of tremendous value to such people and give them an edge but the demand to go shopping on Sundays, which does exist, would be met by people being able to shop on Sunday afternoons. The advantage of that solution is that it would be exceedingly easy to administer. When a shop registered for the uniform business rate, it could also register its size. If it were below a certain size, it would be able to open and if it were above that size, it would not.

My hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Sir G. Gardiner) was wrong to suggest that full, unrestricted, 24-hours-a-day opening would involve no cost for local authorities. That is manifestly untrue as cleansing, inspection and a range of duties would need to be carried out at the expense of local authorities. It would be unrealistic and wrong for the Committee entirely to dictate the country's shopping patterns by legislation. Shopping patterns keep changing. Small shops are struggling and will continue to do so, but it is reasonable to protect the privacy and tranquillity of a substantial slice of the population by saying that Sunday trading should be restricted, as suggested by my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton. His is a very good solution to the problem, and I shall support it.

If that solution fails, as is conceivable, I shall support the KSS option, but not because I think that it would be easy to work in its present form. It involves far too many anomalies to make it a comfortable solution but they can, to some extent, be refined. I am disappointed that they have not been refined over the many years that have been available to work them out, but we could perhaps improve the option. I shall support it, if necessary, because I believe that it is sometimes right to suggest by public statement that there is more to life than shopping.

Ms Glenda Jackson: I cannot join the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) in supporting the amendment tabled by the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). In an admirably succinct argument, my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) established the fact that the Committee will be voting either for deregulation or to keep Sunday special—there is no halfway house that can meet the needs and requirements of the country at large.

The hon. Member for Reigate (Sir G. Gardiner) said that he would vote for the first option because it offered free choice. As one whose first experience of the world of work was as a shop assistant, I can tell him that deregulation gives little or no free choice to people who work in shops. I shall read out part of a letter from a constituent who said that the Bill was

> "very personal to me because I work in the retail industry, in Central London. This means that time to spend with my family and friends is already in short supply, so anything that lessens it will seriously affect the quality of my family life. I am worried that companies like mine would not be able to operate voluntary arrangements and that everyone would be expected to work Sundays eventually, so cutting into precious time with my family."

Another constituent wrote:

> "As I see it the main problem from legal Sunday Opening is the probable coercion on Shop Staff. While in legal theory, retail store staff might be given a choice, in reality, the only choice is either, treat Sundays as a normal working day or lose your job, or at the very best your chances of promotion."

Sir George Gardiner: How does the hon. Lady react to what I have been told by many managers of supermarkets in my constituency? Their workers are queuing up to work on Sundays, and they have no difficulty in finding the necessary staff.

Ms Jackson: With respect, when there are 3 million unemployed people, one could offer any kind of gainful employment and queues would form. The hon. Gentleman must not regard any kind of remuneration as being a wage. Shop assistants—certainly part-time shop assistants—receive what I regard as disgracefully low rates of pay. The Government have a large slate of deregulation planned for the coming Session, and I have no doubt that one of the first things to be deregulated—as proved by the abolition of the wages councils—will be any protection of workers' wages or workers' rights.

I have also received a letter from the managing director of Robert Dyas, ironmongers. It states:

> "We are also very doubtful that any Government proposals for protection of staff are workable, should Sunday trading become the norm. This Company is taking on a steady trickle of staff who have become dismayed at the pressure placed upon them to work on Sundays, whilst their previous employers proclaim that such work is voluntary. I myself have no doubt that if this company was forced, through competitive pressures, to trade on Sundays,

we would be able (if we wished) to 'persuade' large numbers to work . . . No legislation can cope with this style of insidious pressure."

Another choice about which we have heard a great deal is that of individuals being able to shop when they please. A managing director of the John Lewis Partnership disagrees with that option, saying:

"Contrary to what some would suggest, choice for the consumer is actually likely to diminish as larger shops take over the business of smaller ones and villages lose their small convenience stores."

London used to be a series of villages—in many instances it could still be—but that is being rapidly eroded because of the enormous pressures on small businesses. Small businesses are closing at the rate of approximately eight a week. The corner shop, the local shop and the local small market centre will be absolutely demoralised and destroyed by deregulation. Deregulation is not about choice for the consumer or reducing prices, but about the large retail outlets fighting to increase their market share, and that will continue.

The pattern of shopping in this country, as in America, is to move shops to greenfield sites and away from where people live. That is a wonderful way to shop if one has the means of getting to and from those sites. A large proportion of my constituents are pensioners, on some form of social security or exist only because they can make a legal claim on the benefit system. Those people are utterly and totally dependent upon the local shop and being able to walk to it. They cannot afford private transport; in many instances they can barely afford public transport.

The suggestion that everyone does one large weekly shop is nonsense. I know many people who buy only after counting penny and twopenny pieces—and the older one gets the more difficult it is to differentiate between our coins.

The hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) referred to the issue of choice raised by the hon. Member for Reigate. Surely there must be a choice for the people who live near retail outlets. They will have no choice at all about a quiet Sunday, or about one day of the week being different from the other six. In my constituency there are two residential areas in which there are large multiple superstores. People live above one of those superstores and the delivery bays of the other store are next door to my residents' front doors. For seven days a week those people will be plagued by enormous delivery vans and by the clanging backwards and forwards of the large steel doors that cover the delivery bays. There will be no Sunday for people who live next door to such superstores.

Mr. Fabricant: The hon. Lady raises a valid point. My constituents know where I stand on this issue. They have asked me whether there will be a problem of disturbance by delivery vans. I have looked into the matter and it is apparent that the Highways Acts cover this point. Local authorities can, if they wish, implement the measures contained in those Acts to restrict the number of lorries visiting certain premises. They can even forbid lorries to arrive at particular times of the day or days of the week. The Acts are there; it is for the authorities to use them.

Ms Jackson: If existing Acts are so all-powerful, why were they not enforced? That is why we are here debating the whole issue.

Mr. Fabricant: They are different Acts.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. However strongly hon. Members may feel about the subject, there must be no sedentary interventions.

Ms Jackson: I will give way to the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink).

8.15 pm

Dr. Spink: Does the hon. Lady believe that her constituents and mine should be free to have a day away from the disturbance of other people's noise, fumes, traffic and the hustle and bustle of a normal weekday?

Ms Jackson: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, because he brings me to my next point.

The hon. Member for Reigate talked about constituents' wishes. The issue of Sunday trading has increased my post by dozens of letters. When I knew that we would be debating this particular amendment I made a less than scientific breakdown of percentages. Of the people who wrote to me of their own volition—they did not forward cards presented to them by the big multiple stores—73·6 per cent. of my constituents wished to keep Sunday special. I was interested to see on the front page of *The Independent* today that nationally 74 per cent. of people wish to keep Sunday special.

That is not surprising because the pressures of modern-day life are enormous and the break-up of families seems to be continuous. Sunday is the only day on which families can meet and be together. I endorse the opinions of all hon. Members who have said that there should be one day in the week that should be nationally regarded as special.

How can special payments for people who work on Sunday logically be achieved? What would be special about people working on Sunday if we were to take away its special nature? There would be no logical reason to pay them double time or overtime.

I believe that we have seen sufficient decay and sufficient reduction of the things that individuals value intensely and totally. It may be religion, it may be being able to communicate within families, it may be to be able to indulge in some kind of sporting activity—a pursuit I am not particularly interested in—it may be a whole range of issues, but if we continually reduce everything to a norm we take away something that is vital and essential to our experience as human beings. There are differences; there should be differences; we must keep Sunday special.

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): It is important that the Committee does not lose sight of the fact that tonight we are trying to select a particular option. That will then go forward to Standing Committee for further refinement. I assume that the further refinement will be in the broad spirit of whatever option is chosen, but it means that there will be another opportunity to make some modifications to whatever option is selected. Hon. Members should choose the option that comes nearest to the particular one that they would like to see, with a view to further modification later. Hon. Members must seek to select an option that they think stands a reasonable chance of getting through with the largest majority, bearing in mind the order of voting. That could make a significant difference.

The Committee must consider the fact that the solution needs to be a simple one, which is easily understood by not only the expert lawyers but by the small shopkeepers who

[Mr. Douglas French]

will have to comply with it. It must be capable of being enforced with a maximum amount of certainty and a minimum amount of cost.

We need to guard against replacing the current confused and confusing set of laws with a further set of laws that are unenforceable and equally confusing. Whenever we make laws we should make good sound laws, not laws that invite people to break them at the first opportunity. The conduct of certain retailers in breaking the law as they have during the past year has been despicable.

The guiding principle that we must try to stick to is that the formula that we adopt must not be too complex. At first glance, that principle drew me towards the simplicity and ease of enforcement of the total deregulation solution. I was much impressed by the persuasive advocacy of my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold). Total deregulation is the easiest option to enforce, and the easiest for people to understand; I do not believe, however, that it is really in keeping with the mood of the people.

I am sure that some people want to take advantage of shopping facilities on Sundays, although others do not. Some want to be able to work on Sundays, while others prefer not to. Most important, a significant group want Sunday to be a day on which they can be fairly certain of securing a degree of peace and quiet—a day on which they can relax, indulge in recreation and pause to wind down before the start of the week. In that regard, I agree with the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) and my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell).

I regard Sunday as a different day: a day on which the pace of life should be slower, which provides the opportunity to do something a little different from what one does for the rest of the week. It is clear from the 700 or more letters that I have received from constituents that a significant number of them want to ensure that Sunday does not become like every other day of the week.

Mr. Fabricant: Like other hon. Members, my hon. Friend wants to keep Sunday special. I think that most of us want to keep it special, but is it not special in Scotland, where deregulation has taken place? If, as some have said, retailers are already behaving as though there were no law in operation, is not Sunday special now?

Mr. French: I do not consider the comparison with Scotland particularly valid. It does not promote my hon. Friend's case very well. Scotland is, after all, an entirely different place, and its circumstances are also different.

As I was saying, I subscribe to the sentiments of the Keep Sunday Special campaign to some extent. I feel, however, that in trying to give effect to what are certainly laudable sentiments the campaign has advanced a solution that does its case no good, because it is largely unenforceable. It fails all the criteria of simplicity and easy enforcement that I require.

We need only examine the campaign's proposed formula to realise how difficult its enforcement would be. It proposes, for instance, that whether shops open should depend on whether the goods sold are "wholly or mainly" of a particular type. I searched the proposals for a definition of "wholly or mainly", but was unable to find one. It is not at all easy to identify when a shop would be fulfilling the Keep Sunday Special formula and when it would not. I could take hon. Members to certain shops that would present them with considerable difficulty.

Let us examine the second and third categories on the KSS list. First, there is the newsagent's shop where the goods on sale are wholly or mainly newspapers, periodicals and confectionery; secondly, there is the convenience shop where the goods are wholly or mainly groceries, domestic cleaning materials and confectionery. Confectionery is common to both categories; but, as has already been pointed out, a sweetshop would not qualify.

Most important, a "wholly or mainly" provision is likely to be extremely unfair to specialist shops, many of which are small and which often bring character to our city centres—character that can all too easily be lost. We should ensure that such shops remain viable.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): If the KSS—RSAR proposals were accepted, would such shops open alone in city centres whose streets were deserted?

Mr. French: My point is that specialist shops selling precisely the same items as convenience stores, newsagents and other shops in the same category would not be able to sell their goods, unlike the designated shops.

Mr. Butterfill: My hon. Friend has not answered my question.

Mr. French: I am happy to give way again.

Mr. Butterfill: Even if the provision were extended to the specialist shops about which my hon. Friend professes concern, would they open on their own in city centres?

Mr. French: I think it highly likely. Certainly, I think that they should be given the same opportunity as other shops selling the same items.

I had some sympathy with my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Sir G. Gardiner), who drew on some of the telling examples presented by the Consumers Association. As my hon. Friend pointed out, the KSS proposals would make it possible to buy toys and books from a newsagent, but not from a toyshop or bookshop. It would be possible to buy meat or bread from a small supermarket, but not from a butcher or baker. A drill could be bought from a small do-it-yourself store, but not from a specialist electrical store. That strikes me as completely lacking in logic. It is confusing and unfair, and I believe that it would ultimately be unenforceable.

Mr. Alison: I must contest my hon. Friend's claim that the proposal lacks logic. By definition, in the category of shops that could open, the articles described by my hon. Friend could not be part of the "wholly or mainly" definition; they would be residual items, and would present no kind of competition with shops whose whole occupation is selling such goods.

Mr. French: I understand my right hon. Friend's point. However, we would have to be constantly involved in judgments about what constitutes "wholly or mainly". Of course, there will be clear-cut illustrations, but many will be on the margin. That is the difficulty with your proposals.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. They are not my proposals.

Mr. French: I am sorry, Dame Janet. I meant the KSS proposals.

I also see some difficulty in another aspect of the KSS proposals—the demarcation line in the definition of an area of 280 sq m as the relevant floor area. It appears that car parks and other external areas, storage areas, corridors and stairs, staff rooms and lavatories are all excluded from the calculation of floor area in the consideration where the shops meet the size criterion; but any areas where goods are displayed, such as window areas, are to be considered part of the relevant floor area, even if customers have no access to them. Parts of the shop from which customers are normally excluded, such as the area behind the counter or the till booths at a check-out, will be included in the calculation. What a crystal-clear definition that is.

Mr. Luff: Does my hon. Friend accept that those who will be charged with the responsibility of enforcement—representative bodies, the Association of District Councils and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities—say that they foresee no difficulties in enforcing the KSS proposals?

Mr. French: That appears to be the official line of those associations. I have spoken to many individual councils, however, and it seems that that view is not widely held. This is another example of associations not properly representing the views of many of their members.

Mr. Llwyd: Every day magistrates courts impose demarcation zones in shops for off-licence purposes. As a lawyer, I have never encountered any difficulties in that regard.

Mr. French: I shall describe the difficulties in a moment. I maintain that such an arrangement would present problems. It might produce a lot of work for surveyors, but it would also create difficulties whenever a shop was altered. I do not want someone who is developing a business to encounter the complication of falling into a different category the moment he wants to add a small extension to his shop.

Mr. Butterfill: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. French: No, I must press on.

Such a provision would be difficult to enforce and would produce peculiar anomalies. The most obvious is that a shop of 270 sq m would be treated differently from a sister shop down the road of 290 sq m selling the same goods. That lacks logic. Although local authorities may be able to undertake the task, they would incur costs in measuring shops and reaching agreement on the wholly or mainly definition. That is a recipe for disagreement and dispute—even if it produced a lot of work for solicitors and surveyors. I reject the KSS proposal for those reasons.

8.30 pm

Mr. Butterfill: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me to intervene again. I am a chartered surveyor and can relieve him of his anxieties. Local authorities already perform that function because, under planning regulations and byelaws, they have responsibility for ensuring that permitted floor areas for sales as against other purposes are not exceeded. The problems that my hon. Friend envisages will not arise.

Mr. French: It would entail a lot of unnecessary cost.

Mr. Butterfill: But local authorities already incur it.

Mr. French: But shops change all the time. No doubt my hon. Friend, as a surveyor, sees some benefit in that arrangement. [HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] I am arguing that such an arrangement would create unnecessary work for solicitors and surveyors, for which the local authority and ultimately the taxpayer would have to pay.

A different approach is adopted by my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). Amendment No. 35 does not, in relation to the goods that may be sold, adopt the wholly or mainly formula but specifies a limited number of goods that might be sold in specific shops on Sunday morning. One accepts that involves some complexity but one sees the logic. I cannot envisage a Sunday on which one could not buy a newspaper from a newsagent or medicinal or surgical products from a pharmacy. It is also very much part of Sunday to be able to buy plants and garden supplies from nurseries.

I have difficulty with some of my right hon. Friend's other categories. Garden accessories present many definitional difficulties, but my right hon. Friend's broad approach of tightly restricted morning trading combined with total deregulation in the afternoon is good. My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) made fun of the Sunday morning formula proposed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton, yet suggested that antiques might be sold by a do-it-yourself centre. That verges on a far more ridiculous situation than does the formula suggested by my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton.

There has been no mention yet of the KSS proposal relating to permitted goods sold from garden centres, motor supply and do-it-yourself shops. The word "permitted" presents a definitional quandary every bit as difficult as that criticised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby in respect of the proposals of my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton.

In a nutshell, amendment No. 35 would keep Sunday morning special and has many attractive features. It is an appropriate solution, not least because of the obvious inadequacies of other proposals before the Committee. Partial deregulation is not credible—*[Interruption.]*

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but there is a constant buzz of what I imagine to be private conversations, which is not acceptable. If the hon. Members responsible hope to catch my eye later, they will be unlucky.

Mr. French: I agree with the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) that partial deregulation is a wolf in sheep's clothing. It is far too close to full deregulation and would quickly destroy the character of Sunday, which I have an interest in preserving. Partial deregulation would be harmful to small shopkeepers, and a diversity of small shops is valuable and must be retained—particularly in city shopping centres. Allowing large shops a continuous six-hour period of trading between 10 am and 6 pm would turn Sunday into a low-key Saturday—and that is not something that I or the majority of my constituents desire. I want Sunday to remain a trading half day with the minimum of complexities in respect of the type or size of shop, type of goods or hours of opening.

If amendment No. 35 is passed, I would want to make one or two modifications in Committee and to re-examine the types of shop that it allowed to open and the sort of goods they could sell. I would like to place some finite

[Mr. French]

limit on afternoon deregulation. At present, all shops could continue to remain open for the rest of the day, and a six o'clock closing time would strike a fair balance. Such a formula would get rid of complexities, keep costs to a minimum, make enforcement practicable and satisfy both those who want to shop on Sunday and those who do not and want it to remain a little different. It would satisfy also those who want to work on Sunday and those who do not. Amendment No. 35 therefore represents the best option before the Committee.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Gloucester (Mr. French), who clearly brings his legal expertise at the Bar to analysing the various options. He has a special interest in small businesses but perhaps did not examine that sector sufficiently in relation to small shops. The hon. Gentleman referred to the mood of the people, and it is incumbent on the Committee to reflect the totality of that mood.

The hon. Member for Reigate (Sir G. Gardiner) indicated in an intervention that Parliament should adopt the views taken by constituents, and he warned that if we do not we shall receive an avalanche of letters from constituents who will lose their jobs if we do not follow a particular route. With 3 million unemployed, there will anyway be many redundant Conservative Members after the next general election. That would truly be retribution. However, as to the mood of the public, we cannot abrogate our responsibilities.

We are not here to respond to the dictates of single-issue pressure groups. My hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms Anderson) referred to a single-issue pressure group. We have all received letters on this subject from such groups. But at the end of the day it falls to the House of Commons to make a balanced decision in the interests of our constituents.

The hon. Member for Gloucester talked about the mood of the people. It is incumbent on us to catch that mood tonight. The hon. Gentleman referred to peace and quiet. He said that he supported amendment No. 35. If we were to get full deregulation, there would not be much peace and quiet in our daily lives.

The hon. Gentleman referred to a variety of anomalies that he found in the Keep Sunday Special documentation and the option. Those anomalies fall in the category of myths, myths and shibboleths. We can spend a lot of time talking about those anomalies. It was suggested that they could be examined on Report and I am sure that that will be the case.

The hon. Gentlemn referred to the extra cost to local authorities if the Keep Sunday Special option is adopted. If there is full deregulation, there will be additional costs on local authorities. The hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) referred to services that are offered at present by local authorities on a Sunday.

I support the option put forward by Keep Sunday Special and the Retailers for Shops Act Reform. I will vote for amendments Nos. 2, 5, 7, and 8 in accordance with the advice given by the Secretary of State when he set out the options open to us. I am glad to see the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) in his place because he referred to a specific point to which I shall return later. He said:

> "No serious employment protection in the future is available without keeping Sunday special . . . keeping Sunday special is the only way to protect our workers."

That must be the case. We have seen many documents on what happens in Europe. For example, there is no trading on Sunday in Germany. There has never been trading on Sunday and there has been no question of the German economy faltering, floundering, weakening or slipping.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: It is in a terrible state.

Mr. Bell: That is because of reunification, not because there is no shopping on Sunday.

Another significant fact about Germany is that, notwithstanding the fact that there is no law for trading on a Sunday, there is no breaking of the law. The law has not been broken and enforceability has not been necessary. That is a significant difference between Germany and the United Kingdom. Many hon. Members have talked about the way in which large retail stores have broken the law over many years. That reflects a different attitude from that in Germany.

I spent many years in France. Certainly, Sunday in France is not the same as Sunday in this country. There have been many jokes from French tourists about Sunday closing in London and England. It is not the same in France where Sunday is certainly much livelier. France has a Sunday shopping law which prevents all stores from opening on a Sunday. The Virgin megastore was the last to discover what can happen when one opens on a Sunday against the law of the land.

The difference between France and the United Kingdom is that the law has been enforced in France. Local inspectors have been involved and there are several cases before the courts. It is interesting to see that the French have not gone along the route of taking cases of being open on a Sunday to the European Court under article 30 and saying that this is somehow a quantitive restriction on imports on a Sunday.

The French law has something which we have had since the Shops Act 1950 came into force—employee protection for Sunday work. It is a legal obligation that a person does not work on a Sunday, but if he does work on a Sunday there must be another day in lieu. One of the consequences of the Shops Act has been that penalties have been imposed in the criminal courts if employers did not respect the obligation not to make someone work on a Sunday. Under this Bill, that provision will go.

8.45 pm

The right hon. Member for Selby referred to employee protection. At the outset, I must say that my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) has worked extremely hard to get some form of employee protection into the Bill. There has been a series of extensions of the original proposals into the area of worker protection. However, the worker protection that will come out of the Bill will be through the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 which deals with industrial tribunals.

If a worker on a Sunday has any difficulty with the owner of the retail shop or chain, he must take his case to an industrial tribunal. That is not necessarily a way forward that protects the right of the worker. He may have bought himself a law suit but he has certainly not bought himself justice. We should bear that in mind when we consider employee protection. It is not sufficient simply to say that we are protecting those who work on a Sunday by introducing employee protection. The employer then has a whole series of hurdles to get over if he is to enforce his right.

Mr. Butterfill: The hon. Gentleman may recollect that the state of Massachusetts in the United States introduced a similar employee protection law when it deregulated some time ago. Indeed, I introduced a similar provision when we debated the issue previously. I assure the hon. Gentleman that there have been no problems with the law in the state of Massachusetts—it has not led to any significant litigation or difficulties.

Mr. Bell: There has been a whole series of erosions of rights before industrial tribunals. Our research clearly shows that applicants without legal representation have been successful in only 1 per cent. of cases where the employer was represented. Other figures show that trade unions frequently help their members to fight cases before industrial tribunals, thus mitigating the absence of legal aid provision. However, most of the 2·2 million retail employees are part-time, non-union workers and do not have the same way of defending their actions.

That is not simply my view; it is the view of those who have specialised in this subject. They have examined the subject and believe that the unfair dismissal law cannot be used to provide unqualified job security rights for shopworkers. Both the substance of the law and the statutory remedies for unfair dismissal suffer from weaknesses which would substantially limit the effectiveness of schedule 4 to the Bill. I return to the point made by the right hon. Member for Selby. If we wish to have employee protection on a Sunday, we will get it only by voting for the Keep Sunday Special option.

A number of statements have been made by trade union leaders. My hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen referred to USDAW. I have received representations from the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union. I must declare an interest. I am sponsored by the GMB and I am comfortable with that fact, although I do not propose to follow its recommendation. I am being whiter than white when it comes to this issue.

We have also had the views of Unison. That union has clearly said that the Keep Sunday Special option is the one that we should support. Lest I give the impression that we are entirely unionised and we entirely support the view of certain trade unions, let me say that we also have the views of the British Chamber of Commerce and therefore I link the interests of trade unions with those of businesses. They say clearly that the updating of the Shops Act along the lines of schedule 1 to the Bill—that is, the joint option of KSS and RSAR—offers a relatively straightforward basis for updating the law on Sunday trading which is economically enforceable. I quote:

> "Total deregulation would lead to many small shop closures, less protection of staff, increased local authority and public service costs and ultimately higher prices to the consumer."

I shall return to the subject of small businesses because small shops and medium-sized shops are small businesses. Two weeks ago, in the Budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer lifted the requirement of an audit on small businesses. He lifted the threshold on VAT. He offered a consultation on late payment for small businesses. Yet the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary, who is with us tonight and is listening—I know how barristers listen with one ear even if they have another one occupied—are going for total deregulation. That is incompatible with the objective of helping small businesses and overlooks the point that small shopkeepers are small businesses.

At least the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold), to whose speech I listened with great interest, had the grace not to say that the document which we have, urging Conservative Members in the first instance to vote for total deregulation and, if that was not acceptable, partial deregulation, had been left on a photocopying machine. Generally, when we have leaks from the Conservatives, the document is left on the photocopying machine for a Labour party researcher. That was not the case.

The argument that I wish to make in relation to the speech of the right hon. Lady is that there is no halfway house between full deregulation and partial deregulation. The Committee must decide clearly tonight that either it wants total deregulation or it wants the option of Keep Sunday Special. We all know the route that partial deregulation will take—it will fairly quickly become full deregulation. I seek, therefore, to persuade the Committee, as we are in the business of persuading, that the Keep Sunday Special option is the option available.

I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) in his place because he made an interesting and incisive speech on Second Reading. He referred to defining the essence of Sunday. We have all looked upon that concept of Sunday. We have all said how we want to keep Sunday special. Some of us regard it as a day of leisure. Some of us regard it as a day of rest. Others talked of a day of tranquillity, of contemplation, of reflection. My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) talked of it as a day special to the six others.

We have touched briefly upon the question of religion. My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) mentioned it; the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) mentioned it; but we have to bear in mind that in this country we have a Christian ethic and a Christian ethos. We fully accept the other religions. We accept that we are a multi-racial society and also a multi-religious society—we respect the Jewish faith and the Muslim faith—but we open each sitting of Parliament with prayers as part of the established Church. We cannot simply take out of the equation the element of the sabbath, that essence of our belief, when it comes to the subject of Sunday opening.

I was quite enlivened one day in church when the priest said that more people go to a church on a Sunday than go to a football match on a Saturday. It may be that more people now watch the football match on Sky television on a Sunday than go to church, but we have the Christian ethos and we have the Christian value. We ought not to overlook that when we discuss these issues.

I would not wish to take up the time of the Committee unduly, but I must leave the issue where I began. It is incumbent upon the Committee to make a decision in the national interest, in the interests of all of our people; not simply those who have written letters; not simply those who have enlisted single-issue pressure groups; not simply those who have lobbied today for a six-hour day for Sunday shopping. It is for us to make the final decision. It is in our hands to resolve the issue once and for all and to resolve in Committee and on Report other aspects that

[Mr. Bell]

might arise. The gift is ours; it cannot be taken away from us. Members of Parliament must decide tonight, and, in my view, the only option is the Keep Sunday Special option.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: We can all agree on what the hon. Gentleman has just finished by saying—that the matter has been dragging on for far too long and must be settled once and for all. I applaud the Government's determination to do just that.

On the subject of small businesses, and on the subject of Scotland, a friend of mine who runs a small business in Scotland said that when the big shops in Princes street open on Sunday, as British Home Stores does, more people come in to shop in the small shops in the arcades on Sunday. If big shops open, it appears to do good to small businesses rather than the harm that is sometimes expected.

Mr. Lord: Will my hon. and learned Friend give way?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I will not, because a lot of people want to speak and if I give way to my hon. Friend I shall be tempted to give way to all sorts of other people who want to ask me lots of questions. It is out of fairness to everyone else. Perhaps my hon. Friend will catch the Chairman's eye.

What are the elements that I believe must affect the decision that I make this evening? The first is that it should accord as far as possible with the wishes of the majority of the people. Secondly, we should decide on an approach which will give people as much freedom as possible to make a choice about whether they want to shop or they do not. Thirdly, we must do it in such a way that we should respect the law rather than have contempt for it. Fourthly, we must do it in a way which incurs the least possible cost to the taxpayer. Fifthly, we must protect the consciences of those who choose not to work on Sunday.

Applying those rules, what do I find to be the situation? As far as the overwhelming will of the people is concerned, I am persuaded that the majority want to be free to shop or not, as they choose, on Sunday. It has nothing to do with keeping Sunday special. If they want it to be special by not shopping they will not shop. Some will want it to be special by being the one day in the week when they can shop with their families. Bearing in mind that the patterns of life have changed very much since the Shops Act was introduced in 1950, that families often come together and it is much better that they should come together with some kind of an activity on Sunday than sit stewing in front of the television set, and that 11 million people already shop on Sundays and will go on doing so whichever way we decide tonight, and that the church shops are often open on Sunday so the sin has gone out of Sunday shopping, I think that the first of those elements has been fulfilled if the overwhelming majority of people want to choose deregulation.

As to free choice, the Keep Sunday Special option offers the least free choice, the partial deregulation, the next least free choice, amendment No. 35 the next degree of free choice and total deregulation the most free choice.

As to respect for the law, we should have learnt the lesson by now that restrictions in this area lead to contempt for the law and the injustice of some being prosecuted while others are not, some being forcibly closed down while others are open, and the absurdity of the distinctions which are so much honoured in the breach, governing what one may sell, what one may not sell and in what shop one may not do it.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Sir G. Gardiner) said, it is crazy to substitute one set of restrictions for another. It will bring the law into disrepute, as powerful and wealthy shops break the law, get round it or ignore it. About 30 years ago I was asked to advise whether a certain well known company was breaking the Shops Act by holding sales of all the wonderful items that it made in people's houses on Sunday. The name of the company must, of course, remain secret, but it produced plastic ware. I was a young barrister, and I advised the firm that what it suggested would be in breach of the Shops Act. I do not blame the firm, but it totally ignored my advice, and went on to make large fortunes for anyone who invested in the business.

I say that merely to make the point that, in one way or another, people get round, ignore or break such laws, and it will be the wealthy organisations and companies that do so.

9 pm

Mr. Butterfill: Will my hon. and learned Friend give way?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: No. The same rule must apply to my hon. Friend, tempting though his interruption may be, as applied to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord), to whom I had to say no.

There is no doubt that unless we get rid of all those regulations there will not be respect for the law.

With regard to expense, we have only to consider the expense of policing those multifarious regulations, whichever option we choose. If we choose partial deregulation someone will have to decide whether a shop is larger than 280 sq m, or whether it is open for minutes longer than six hours between 10 am and 6 pm. Someone will have to decide whether a shop really is a pharmacy, and therefore exempt. There would be the absurdity whereby a supermarket of 270 sq m could open all day, but one of 290 sq m could open for only six hours.

That is nothing compared with the policing necessary to enforce option 2 of the Keep Sunday Special regulations. Policing at some cost would be required to see whether a shop was exempt, regardless of size. Someone would have to ask: is it a pharmacy, selling medicines, or, if it size-limited, is it no larger than 280 sq m? Is it selling goods that are "wholly or mainly" the goods that one would expect to buy in a grocery shop, a newsagent, or a flower shop? If it is a larger exempt shop, is it selling only permitted goods? If it is exempt because of location, is it a tourist shop selling "wholly or mainly" souvenirs or confectionery? If it is a farm shop, is it selling "wholly or mainly" home-grown produce? If a very small shop claiming to be 10 sq m or less is being investigated, is it 10·25 sq m, or 11·2 sq m, and so on? That is crazy.

If hon. Members want to hear me make a speech against my interests as a lawyer, I am making one now. Having as many regulations as we can is a wonderful way to give money to lawyers. *[Interruption.]* I am speaking against my own professional interests, and my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) knows that that will strengthen my argument. When one speaks against one's interests there is more credibility in what one says—or so one hopes.

No doubt it will be in the interests of some people for there to be some form of regulation, but there can be no possible doubt that the least expensive option—my fourth requirement—is total deregulation.

Mr. Booth *rose*——

Sir Ivan Lawrence: No; the same rule must apply. I am sorry.

Finally, my fifth requirement is to protect the consciences of those who do not choose to work. That is an important matter and I am delighted that the Government have come round to the idea of accepting all the requirements of those most closely concerned with that aspect. The Government have given that protection in total regulation, as in all others, and I do not need to repeat those provisions.

I am driven, Miss Fookes, to—[HON. MEMBERS: "Dame Janet."] I am sorry, Dame Janet.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): That is quite all right, Mr. Lawrence.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Applying the facts as I see them to the requirements that I believe necessary, I am driven inexorably to the conclusion that there should be total deregulation. Once we accept that Sunday opening is not a sin but is what a majority of people want, and that Sunday will still be special if, for any reason—people have different ideas about what the special nature of Sunday is —we want to make it special, once we ensure that those who do not want to work are not forced to do so, once we ensure that it will be cheaper for the taxpayer, simpler and less likely to bring the law into disrepute than total deregulation, then total deregulation seems to me to be the only sensible conclusion.

That is what the Auld committee, after 18 months' work during which it contacted 500 individuals and organisations, and considered 7,000 submissions, decided:

> "We are firmly of the view that there is no interest, or combination of interests, that justifies the retention of . . . regulation"

of shopping hours.

> "We have considered as an independent issue whether in any event a form of control can be devised that would be fair, simple and readily enforceable. We have examined in great detail a wide range of suggested different forms of legal control . . . none would provide a fair or readily enforceable system."

That is what has always happened in Scotland, and it works well there. I am not impressed at all by my hon. Friends who brush aside Scotland as though it is of no interest in the matter just because it is the most inconvenient example to their argument. Three-quarters of the shops in Scotland do not open, so there would be far less noise than my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) fears.

The quarter of the shops which do open bring shopping interest to their area. The big shops, as I have said, bring trade to the smaller shops also—or so my Scottish friends tell me. They also provide jobs for students at the weekends or for people who want to have some time at the weekend to supplement their incomes.

My hon. Friend will know that I do not follow the Scots everywhere, particularly in legal matters. However, on this occasion we would all do well to follow the call of the bagpipers.

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The standard of debate during this evening and this afternoon has been very high. The Whips are off, and there may be a lesson for us all in that.

I wish to comment on the speech of the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), although I hesitate to do so because I well know his standing as a Queen's counsel of great eminence. However, if I understood his thesis in connection with the Keep Sunday Special option, I believe that he said that the law would be brought into some disrepute if regulation were necessary. That must be the best possible argument for abolishing Parliament.

I shall be brief, as time is short. I believe sincerely that total deregulation is wrong in principle and that it will not work. I listened carefully to the extremely powerful and well-argued speech of the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold). I disagreed with her and shall elaborate on why shortly.

The right hon. Lady said that the second option, the Keep Sunday Special option, was in some way complex and would be unworkable. I will make the obvious point that the fine-tuning exercises can take place at another stage and that today we are dealing more with the principle. We are not dealing with the minutiae of the Bill, and those matters can be discussed on another occasion.

I am afraid that the partial deregulation option appears to me to be a Pandora's box. As the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) said, it is also a slippery slope. It will bring deregulation via the back door and, to that extent, it may be a dishonest—I use that word advisedly—option.

The fourth option was introduced by the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) for what were, I am sure, the best possible and most honourable of motives. However, I would classify his version with the Pandora's box. It will open the door, and the door will then fly open with the wind.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Llwyd: Time is short, and I should like to make progress if the hon. Gentleman does not mind.

Total deregulation is, in my view, wrong. It is not only simplistic but a dangerous option for many thousands of small shop proprietors. They would face two real problems. The first is the problem of having to open for seven days. If a shop has a staff of perhaps one or two persons, will the proprietors be able to handle a seven-day working week? Should they have to face a seven-day working week? The short answer is no. Hon. Members have a seven-day working week, but we are a funny breed anyway. One should not reasonably expect a person to work for seven days a week.

What happens if small shop proprietors do not work for seven days and want to keep their customers? I am talking not about city centre areas but about smaller towns, such as those which I represent, which have the larger stores on their outskirts. If proprietors want to keep their customers and they do not want to work seven days a week, they will have to bring in extra employees to cover the seventh day. Many of those businesses operate on minimal margins, and the proposals will break them as surely as I am standing here.

[Mr. Llwyd]

No doubt, there are one or two problems of fine-tuning to be dealt with. I do not pretend that this option is perfect as it stands, but surely in this place we can fine-tune or hone measures when necessary.

The right hon. Member for Honiton foresaw that a major problem would be posed by the need to know the floor area of shops. But all that information is on file already. District valuers have it for the purposes of the uniform business rate. All they need to do is put it on someone's desk. I fear that no surveyors will have to be instructed—the information is all on file, so there is no problem. It is a dud point. Moreover, I am sure that analysis of the problems that hon. Members have identified in the KSS option will show that none is insurmountable.

I firmly believe that the KSS option is the right one, because it is a reasonable package. It is also highly practical, and as a lawyer I do not foresee any problems with implementation. It will open the door to smaller firms; if they want to, they can open their shops. Larger concerns may open during the run-up to Christmas. That provides choice. I therefore disagree with hon. Members who say that it is the least attractive option in terms of free choice. The choice offered by the KSS proposal is more than adequate.

One of two fine-tuning exercises may take place; I acknowledge that one or two slight problems may need ironing out. Like other hon. Members, I am concerned about the rights of employees. I believe that the KSS option ensures that their rights are protected and will mean an extension of choice to the public—with added safeguards for staff.

I am sure that I speak for the whole Committee when I say that legislation is overdue. Tonight we have a real opportunity, and hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber must grasp it. The law certainly has fallen into disrepute, and our job as parliamentarians is to ensure that the new legislation does not fall into the same trap.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) pointedly and rightly said that the cynical lawbreaking by some of our larger concerns had been disgracefully bad for the rule of law. He asked what we should do about the lawbreakers. The short answer is that the Bill provides for bringing them before a court of law. I hope sincerely that they will be taken to court; otherwise, the whole exercise will be a complete waste of time.

Mr. Sheerman: Some of the companies in the forefront of this campaign used to be names that we regarded with great admiration. We used to think that the Sainsburys of this world were progressive companies in the retail trade, but they have changed. They have led this charge; they have led this lawbreaking. Is not that disturbing and astounding?

Mr. Llwyd: I entirely agree; it has been a disgrace. Those companies should be ashamed of themselves, driven as they are by only one motive—profit. That is abhorrent——

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): They also have their customers in mind.

Mr. Llwyd: The hon. Lady has not been in the Chamber long. She has been here for five minutes, whereas I have sat through five hours of debate. Let us have an element of decorum.

Those companies should be ashamed of themselves because they have been selective about adhering to the law. If a person is caught shoplifting, whether on a Saturday, a Sunday or any other day, he is likely to be prosecuted.

Time and time again, local authorities have turned a blind eye to lawbreaking. Some have decided as a matter of policy not to enforce the law, but I am sure that others are unable to do so because of financial constraints. I hope that the Committee will vote for the second option, but that new law can only be adhered to if local authorities are able to ensure that it is upheld. It is no use saying that some local authorities will police the law and others will not, because we would then be back at square one. We must ensure that local authorities have the resources to police the new legislation carefully and properly. They must prosecute all fairly and without fear. The Home Office must accept the scale of the problem and ensure that the local authorities receive the required resources to perform their function.

9.15 pm

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) spoke about the environmental impact of Sunday trading. The Association for the Conservation of Energy estimates that 1 million tonnes of additional CO_2 emissions will result from complete deregulation and the resulting extra traffic.

It is important to remind the Committee of one topical, important point. When the Government introduced VAT on fuel, with which I disagreed, they argued that it would lead to a reduction of 1·5 million tonnes in CO_2 emissions. In one fell swoop, however, we could drive a coach and horses through that intention, because total deregulation would sanction the emission of an extra 1 million tonnes of CO_2. That point is not peripheral to the argument because we live in the world and we have a duty to protect our environment. If the Government are truly committed to the Rio agreement on emissions, they should take that on board.

The only viable option is the Keep Sunday Special option. I urge hon. Members to vote for that option because it will give the consumer what he needs, protect smaller shops and give larger retailers a say. It will also ensure that workers' rights are preserved. I urge hon. Members to vote for that option.

Mr. Couchman: I am pleased to have been called to speak in this important debate.

Last week, the House gave the Bill a Second Reading by a massive majority. It did so for one good reason—the law is in disrepute. It has proved to be unenforceable because it is shot through with anomalies. Tonight when we vote, however, we must ensure that we do not support an option that will create similar anomalies and contention.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) produced a most interesting option at the very last moment. It is, however, a complete nightmare. Who will tell housewives who run out of something on a Sunday morning that they cannot buy the necessary groceries from the corner shop? That is absolutely beyond the pale. It is not possible to support something so fundamentally flawed.

Mr. Butterfill: We are on common ground so far.

Mr. Couchman: My hon. Friend might care to listen.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton suggested that it might be possible to amend his option in Standing Committee. That seems to me to be an entire cop-out.

We are then faced with the possibility of total deregulation, which was proposed most eloquently and powerfully by my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold). It still has a good deal of attraction for me. I voted for total deregulation in the unsuccessful attempt to reform the law in 1986 and I still feel considerable warmth towards that option. However, I do not expect it to succeed in the Committee tonight.

For a long time, I have nailed my colours to the mast of the Shopping Hours Reform Council compromise—the only real compromise among the options that are offered.

I have a great deal to say about the Keep Sunday Special campaign. I view it as a complete nightmare for lawyers. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) said that it would be a real field day for lawyers if we were to end up with the Keep Sunday Special option.

It seems that there is a certain amount of dissembling among those who proposed the RSAR option, which has now become the combined KSS-RSAR option. In Scotland, Marks and Spencer opens two of its stores on Sunday. It announced several months in advance—even before the shopping centre was open—that a recently opened store would be open on Sundays. Marks and Spencer led the way and was not led by others. That gives the lie to the comments of the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) earlier this evening.

Much has been made of the way in which Marks and Spencer is preserving the small shopkeeper. I found an interesting article on a shuttle bus which it runs to the Fosse Park shopping centre in Leicestershire. The shuttle bus runs through all the villages, taking the villagers away from the small village shops and putting them in the large store at Fosse Park.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Couchman: I shall not give way at all because I have sat here for five hours waiting to make a short contribution.

Mr. Lord: Marks and Spencer did not break the law.

Mr. Couchman: My hon. Friend says that Marks and Spencer has not been breaking the law, and indeed it has not. However, it may well be that Marks and Spencer is preparing for a change in the law.

I understand that, when stores are interviewing applicants for new jobs, potential employees are asked whether they would be prepared to work Sundays. There has been a certain amount of dissembling on that matter. If the law changes to allow Marks and Spencer to trade legally south of the border, as it is doing north of the border, it certainly will do so. We should do away with the dissembling on that issue.

It seems that the Keep Sunday Special option totally ignores the social changes that have occurred in the 40-odd years since the 1950 Act was passed. It ignores the fact that many more women go out to work but remain the principal shoppers in households. Sunday shopping has come as a great boon to them. I visited a shop in my constituency where many families were doing their weekly shop as a family because mum could come out, too, because she was not at work as she was during the week.

There is a demand for a liberal change in the law and not for a more restrictive change in the law. Half the population who regularly shop once a month on a Sunday do not want to find themselves with a more restrictive choice than they have now. The list of exceptions that the KSS option would allow leads one to believe that that option has been drawn up in a way that is as near Sabbatarian as its promoters could get away with.

Much fun was had by my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) about the fact that I like to go to antique shops on Sunday. I only wish that I could have responded to his suggestion that, in future, I will have to go to B and Q for my antiques. That seems a most unlikely place for antique collectors to spend their leisure time on Sundays.

There are, as we have heard from various hon. Members, bakers, butchers, book shops, boat yards, car showrooms, caravan showrooms, carpet shops, compact disc sellers, charity shops, china and glass shops, clothes shops, confectioners, craft shops, curtain and blind shops, electrical shops, furniture shops—even greengrocers—jewellers, kitchen shops, lingerie shops, pet shops, shoe shops, stationers, textile shops and toy shops.

Mr. Sheerman: On a point of order, Dame Janet. That is a very tedious list. This is the Committee stage of the Bill, yet hon. Members are getting up and refusing all interventions. Will you rule on that? It is quite extraordinary that hon. Members are starting their speeches by saying that they will not take interventions and then they go on to read long and boring lists.

The Second Deputy Chairman: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that it is entirely up to the hon. Member who has the Floor whether to permit an intervention. I am not able as Chairman to judge the value of a speech unless it becomes tedious repetition.

Mr. Sheerman: It is.

The Second Deputy Chairman: It has to be considerably more tedious than that.

Mr. Couchman: Thank you, Dame Janet, for your support.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield has made many interventions during this debate. My point is that, among those many categories of shops—mostly small shops—some 39,000 will not be allowed to trade on a Sunday. That will mean that 39,000 shops that are currently trading, either legally or illegally, will have to close under the KSS option. Many thousands of workers will lose their Sunday work, alongside the 80,000 who now work for the major stores—the supermarkets—on Sundays. What sort of worker protection do the proponents of the KSS option view that to be? It seems to me that it is no option whatever.

I know that other hon. Members wish to speak, so I will not speak for much longer. We need some form of compromise, because many people hold deep reservations about Sunday shop opening. In reforming the law, I believe that the Committee must take those worries into account. The restriction on large shops, which is in the SHRC option—the six-hour option—will mean a freezing of the present situation and we shall not see many more shops

[Mr. Couchman]

opening on a Sunday. If the partial deregulation option were passed, Sunday would continue to be maintained in a special way and the specialness that all of us crave would be preserved.

Whatever we do by way of reform to this outdated and anomalous law, we should ensure that it is durable. The one thing that we do not wish to see coming back next year is a shopping hours reform Bill. That is what will happen if we end up with a restrictive and regulatory option such as that proposed by the KSS campaign. If, as I suspect, total deregulation does not gain favour with the Committee, I hope that it will give massive support to the alternative compromise SHRC proposal.

Mr. Soley: I intend to be brief and speak in support of the SHRC position, and bring in a couple of new points, which might seem a little difficult after so much time. I shall touch equally briefly on a couple of points that have already been mentioned.

The importance of the employee's rights has been mentioned. I would vote against legislation if I thought that it was against those rights. As the main trade unions, including one of which I am a member, have concluded that the compromise proposal is in the best interests of their members, I am not in the business of telling them to go back and tell their members that they are wrong. Nor am I in the business of telling them to go back and renegotiate. That is an important point, and so far as I am concerned, it deals with that issue.

My second point is about small shops. Again, if I felt that a measure that extended shopping hours would cripple small shops, I would be tempted to vote against it. *[Interruption.]* I ask hon. Members on the Liberal Democrat Bench to listen to me. I do not want to take too many interventions, but when they have heard what I have to say, one of them may wish to intervene and, if so, I shall consider giving way.

The important point to remember about the regrettable decline of small shops is that it started long before the Sunday trading issue. It is the result of the growth in supermarkets and large stores. In the debate, hon. Members have blamed the growth of the great stores for closing the small shops and said that if they open for another day, yet more small shops will close. That theory is not correct and it is not supported by the experience in my area or by a look at the types of shopping.

9.30 pm

When people go to the large superstores, particularly those out of town, they tend to do a different type of shopping from the shopping they do at local shops. They stock up for a week, 10 days or two weeks; they buy in bulk and it does not matter what day of the week they do that. If one went on the Wednesday because the shop was closed on a Thursday, Sunday opening would not make much difference to the pattern. It makes little odds what the day is. If I cannot go on a Sunday now, I will go on a Monday, but if I can go on a Sunday, I will not go on a Monday.

If hon. Members really believe that Sunday opening will lead to the decline of the small shop, they should listen to my experience. Only a couple of years ago a couple of large stores—both Sainsbury—opened in my area within about five miles of each other with my main patch, Shepherd's Bush, right in between them. *[Interruption.]* I should be grateful if I could have a little less noise around me.

There should have been a decline in the number of small shops in the area as a result of those two stores opening, but in fact there was probably a marginal increase, although not one connected with Sunday shopping. People go to the large shops on Sunday but down the end of the road for local shopping. That is what I do where I live in Shepherd's Bush. If I want five, six or 10 items, I will go down the road for them, even on a Sunday, when I go to my local Asian shops, whose owners are not in favour of the KSS option, or at least have not told me that they are. On the other hand, if I want to stock up for a week or two, I go to the nearby Sainsbury store, or whatever.

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Soley: I will give way, but I do not want to give way too often because of the lack of time.

Mr. Gapes: I thank my hon. Friend. Is he arguing that there is a limitless increase in the amount of goods that will be bought in the shops to which he is referring? Is there not a finite amount of shopping that will be done, and if that amount is spread over a longer time, will not that result in higher overheads and other costs?

Mr. Soley: I would like to think that it was as simple as that, but as is so often the case, there are variables. My hon. Friend has not taken into account the changed nature of shopping. If he was right in his argument, the situation in Scotland would have changed much more drastically. However, the argument that Scotland is different does not wash. I lived in Scotland for a number of years and I know that there is not much difference between the areas around Glasgow and Edinburgh and those around London. There is a far greater difference between living in London and living in the southern rural areas. One must also take into account the change in shopping patterns, which is vital.

Hon. Members have spoken about family life. It is hard to determine what improves or makes worse family life in an issue like this. The majority of shoppers are women. That is changing, I am pleased to say, but it is still true. I would like to think that hon. Members, like me, have gone shopping with young children. Those who have will know that going to shops with young children on one's own is a difficult job.

It is far better to go to the shops with another person. One of the advantages to the family, and to the mother, of shopping on a weekend, whether it is a Saturday or Sunday, is that there is partnership of people to shop and look after children. Another equally important option, which I employ, is to share the child care—either stay at home with the children while the other partner goes shopping, or vice versa. It is therefore not an argument to say that Sunday trading undermines family life. There is considerable evidence that it makes family life much easier and that it certainly makes the woman's role much easier.

The majority of representations that I have received from women are in favour of that sort of flexibility.

We must also be careful about the impact of technological change. Superstores grew in number because with the growing availability of cars and fridge freezers people were able to travel to those stores and stock up for a week or more.

We must also consider another imminent situation in which people will sit in front of their television sets and order goods by telephone. If we are to go down that road in a few years, we must be clear about whether that will be allowed to happen on a Sunday. Technology drives social change. Whether that change is the growth of superstores or the ability to shop by telephone and television is marginal to the issue before us. However, it is critical if we kid ourselves that we can stand in the way of that social change.

We must ensure that we protect certain values and rights. We must protect the rights of the employees to the satisfaction of the trade unions involved and ensure that we do not introduce anything that is destructive of family life —there are some advantages. Logically, to protect small shops, the big shops would have to close. That would allow growth in the small shops, but apparently nobody is arguing for that.

The SHRC approach is the best option, not because it is perfect but because the others do not bear the analysis which is sometimes applied.

Mr. Cormack: The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) always makes a thoughtful and interesting speech, as he has done tonight, although I could not follow his logic or his argument.

My hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth), who had hoped to participate in the debate, a few moments ago handed me an interesting quotation of the words of an eminent neurologist, Dr. James Brown. He said:

> "We doctors, in the treatment of nervous diseases, are compelled to prescribe periods of rest. Some of these periods are, I think, only Sundays in arrears."

It is an interesting observation from a medical man. I stand full square behind the special nature of Sundays. It is not a question of whether one goes to church; it is a question of a day when the tempo of life is slower, when the family can be together more and when it is different from the rest of the week.

I have always opposed the deregulation of Sunday trading because I am completely against a high-street Sunday. I do not want Saturday to be replicated the day after and if there is total deregulation through either of the deregulation options before the Committee, Sundays will certainly be a second Saturday. I also oppose the deregulation of Sunday trading because I strongly believe in the value of small shops. Members of Parliament have a prime duty to those who are most vulnerable in society. I think it was my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) who talked about the rich and powerful. We do not have to worry about the rich and the powerful a great deal. As we have seen in recent years, the law has been flagrantly violated by those who ought to know better. We are concerned with protecting those who are less able to protect themselves—small shop keepers, workers in shops and those who live in modest houses who will suffer the greatest disruption from the clutter and bustle of a high-street Sunday.

Let us consider those three categories one at a time, beginning with the small shopkeeper. I am afraid that I was not convinced by what the hon. Member for Hammersmith said. I believe that they would suffer in one of two ways —they would be driven out of business or forced to open on Sundays and people who work all around the clock would lose the little rest and recreation that they sometimes have.

I was much influenced by a letter that I received from the National Organisation of Asian Businesses. My right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) is a member of its advisory board. I fully respect her position but it is certainly not in accord with that of the organisation which urges us to support the RSAR initiative, allowing shops of up to 3,000 sq ft to remain open on Sundays.

Small shops perform a significant and signal service in rural areas such as mine, where they are often the centre of the community where people gather, and in urban and suburban areas where they are the corner shops. They would all be endangered by the unrestricted Sunday opening of the large shops. There is no doubt about that.

The second category concerns those who work in the shops. I am especially worried about the total inadequacy of the well-meant provisions in the Bill which are supposed to give some protection. I intervened on my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) to quote a contract circulating in the Wolverhampton area. I received a very sad letter from a lady who received a copy of that contract. She drew my attention to a clause in the contract which states:

> "If it is decided that your branch will trade on a Sunday or a Bank holiday, you may be asked to work on these days. Your employment is subject to your full agreement to this condition of employment."

What option does the ordinary shop worker have if there is unrestricted Sunday trading? As has already been said, if Sunday ceases to be special, there is not much of a logical case for arguing for double time or overtime, so shop workers will suffer whatever happens.

The third group of small people are those who live in modest terraced houses and other accommodation in or near the centres of towns and cities. Their lives will be disrupted by the clutter and clatter of the commercial Sunday. When I listen to debates on this topic, I often think of Oscar Wilde's words about people who know the price of everything but the value of nothing. We have a duty to know the value of Sunday, and we should not allow it to be driven out of our heads by purely commercial instincts.

I urge all hon. Members to realise that if we abolish the special nature of Sunday, we cannot call it back—it will be gone for ever. If we accept the Keep Sunday Special option, linked with what I call the Marks and Spencer option—meaning that shops would be allowed to open for the four Sundays before Christmas—we could amend and adjust it to meet changing demands. Total deregulation, however, would mean the removal of all restrictions to the disadvantage of everyone.

I end with two examples to support my argument. The first involves the effect of total deregulation on many of our town centres and cities. I do not know how many right hon. and hon. Members know Dudley in the west midlands, which has become a ghost town since the opening of the Merry Hill shopping centre. Such competition sucks the life out of a town—the hoardings go up, the criminals come in, and the town is dehumanised. I believe strongly that we would be doing a great disservice if we allowed that to happen everywhere, which would be the result of total deregulation.

Secondly, I think that it was the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) who mentioned Good Friday. Many hon. Members must remember when commerce stopped on Good Friday. It was an extra day of the year—another Sunday, if you like—when people could

[Mr. Cormack]

sit back; whether or not they went to church, it was a day of rest and recreation. For the more serious people it was a day of contemplation; and for the even more serious it was a day of contemplation about the most serious thing in their lives.

Good Friday is now another commercial day. One can drive down the main streets of any of our towns and cities, in almost any part of the country, and the cash tills are ringing and the queues are there. The rest, the recreation and the opportunity for contemplation has gone for ever. If we move along that road tonight, we will condemn every Sunday to go the way that Good Friday has gone in so many parts of the world.

I urge all right hon. and hon. Members not to throw away something that is priceless and beyond recall. The special character of Sunday is priceless. If it goes tonight it will be beyond recall.

9.45 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I apologise for missing the earlier parts of the debate but I was delayed by traffic.

I welcome the opportunity to follow the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), who made telling points. I may be in danger of going over old ground, so I will try to keep my remarks concise and deal with some of the points that I have heard.

We have heard some specious arguments tonight. For example, according to the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), the more people break a law the less likelihood there is of that law being upheld and therefore we must change it. It is a strange argument. Perhaps I am more aware of that because I come from Northern Ireland.

I did not follow the argument of the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). In this debate at least, my experience has been that trade union officials—having entered into agreement with some of the bigger stores to collect dues—have been protecting their jobs rather than those of some of their members.

The debate is about whether we go for further materialism or stand for other values. I declare my interest without any ambiguity as an ordained minister of the word and sacraments. We are living in a materialistic society. Reference has been made to the Jews, Moslems and Christians, and we all accept the principle that one day in seven must be kept different. In other countries, where the predominant religion may be Jewish or Moslem, their specific day is different. Because of our heritage, traditionally our's is the first day of the week.

When people were arguing for Sunday football and Sunday sport some years ago, one of the arguments was, "We must play on Sunday because Saturday is the only day that we can go shopping with our wives." When the premier league was introduced and the main matches played on a Sunday were televised, it was amazing how many found that they could play football on a Saturday because they were not getting the gates on a Sunday. That reflects the materialistic spirit that is passing through our world.

Reference was made to Germany and France. It is not surprising that those who have been leading the advance to totally deregulate Sunday trading in this country are now beginning to spread their wings and seeking to influence thinking in France and Germany.

The Government are calling us back to basics. Tonight is an opportunity to get back to the basics of the decalogue and to remember that the fourth commandment is one of the fundamental basics that gives us a day of rest, when we can recycle ourselves and opt for values that are more important than profits.

Mr. John Marshall: Having listened to every speech, I shall resist the temptation to comment on all but one—that of the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), whose integrity, principles and commitment to Christianity we all accept, but some of whose conclusions are not acceptable to me.

I noted the hon. Gentleman's kind comments about the Jewish community, and his observation that that community honours Shebat. I suppose that I represent more orthodox members of the Jewish community than any other Member of Parliament. When I go around Hendon on a Saturday, I can guarantee that orthodox Jewish families will also be walking around my constituency. They do not do so because there is any lack of temptation. Nearly all the shops in Golders Green open on Saturdays, as do virtually all the shops in Hendon. Those families could go to the shops at Brent Cross, or to the cinema, but they do not do so for reasons of conviction —and I believe that Sunday will remain special through conviction rather than legislative fiat.

Mr. Donald Anderson: I was trying to make a point about the value of family life. I am certain that, if deregulation were introduced—either immediately or by stages—it would impose an undesirable additional pressure on the family. In many cases, a key member of the family would not be present on that one day.

Mr. Marshall: There is no reason why family life should be destroyed by partial deregulation, as recommended by the Shopping Hours Reform Council. Over the past few weeks, I have visited a number of supermarkets and have noted the instances in which father, mother and children go shopping together.

Let me give the hon. Gentleman an example of the way in which seven-day trading can aid family life. I asked a gentleman of about 50 who was shopping in Asda, "Why are you shopping today?" He replied, "I shop for myself on Saturdays, and on Sundays I take my elderly mother out in the car so that she and I can shop together. That is the only way in which she can visit the supermarket: it is open on Sundays, and I can go with her and help." That is family life—a son helping his elderly mother. It would stop if supermarkets closed on Sundays.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Is not one of the greatest joys of childhood sitting on a supermarket trolley while the parents do the shopping?

Mr. Marshall: I went to a supermarket with my children last weekend—*[Interruption.]*

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I should be grateful if hon. Members would listen to the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall).

Mr. Marshall: My children thoroughly enjoyed the experience, although I did not enjoy paying for their extravagances; they thought that I should buy whatever they selected.

The hon. Member for Swansea, East said that the supermarkets had been breaking the law. Every shop that has opened on Sunday has been breaking the law for generations: every shop that has sold a bag of sugar or Tetley tea bags—Tetley's beer can be sold on Sundays, but the tea bags cannot—or a can of beans has broken the law. Every shop that would benefit from the amendment supported by the hon. Member for Swansea, East has been breaking the law. The argument that lawbreakers must not be allowed to benefit is an argument for voting for none of the amendments.

Over the past few weeks, an unholy alliance—a marriage of convenience—has been created between the Keep Sunday Special and RSAR campaigns. It should be remembered that the two campaigns came together only because they knew that individually they could not get their proposals through the House of Commons. It is the most disgracefully restrictive and protectionist group of retailers imaginable.

Waitrose does not want to open Sundays. I would not force Waitrose to do so, but why should it stop Asda, Tesco and Sainsbury opening on Sunday? Marks and Spencer wants to open only four Sundays a year. Why should it prevent British Home Stores or Woolworth opening the other 48 Sundays? Marks and Spencer wants to deny consumer choice and to restrict competition. Marks and Spencer wrongly claims that it will be forced to open on Sundays if the SHRC option succeeds. One only has to look at the experience of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee to realise that if shops were allowed to open on Sundays in England, Marks and Spencer would not be forced to do so and would not do so most Sundays.

Keep Sunday Special's decision to get into bed with the RSAR was completely unprincipled. When we debated the private Member's Bill of the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) earlier this year, one understood that the hon. Gentleman was advancing the principle of no trading on Sundays by the big boys. We no longer have that principle, but we are told that there should be no trading except on four Sundays. Why four and not six, eight or 10? No one has said. We have been told that shops should only trade on the four Sundays before Christmas, and see the KSS campaign supporting the commercialisation of Christmas. I find that completely—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Sheerman: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. It is difficult to hear the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), and a rumour that is circulating is adding to the noise. The rumour is that the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) has withdrawn his amendment, which would change the voting pattern. If that rumour is true, right hon. and hon. Members should know before they flood out of here and into the wrong Lobby.

The Chairman: It is not for the Chair to listen to any rumour that may be circulating. If any right hon. or hon. Member wants to withdraw an amendment at any time, it is up to him to do so. At this point, the Committee is debating amendment No. 35 and the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) has the Floor.

Mr. Marshall: Much of the debate has been muddied by discussion of the small shopkeeper. It is amusing to see Marks and Spencer, which has been competing against small shopkeepers for generations, suddenly come along and say, "We are terribly concerned about the small corner shop." Marks and Spencer could not care two hoots. It is amusing also that Iceland, which has been trying to win business from the small corner shop, says, "Vote for our option to help the small corner shop." It would be more honest of Iceland to say, "Vote for our option to benefit Iceland"—because that is what it seeks to do.

The dramatic decline in the number of small shops in the 1980s had nothing to do with Sunday opening by supermarkets, because they did not open on Sundays then. It all had to do with a changing pattern of retailing, which presented small shops with intense competition, not from supermarkets but from petrol stations.

The test is simple. What would benefit the consumer, what do workers want and what do local authorities, which will have to enforce any change in the law, want? Local authorities prefer deregulation. They consider the SHRC option to be tolerable and the KSS-RSAR option to be intolerable, because it is riddled with illogical concepts.

This evening, my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) said, "Vote for the KSS option so that you can buy antiques in a DIY store on Sunday." Does my right hon. Friend really believe that the public would go to B & Q to buy a George IV desk? What arrant nonsense. How out of touch is my right hon. Friend.

The consumer enjoys Sunday shopping. Several million people shop on a Sunday. One of the reasons they do so is that supermarkets give good value. The supporters of KSS and RSAR want to keep convenience stores open. I went to a convenience store and a supermarket on a Sunday. In the convenience store, I had to pay 38p for a pint of milk. In the supermarket, the cost was 25p. Why should the pensioners of Hendon be prevented from paying low prices for their milk, bread and Nescafe? The supporters of KSS want to stop the pensioners, the low-paid and those who are not well off in my constituency from enjoying the benefits of cheap prices on Sunday. There is nothing moral about Labour Members voting to impose higher prices on my constituents.

It being Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report Progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report Progress.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Sunday Trading Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Sunday Trading Bill

Again considered in Committee.

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Marshall: The final point to remember is what the workers want. Thousands of workers want to work on a Sunday. Members of USDAW want to work on a Sunday. If people want to work on a Sunday, they should be free to do so. The way to make them free to do so is by voting for the Shopping Hours Reform Council option this evening.

Sir Peter Emery: With the leave of the Committee, may I say that I have listened to the whole debate. Having been told by hon. Members on both sides of the Committee that they like my amendment second, it seems that I can save a vote by withdrawing my amendment. I therefore beg to ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment proposed: No. 1, in page 1, line 5, leave out from beginning to 'sections' in line 7.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 174, Noes 404.

Division No. 15] **[10.02 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxton, John
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pickles, Eric
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tim Devlin and
Mr. James Couchman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bendall, Vivian
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann

Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Denham, John
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Galbraith, Sam
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*

Grocott, Bruce
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Heald, Oliver
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Leigh, Edward
Leighton, Ron
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew

Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Mandelson, Peter
Mans, Keith
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Marlow, Eric
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Merchant, Piers
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Ottaway, Richard
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*

Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Michael
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Tipping, Paddy
Tredinnick, David
Trimble, David
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Vaz, Keith
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Waterson, Nigel
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*

Wise, Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Luff and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed: No. 2, in page 1, line 5, leave out from beginning to 'Schedules' in line 10.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee proceeded to a Division—

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West) *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I am alarmed that a period of four minutes elapsed from your instruction to lock the doors and the door of the No Lobby being closed. As a result, I believe that, democratically, those voting in the Aye Lobby have an unfair advantage.

The Chairman: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman had a stopwatch with him, but it was reported to me that the door was not locked. I therefore gave instructions for it to be locked. I shall await the result of the vote before deciding whether to take any action.

Later—

The Chairman: In the light of the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn), I am not satisfied with the result of the vote; it will therefore take place again. May I ask for particular care from the Serjeant so that, when I call out "Lock the doors", the doors are locked immediately?

The Committee having divided: Ayes 286, Noes 304.

Division No. 16] 10.31 pm

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Bates, Michael
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bendall, Vivian
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Andrew
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Denham, John
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dover, Den
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Dykes, Hugh
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Galbraith, Sam
Gale, Roger
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Heald, Oliver
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mans, Keith
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martlew, Eric
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Merchant, Piers
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Robathan, Andrew
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare

Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Straw, Jack
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Tipping, Paddy
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trimble, David
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Vaz, Keith
Viggers, Peter
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Waterson, Nigel
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wise, Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Luff and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Austin-Walker, John
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clelland, David
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Coffey, Ann
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Gunnell, John
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Hutton, John
Jack, Michael
Janner, Greville
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Jowell, Tessa
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McKelvey, William
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mandelson, Peter
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morley, Elliot
Moss, Malcolm
Mowlam, Marjorie
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Pope, Greg
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Radice, Giles
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stevenson, George
Stewart, Allan

Strang, Dr. Gavin
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Wood, Timothy
Worthington, Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mrs. Angela Knight.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed: No. 3, in page 1, line 5, leave out from beginning to 'Schedules' in line 12—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 333, Noes 258.

Division No. 17] **[10.45 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Allen, Graham
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Austin-Walker, John
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barron, Kevin
Batiste, Spencer
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Coffey, Ann
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gould, Bryan
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Gunnell, John
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jack, Michael
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Jowell, Tessa
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLeish, Henry
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mandelson, Peter
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Moss, Malcolm
Mowlam, Marjorie
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Pope, Greg
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Radice, Giles
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stevenson, George
Stewart, Allan
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter

Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey
Wood, Timothy
Worthington, Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Couchman and
Mr. Bernard Jenkin.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Bates, Michael
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bendall, Vivian
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Bowden, Andrew
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Denham, John
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dover, Den
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Dykes, Hugh
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
French, Douglas
Galbraith, Sam
Gale, Roger
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Andrew
Heald, Oliver
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Meacher, Michael
Merchant, Piers
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rendel, David
Robathan, Andrew
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Straw, Jack
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Tipping, Paddy
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trimble, David
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Vaz, Keith
Viggers, Peter
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Waterson, Nigel
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Luff and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

The Chairman: I shall now put the consequential amendments.

Amendment proposed: No. 6, in page 1, line 13, leave out from 'such' to end of line 17 and insert

'day as the Secretary of State may by order made by statutory instrument appoint (in this section referred to as "the appointed day")'.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 339, Noes 219.

Division No. 18] **[10.58 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Allen, Graham
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Austin-Walker, John
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barron, Kevin
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Bradley, Keith
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clelland, David
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Coffey, Ann
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jack, Michael
Janner, Greville
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Jowell, Tessa
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mandelson, Peter
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Moss, Malcolm
Mowlam, Marjorie
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Pickles, Eric
Pope, Greg
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Radice, Giles
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stevenson, George
Stewart, Allan
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter

Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*

Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood, and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bendall, Vivian
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bowden, Andrew
Boyes, Roland
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Butterfill, John
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Day, Stephen

Denham, John
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dover, Den
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
French, Douglas
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Andrew
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*

Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Merchant, Piers
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Rawsey, James
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn

Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Robathan, Andrew
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Spink, Dr Robert
Straw, Jack
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Tipping, Paddy
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trimble, David
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. Peter Luff and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Amendment proposed: No. 7, in page 1, line 18, leave out from beginning to 'sections'.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 332, Noes 192.

• **Division No. 19]** **[11.11 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Allen, Graham
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Austin-Walker, John
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*

Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barron, Kevin
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beresford, Sir Paul
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Graham

Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clelland, David
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Coffey, Ann
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John

Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jack, Michael
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Jowell, Tessa
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacK[illegible] Andrew
McKelvey, William
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNamara, Kevin

McWilliam, John
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mandelson, Peter
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morley, Elliot
Moss, Malcolm
Mowlam, Marjorie
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Radice, Giles
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rooker, Jeff
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom

Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stevenson, George
Stewart, Allan
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David

Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh

Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bendall, Vivian
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bowden, Andrew
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Butterfill, John
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dover, Den
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
French, Douglas
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Andrew
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Keen, Alan
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Marlow, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mills, Iain
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Mudie, George
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pawsey, James
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Robathan, Andrew
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Spink, Dr Robert
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Amendment proposed: No. 8, in page 1, leave out lines 21 to 23.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 320, Noes 185.

Division No. 20] **[11.23 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Allen, Graham
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Austin-Walker, John
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Barron, Kevin
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beresford, Sir Paul
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clelland, David
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Coffey, Ann
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa

Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jack, Michael
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Jowell, Tessa
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McKelvey, William
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mandelson, Peter
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*

Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morley, Elliot
Moss, Malcolm
Mowlam, Marjorie
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Radice, Giles
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rooker, Jeff
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soley, Clive
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stevenson, George

Stewart, Allan
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William

Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wise, Audrey
Wood, Timothy
Worthington, Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew MacKay and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bendall, Vivian
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dover, Den

Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
French, Douglas
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Andrew
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Keen, Alan
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz

McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Marlow, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Robathan, Andrew
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Spink, Dr Robert
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'Fld)*
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

THE CHAIRMAN, *being of the opinion that the principle of the clause and any matters arising thereon had been adequately discussed in the course of the debate on the amendments proposed thereto, forthwith put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 67 (Debate on clause or schedule standing part)*, That the clause, as amended, stand part of the Bill:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 335, Noes 175.

Division No. 21] **[11.35 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Allen, Graham
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Austin-Walker, John
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Barron, Kevin
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beresford, Sir Paul
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clelland, David
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Coffey, Ann
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Hutton, John
Jack, Michael
Jamieson, David
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Jowell, Tessa
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mandelson, Peter
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Merchant, Piers
Milburn, Alan

Miller, Andrew
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Moss, Malcolm
Mowlam, Marjorie
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Pope, Greg
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Radice, Giles
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rooker, Jeff
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*

Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soley, Clive
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stevenson, George
Stewart, Allan
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wise, Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Worthington, Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. Michael Brown.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alton, David
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh

Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bendall, Vivian
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bowden, Andrew

Bray, Dr Jeremy
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dover, Den
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
French, Douglas
Gapes, Mike
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Andrew
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Keen, Alan
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie

Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Robathan, Andrew
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Turner and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Committee report Progress; to sit again.
Committee tomorrow.

Broadcasting

11.48 pm

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): I beg to move,

That the draft Broadcasting (Restrictions on the Holding of Licences) (Amendment) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 29th November, be approved.

The order is made under powers in schedule 2 of the Broadcasting Act 1990. The purpose of the draft order is to give effect to the changes in the regulations governing the ownership of the regional ITV companies that I announced on 24 November. I made it clear then that the proposed changes were subject to parliamentary approval.

The draft order amends the present order restricting the holding of licences, which was made in May 1991, in two ways. First, article 2(1) amends article 3 of the 1991 order. Its effect is to remove the distinction between licences for the nine areas with the largest advertising revenue and those for the other six areas. Article 3 of the 1991 order prevents anyone from holding two licences in the nine large areas. The draft order would remove that restriction, except that no one could hold both London licences. The overall limit on holding no more than two licences remains. The other change is technical. Article 2(2) removes from the 1991 order provisions which have now expired and the references to them.

Before I explain the reasons that led me to propose these changes, I should like to reply to criticisms by some Opposition Members that I did not come to the House and make a statement about these proposals. As the House will know, I issued a press notice at 8.30 on the morning of 24 November as the stock market opened, sending a copy at the same time to the Independent Television Commission and the ITV companies. I wrote to a number of right hon. and hon. Members with an interest in broadcasting issues, and I gave a written reply to a parliamentary question later in the day.

As I explained in those letters, these arrangements were made to avoid a period of intense speculation on the stock exchange, which was the likely result if it had become known that an announcement would be made later in the day. This arrangement is usual for Government announcements that are market sensitive. In reaching decisions on the best way of making the announcement, I was influenced by the knowledge that the draft order was subject to debate both here and in another place.

As many hon. Members will be aware, considerable changes are taking place in broadcasting, not just in the United Kingdom but throughout the world. The most obvious change is the increase in the number of channels and services available. In the United Kingdom, we have had an increasing number of cable and satellite channels, as well as new radio services. Even more services are likely in a few years wiith the introduction of digital transmission technology. The technologies of broadcasting, telecommunications and computers are already beginning to converge, and this process can be expected to continue at an accelerating pace.

Similarly, although it is likely that some traditional broadcasting services will remain, many other services of entertainment, information and education will become available. In the foreseeable future, people will be able to pick and choose from a wide range of sources of news, information and entertainment, including films, videos, music, and computer games. Some services will be interactive. People will be able to pay for individual items, as well as whole services. The choice and variety available to the public will be greater than we have ever seen.

Another significant change is the way in which broadcasting is becoming an international activity. A global market for broadcasting is opening up. The United Kingdom should be well placed to take advantage of these opportunities. Broadcasting has been one of the success stories in the United Kingdom in the past 50 years. The high quality of the programmes in our broadcasting services is widely recognised, both here and abroad. ITV companies have, for many years, sold programmes successfully to foreign broadcasting organisations. But the new markets will go well beyond the export of individual programmes, into the provision of whole channels, and a range of services.

The Government want to ensure that United Kingdom broadcasters can build on the success achieved so far and take advantage of the new opportunities that are opening up. We have been holding meetings with senior broadcasting executives to discuss these issues with them. We shall want to consider how these markets are likely to develop and to make sure that there are no unnecessary obstacles that prevent the United Kingdom broadcasters from taking up these opportunities. In saying that, we have to recognise that broadcasters in other countries will be looking for opportunities in the United Kingdom.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Does that mean that someone from the Irish Republic could buy, say, Ulster Television? Enough republican propaganda pours through at the moment—we do not want an overdose of it.

Mr. Brooke: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I always welcome his interventions. The answer to his question is yes, and it would be the case even without the order.

Broadcasting is entering a period of rapid development that is likely to create a revolution in the way we distribute and receive information and education and entertainment services. We are, however, only at the early stages of those changes. It is difficult to foresee the precise nature of the changes or the speed at which they take place.

The hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) and some other Opposition Members understand that major changes are taking place and agree that in the coming months we should look again at the present restrictions on cross-media ownership, as we intend to do.

We are in a period of transition and we need to consider how best to advance. Some people, including the hon. Lady, believe that the best way forward is to stand still. She advocates extending the so-called moratorium. That is the provision in the Broadcasting Act 1990 due to expire at the end of this year. The provision does not prevent takeovers from occurring, but requires the Independent Television Commission to approve them before they take place.

I considered that option carefully, not least because some ITV companies advocated it, but concluded that extending that regulatory requirement was not the best approach to expanding markets. It is, in any case, an illusion to think that we can achieve a continuing breathing space for ITV by legislative means when the rest of the broadcasting world is developing so rapidly.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Brooke: I shall give way, but, as the whole House is aware, we are anxious to make progress.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I am grateful to the Minister for giving way, but the whole House is also anxious to have information from the Government. The Minister said that he has had discussions with various senior television company directors. What discussions did he have and what representations did he receive from his own regulator, the ITC, on the matter?

Mr. Brooke: I shall gladly respond to the hon. Gentleman. He is correct in saying that the House would always want to have the information.

We have had a number of discussions with the ITC. There may have been a degree of misunderstanding in the press in recent days in so far as there was a debate between the ITC and ourselves about my announcement or the particular timing of the ITC receiving it, but we have had discussions in the past about the changes we might make.

As the House will know, the ITV companies had different views about the best way forward. I called a meeting at which all the companies were represented by their chairmen or chief executives so that I could hear their views. I wanted to make sure that all the companies, large and small, had an opportunity to explain their position to me directly. I also consulted the Independent Television Commission, as I said in my answer to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): I am grateful to the Minister. He had discussions with the ITC. What conclusions did the ITC reach and what did it say to him?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman knows that, even when the Broadcasting Act was going through the House and in the immediate aftermath of it, the ITC believed that the moratorium should last longer than had been built into the Act. Of course I would acknowledge that, but it was a subject that we discussed with the ITC. A number of other interested organisations, including the advertising industry, discussed their views with me or with officials in my Department. I found all those discussions helpful, not least because they gave me an insight into the way in which television is developing.

In reaching a decision, I tried to look beyond the immediate issue to the medium term. I have two clear objectives. First, I want to ensure that the British public keep the television services that they value and that the diversity of choice that they have is maintained and extended.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): As a veteran of the Broadcasting Bill and as someone who also went to most meetings in the consultation period on the HTV licence area, I recall that all the other competitors said that they wanted not only to have regional television but for it to be regionally owned. As a result, HTV was driven to pay a large premium to acquire the franchise. Now the right hon. Gentleman is changing all the rules. He is saying that the ownership argument is irrelevant. That is unfair. The basis on which we argued that case drove HTV to pay a higher price than Central Television and others. Now the right hon. Gentleman is changing the rules. Surely he ought to think about it again in the light of the evidence.

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful for that point, and for the benefit of the hon. Gentleman's experience. However, it is possible to ensure that the regional commitment is met in

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the provision of regional television through the exercise of the licence, administered and monitored by the ITC. In that respect, ownership is a different matter.

ITV services are watched by well over 90 per cent. of the population each week. My answer to those who have criticised the proposed changes as being too limited and rather timid is that the millions of people who take pleasure from ITV programmes would not thank us if we moved suddenly from a position of close regulation to one of complete deregulation of ownership, and in so doing undermined the foundations of the present services. I have to take account of the services to the public as well as the opportunities for investment.

My other main objective is to sustain the production base for broadcast programmes in the United Kingdom. That is the key to high quality services here and to the potential increase in exports. As the number of channels increases here and throughout the world, the production of programmes and programme rights will become an increasingly valuable asset.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Will the Secretary of State confirm that BSkyB is exempt from the requirement on commercial television to broadcast a percentage of domestically made products? If that is still the case, how can it be justified?

Mr. Brooke: It is not exempt—it is subject to the European Commission directive. As recently as October, I submitted statistics to the Commission in Brussels showing the European content—European in the context of this country meaning mainly British—of all the channels for which we have responsibility as regulators.

Some 73 per cent. of the programmes broadcast by ITV are made in Europe, most of them within the UK. A large proportion of the programming is original material, made for ITV's audiences. Those programmes reflect the UK's traditions and culture, and that of its regions. We want that to continue.

We also want to sustain the production base throughout the UK, as well as in London and the south-east. The ITC's licence conditions require that 80 per cent. of regional programming is produced in the area. The ITV companies have told me that they regard the regional nature of the ITV system as of crucial importance. They know that it is valued by their audiences, so it will be in the interest of the companies to maintain regional programming and production.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brooke: Yes, I will, but at this hour the House wishes me not to slow down.

Mr. Snape: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. Under the licence held by Central Television, not 80 per cent. but 95 per cent. of the programmes have to be made in the regions. What assurances can he give those of us concerned about the future that such a restriction will continue to apply now that Central has been handed over, lock, stock and barrel, to Carlton?

Mr. Brooke: The ITC will continue to monitor the conduct of the licence, which was issued to Central, and it will continue to be Central that ITV is monitoring.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): The House would like the opportunity to question the Secretary of State, rather than listen to him gabble through his brief. Those of us who might be persuaded that there is a case for relaxing the ownership rule and allowing mergers to take place, which would lead to the strengthening of the ownership of ITV companies, would be more persuaded of the case if, by the same token, the powers of the regulatory body were also strengthened so that there was a balance between the two. The strengthening of ownership but also an increase of power to the regulator—would that not be a more balanced and sensible approach?

Mr. Brooke: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but the discussions that I have had with the ITC have included whether it is confident that it would be able to monitor the conduct of the licences if there were a change of ownerships, and it has declared itself satisfied and confident.

I should not have proposed these changes if I thought that they would put at risk the regional programming and regional production which are such valued features of the ITV system. The Broadcasting Act 1990 places requirements on ITV licence holders about regional programming and production. They are reinforced by the conditions of the ITC's licences, which include the promises about programmes made by the companies when they applied for licences. I know that the ITC takes its licence conditions very seriously. Each year it will assess how far the ITV companies have complied with the licence conditions. If any licence holders fail to comply with their licence conditions, the commission is obliged by law to include information about the failures in its annual report, which is presented to Parliament.

However, the ITV companies have to operate effectively in the changing world of broadcasting. Partnerships are already being formed throughout the world to take advantage of the new opportunities. Major media organisations are combining groups of linked enterprises, bringing together programme production, music recordings, publishing interests and broadcasting outlets, including terrestrial broadcasting as well as cable and satellite. In other words, they are linking the material to be distributed and the means of distribution.

In this world of giant conglomerates, with turnovers of billions of pounds, most of the ITV companies are comparatively small. We think that they should be able to take a more active role in forming new partnerships in the global market than would have been possible under the present regulations.

As they explained to me, the ITV companies themselves agree that it is unlikely that it will be possible for the ITV system to continue for much longer with 15 regional companies plus the national breakfast-time company. They believed that a measure of consolidation was desirable, and they told me of the various ways in which companies were already co-operating. However, they had different views about the degree of consolidation that should take place and the speed at which it should happen. Therefore, although there were different opinions about the best way of reaching the objective and the speed of travel, there was agreement about the general direction in which the television industry needed to go.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): What opinion did the right hon. Gentleman receive from

HTV? Did not HTV believe that it should remain independent, centred on Wales and largely owned by Welsh Wales so that it would be able to continue to deliver a thoroughly Welsh service with a strong emphasis on the Welsh language? What view did HTV express to him?

Mr. Brooke: I am slightly diffident about giving the detailed opinions of each company as the conversations were confidential. I think that the hon. Gentleman knows what the general thrust of HTV's view was, and I would not suggest that it was a million miles from what he said.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Is the Secretary of State not aware that for many years—indeed, since the creation of the film industry—television and film productions have been made by powerful companies, usually in the United States or with money originating in the United States? There has never been a lack of programme making outside the United Kingdom. Companies in the United Kingdom were protected by the understandable desire of Parliament to keep a British involvement in British cultural material. Is the Secretary of State aware that the proposed rules will radically change that position and that it will not be possible to continue regional production as it was in the past?

Mr. Brooke: I know from previous exchanges with the hon. Lady that this is a subject in which she takes a keen interest, not least with regard to film production. The manner in which Governments of different colours have dealt with the film industry in the past 25 years does not encourage one to think that we do not need to pay close attention to preventing broadcasting from going the same way.

Having reflected carefully on the views expressed to me, I concluded that it would be right to propose changes that would allow two larger companies to join together, except in London. That is the purpose of the order. I do not think that it would be sensible at this stage to go further without a thorough examination of the likely effect of greater deregulation in the ownership of media enterprises. There are, as we know, disadvantages in such concentrations. They can be anti-competitive and prevent newcomers from gaining access to the market; they can restrict choice for audiences and advertisers, nationally or locally. At worst, they can restrict freedom of speech and expression. Broadcasting is more than an economic activity.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): Can my right hon. Friend assure us that there will be no further changes in the position of commercial television until the BBC's charter has been dealt with—either renewed or subjected to another Government proposal?

Mr. Brooke: I do not want to give that precise assurance. We shall want to examine the cross-media ownership factors in the way that I described earlier—a method, incidentally, to which Opposition Front Benchers urge us to return. The speed at which change is occurring means that we cannot freeze time at particular moments to enable things to "catch up". I recognise, of course, that the debate on the BBC charter renewal is going on at the same time. We shall need to take account of all those factors in reviewing arrangements for cross-media ownership and vertical integration.

Organisations that cannot adapt to changing circumstances do not survive. Those who wish to preserve the ITV system as it existed in the 1980s, or even in the 1970s, are more likely to hasten its decline than to promote its healthy survival. That is why the Government decided not to extend the so-called moratorium. That has achieved what it was intended to achieve—a short period of stability during the transition from the old ITV system to the system introduced in January this year. Let me say in passing that, on the basis of the figures for the first nine months, the amount of regional programming that has been produced under the new arrangements is substantially up on the previous year.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the merger of the Yorkshire and Tyne Tees franchises and companies has brought significant benefits to my constituents by providing a new local news service? The service, which has cost £1·5 million, is broadcast from Belasis technology park in Stockton. Can my right hon. Friend assure me that if another company bids for Yorkshire it will not be able to dump the Tyne Tees franchise to comply with the two-franchise limit?

Mr. Brooke: I am delighted to hear about the new local news service. Any bidder for Yorkshire-Tyne Tees would be confronted with the fact that Yorkshire already has a second station.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): What is the answer then?

Mr. Brooke: The bidder could not effect a change unless it had divested itself.

It makes no sense to try to protect the ITV companies indefinitely from the disciplines of the market, nor should it be necessary.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): The Secretary of State is right in saying that if a third party bids for Yorkshire and Tyne Tees, under the existing arrangements the bid will not proceed. Will he give an assurance, however, that he will examine possible ways in which Tyne Tees could be hived off from Yorkshire, and that any hiving-off process will not simply enable one company to gain control of three companies by the back door? We want a real separation, rather than a false separation that could damage the interests of either company.

Mr. Brooke: Having not been wholly solicitous to those who intervened earlier, I thank the hon. Gentleman profoundly. His intervention enables me to correct an answer that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) and the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), who intervened from a sedentary position. Of course divestment would not be required if the bid came from an organisation not currently holding a television station licence. It is for the ITC to do all that it can to ensure that licensees comply with the ownership rules. It would monitor the process described by the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett).

The need for adjustments to the ownership regulations was always foreseen, which is why we made provision for the main provisions to be extended and altered by order, subject to the approval of Parliament, rather than by primary legislation. I do not rule out further changes in the

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future, but the change that we are debating today is a first step in the direction in which the Government believe that we need to go. I commend the order to the House.

12.14 am

Ms Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): The Secretary of State has glibly presented a gross simplification of a complex issue. There is general agreement about its complexity and that the Secretary of State has failed to grasp it completely. One of the many City analysts who commented on the matter stated that the Government's action was

"only the latest and silliest turn in this textbook example of how not to regulate an industry."

At this wee hour of the morning, it would be unnecessarily cruel to go further, but that accusation of silliness is a compliment compared with many other comments. The most flattering was "a botched job".

We appreciate the Secretary of State's apology to the House this evening for the two-week gap between announcing his proposals to the market and giving Parliament its democratic right to debate and to vote on them. We understand the legislation's market-sensitive nature, but it would have helped if the Secretary of State had understood that it is contempt of Parliament to delay a debate to such an extent that two takeover bids are already launched.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Does the hon. Lady not agree with the concept of a television company in my constituency joining another to continue producing splendid drama such as "Brideshead Revisited", investigative documentaries such as "World in Action" and blockbusters such as "Coronation Street"? At the same time, they could compete with the growth of satellite channels such as TNT and CNN from Murdoch and Turner, cable and the telecommunications industry—which will soon provide viewers with videos on demand at the touch of a button. Is it not right that companies such as Granada should be able to join with others for growth and to produce the programmes that we want to see?

Ms Mowlam: We called for a continuing moratorium, to allow a review of the kind that is necessary, given the complexity of the market that the hon. Gentleman mentions. Of course there is satellite and cable, and it is illogical and unfair that Murdoch can own 100 per cent. of a non-domestic satellite service when other newspapers can own only 20 per cent. of an ITV company. We do not want the half-cock proposals that are before the House this evening. We asked one year ago for a review and for rational and sensible proposals.

As to the hon. Gentleman's first point, of course we want genuine regional productions and programmes of the quality of "Brideshead Revisited"—but the Secretary of State body-swerved and ducked the question of the ITC having the power not just to regulate and monitor standards but to enforce them. We want quality television, and it worries us that the ITC's ability to regulate and monitor may be lost as television companies grow, become more powerful and centralise. The ITC has done a good job in many areas, but can it continue to do so?

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): Is the hon. Lady aware that the ITC has the power to impose a fine for a first offence of 3 per cent. of qualifying annual revenue each month, and of 5 per cent. for subsequent offences? Is that not enough of a sanction?

Ms Mowlam: There is not enough sanction in the sense that the ITC rightly has those powers post facto. As a result of what the Secretary of State has introduced we will experience some takeovers. Potentially two large whales could develop and a number of small companies—minnows at best—will desperately try to survive in a competitive market—they will compete over advertising and industrial muscle.

What concerns Labour Members and, I think, Tory Members is that as that power is centralised, regional companies may not be able to continue to make the quality productions that we want. That is what is important.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): The hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) says that companies such as Granada need to merge to continue to produce programmes of the quality of "World in Action" and "Brideshead Revisited" His argument is back to front. Under the previous regionally-based regulated system, programmes of that quality were produced. The problem is that with the post Broadcasting Act system, the possibility of producing such quality programmes recedes further into the distance.

Ms Mowlam: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. Her final point should be emphasised. Part of the difficulty that we face this evening is that the problems in the industry have resulted from the Broadcasting Act 1990 and its flaws. Labour Members pointed out those flaws day in and day out. My hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) did a courageous job and provided a lot of valuable policy information. She sought to show how damaging the 1990 Act was to so many regional television companies when she said that it has seriously imperilled some of the world's leading producers of television programmes.

We need only look at the mess, the farce and the tragedy that that Act created. Central Television pays the Treasury £2,000 a year. Now that there is a takeover bid for Central Television, it is worth £750 million plus. That tells us that the Broadcasting Act is ludicrous.

Mr. Tim Renton (Mid-Sussex): Does the hon. Lady recognise that the chairman of the Independent Television Commission, Sir George Russell, said that there has been much more stability in the independent television industry following the 1990 Act than there was following other franchise changes, for example, the change 10 years ago? *[Laughter.]* It is all very well for Labour Members to laugh. It is the judgment of the chairman of the Independent Television Commission.

The hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) said that the Labour party had been campaigning for the moratorium to continue. That is not my impression. Is it not correct to say that the hon. Lady is widely known in the television industry for saying that the moratorium should not be continued and that takeovers must be allowed, otherwise from January onwards Bertlesmann or Berlusconi could bid for Central Television? She realised that, under such circumstances, it would be impossible for a British bid for Central Television not to be accepted. Surely, what has happened is that, when faced with two takeovers and the change in share prices, the Labour party typically panics and changes its view, which has been sensible until now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Several hon. Members are hoping to catch my eye in this short debate. If we have interventions of that length, not many hon. Members will be able to do so.

Ms Mowlam: I shall answer the points made by the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton). First, the ITC has clearly said that it would like a continuation of the moratorium.

Mr. Renton *indicated dissent.*

Ms Mowlam: The right hon. Gentleman can shake his head. I quote from paragraph 39 on page 457 of the ITC's submission to the Select Committee on National Heritage:

> "The Government's intention on extending the moratorium beyond the end of this year is not yet clear. The ITC continues to favour an extension and from the same standpoint has considered whether that would be a benefit in changing the rules."

So the position of the ITC is clear.

The Independent Television Commission has argued, as many have, that stability in the market is necessary. However, the announcement in the past two weeks has created a degree of instability in the market for some of the bigger companies as well as some of the smaller ones.

Let me now answer the second point that the right hon. Gentleman made. The Opposition have supported a moratorium and want to continue a moratorium to review cross-ownership. The honest difference between myself and my predecessor, if he wants it on record, is that she wanted it for three years and I favoured 18 months—I have said at least 12 months—because the changes that are taking place in the market, partly as a result of the instability that the Secretary of State has created by the half-hearted move that is now being made, are making the problem worse.

The difficulty that will confront us from 1 January, partly as a result of what the Secretary of State has done, is that any company in Europe will be able to come and take 100 per cent. of a British television company. One cannot do that in France because one would be prevented from doing so; a foreign company can take only 25 per cent. of a French television company. One cannot do it in Germany because one would be prevented from doing so; a foreign company can take only 50 per cent. One cannot do it in Spain because one would be prevented from doing so; a foreign company can take only 25 per cent. I could go on. That is the difficulty.

As a result of the short-termism of the institutional fund managers of this country and the short-termism of the British Government, we are leaving our small regional television companies totally exposed to European companies which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, are built into consortia with cross-media ownership, which is difficult to break into. That is what we mean by a moratorium. We want that moratorium to continue because the Government have exposed our regional companies in an outrageous way.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Rowlands : May I just draw to my hon. Friend's attention a simple fact? As she pointed out, Central paid a meaningless sum of money; HTV paid a large sum of money for one reason only—that other competitors were not only showing that they were competing for a regional station, they were actually arguing the case on ownership grounds and now the Government are changing the rules. In our view, we are left with the HTV company saddled with a huge bill because of the Broadcasting Act and the consequence is that a company such as HTV cannot produce programmes because it has to spend the money paying fees.

Ms. Mowlam: That is exactly the problem that the Opposition have emphasised. Smaller companies are being put in a position in which it is impossible for them to produce the quality programmes that we would like. I challenge the hon. Members opposite who represent regions throughout the country that have that type of regional television that they want to be protected and preserved. If those hon. Members walk into the Lobbies with the Government tonight they will be calling into question the future of those regional television stations.

So that the hon. Gentleman realises that it is not just Labour hon. Members who agree with me, let me quote from a letter from one of the Conservative Peers in the other place, Lord Buxton. He said in a letter on 7 December:

> "what is being done by the Broadcasting Amendment Order, is a tentative half-measure which produces the worst of all worlds, it will totally unbalance the system, and could lead before long to the eroding of the regional structure."

That is the type of worry that other hon. Members share.

Let me return to the final point that the hon. Gentleman made. He says that some of the smaller television companies believe that as a result of this change they will be so exposed after 1 January—exactly the point that my hon. Friend made in relation to HTV—that the Minister has to do something. Otherwise British broadcasting will not be British any more. The same will happen as it did to our film industry and to our insurance industry in the 1980s —it will be destroyed. The Secretary of State can end up by saying that it is important in terms of democratic values and as part of British industry, but what he is doing is potentially destroying both. That is what the Opposition find so disconcerting.

It is not that we were not saying what we have said clearly; let me just reinforce the argument and give other hon. Members a chance to speak. The Opposition have set out the criteria clearly and we believe that they should be reinforced. We want, above all, for regional television to be retained. By that I mean regional production, quality regional production, with a local management team. Some of the Opposition contributions earlier were about companies being regionally owned. As a result of the Broadcasting Act 1990, most of the companies are no longer regionally owned unless one considers Schroders or Barclays De Zoet, Mercury Asset Management or Warburgs as being regionally owned. That is the problem that confronts us as a result of the Act. Now we want an Act that defends that regional production strongly and continues the regional identity that is there and that independent home-grown broadcasting industry. That is why we have argued for a moratorium. We believe that if that were done, the continuation of the present irrational situation would make things worse for the other options —cable, satellite and the other choices for people in this country.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am sure that the hon. Lady is aware of my interest in the matter. [HON.

[Mr. Nicholas Winterton]

MEMBERS: "What is it?] I chair the all-party media group of which the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) is vice-chairman, and in which my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) is also involved. Does the hon. Lady believe that the order will give the regional television companies more strength to resist overseas predators? I share her view that we want British broadcasting to remain British, so if she can say that the order will not have that effect, I shall have more sympathy with her argument.

Ms Mowlam: I do think that the order will have that effect for the smaller television companies. There is no doubt that they will be deeply exposed after 1 January, and their future will be in question. That is a serious problem. My honest answer is that, although if the Carlton-Central deal goes ahead the company will be bigger, we still have no broadcasting company big enough to be one of the top 20 in Europe in terms of commercial revenue. As we go into Europe we have a problem with British broadcasting as a growth industry. But there is no doubt that it will help those companies. There is no doubt that that help will not be offered to them. Our problem is that technology is moving at great speed, but our legislation is that of five years ago. We need a vision of where British broadcasting——

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): But the hon. Lady wants a moratorium.

Ms Mowlam: Yes, I want a moratorium, because I do not want developments at the present speed that expose half the companies while giving an unfair benefit to the others, and that brings about no recognition of the changes in satellite and cable. For example, in August two North American consortia put £650 million into cabling the populated areas of south and west Yorkshire. Where are the British companies? They are not there, because of the irrationality of the present legislation. That is why we need a moratorium, so that we can take the British broadcasting industry forward together. Such vision goes with the need that we have always emphasised for quality regional television. We want those two developments to move forward together.

If the order goes through, the Secretary of State will place a question mark over the future of regional production and make it harder for our companies to compete in Europe. With one small amendment of the law he will achieve the worst of both worlds.

12.32 am

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on having the foresight and courage to take the shackles off the British television industry and to allow it the opportunity—no more than that—to move forward, to merge and to compete in the communications industry of the next century.

The hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam), who spoke for the Opposition, made a plea for vision, but it was backed up by nothing of substance. She made a plea for an outdated broadcasting and television industry. The communications industry of the next century will be about more than simply television or broadcasting; it will allow every household to have a wide flat screen and will bring into that household not only digitally transmitted pictures and entertainment, but data, education, home shopping and home banking. There will be video-telephony. In every home there will be a communications centre the like of which most Opposition Members have not even begun to imagine.

If the United Kingdom is to have the remotest chance of playing a part in the communications industry of the next century, we shall have to create economies of scale. Not one company in this country now—not Carlton, not Central, not Granada, nor any other organisation—has the size and capacity single-handedly to play a major part on that world stage. There is a stark choice before us. My right hon. Friend has recognised that. Thank God that he has done so in time. We must allow major players in this country to merge if they are to attain the size and scale and the financial clout to compete and to create the industry of the next century. If we do not do that, we will be left sitting on the sidelines. I have said for a long time that this country has more creative power and skill than most other countries in the world, but we will need to take it forward from tonight.

I will be brief in what I have to say. I do not think that we have gone anything like far enough, but tonight is the first step. Opposition Members talk about regional broadcasting. There is one national broadcaster in this country with a number of regional outlets. Those outlets provide good regional broadcasting, including news programmes, and they have regional production centres. The broadcaster is called the BBC. If the BBC can do it, one commercial and terrestrial company can do it if it is necessary.

Those companies will be competing not with each other, but with cable and satellite which will bring in, in the case of the Hughes corporation, 104 channels when digital transmission comes. Are we seriously saying that, at the moment, there is one company in this country that has the commercial and the artistic power to compete with any of those competitors? The answer is no.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does my hon. Friend agree with me that what he has just said is absolutely right? The BBC acts as a national and a regional company and it will have to compete in the future with the likes of Turner, which has brought in CNN and TNT, and is looking to introduce other stations via satellite to compete with the BBC. Murdoch also has introduced main channels already via satellite, and that company will be looking to expand its market also. If the BBC is to be up against it in future, and if the independent television companies, which are split, are not allowed to join together and to compete rationally——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already informed the House that many hon. Members want to catch my eye during a short debate. It is unfair on people wanting to speak for hon. Members to make long interventions.

Mr. Gale: I will always agree with my hon. Friend if he agrees that he is agreeing with me. He is, of course, absolutely right. The crux of the argument is simple. We must have a communications industry—not an entertainment, television or broadcasting industry—which plays a part within, not just the United Kingdom and Europe, but hopefully in overseas markets.

If we are to do that—here I will make a mild criticism of my right hon. Friend—then the step which has been taken tonight has not gone far enough. One has only to look at graphs of advertising sales. Due to the nature of competition from satellite and from an increasing number of channels, the advertising sales graphs are falling. If the sales are falling and production costs are rising, as they are, it is absolutely certain that, without economies of scale, a number of the regional companies to which the hon. Lady referred will not survive franchise—takeover or not. They will go to the wall within three years. I will put money, or a bottle of champagne, on that with the hon. Lady.

If there are no takeovers and the regional companies are left marginalised, they will in three years' time simply not exist because they have no economy of scale or the financial power to compete.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): The hon. Gentleman voted for the Broadcasting Act 1990.

Mr. Gale: The hon. Gentleman should know that I served on the Committee which dealt with the Broadcasting Bill. I said then, and I will say now, that that was a Bill for the 1990s. What we are talking about tonight —I hope—is the communications industry of the United Kingdom for the year 2000 and beyond.

The hon. Lady talked about a sense of vision, but if we are to have that sense of vision, let us not have a moratorium that would put the brakes on.

Mr. Morgan: Did the hon. Gentleman say that some of the companies for whose franchises, I take it, he voted in 1990 would not survive the next three years? Did I hear the hon. Gentleman correctly?

Mr. Gale: I did not vote for those franchises. Indeed, I am on record as saying that the lucky people were those who did not win the franchises, because only a mug would have made a successful bid. Anyone with any sense could see the way the entertainment and communications industries were going. The companies will not survive.

If there is to be a sense of vision, we must look beyond the regions to what is going to happen in the United Kingdom, Europe and the world in the year 2000 and beyond. What we need is certainly not a moratorium of any kind; we do not want the brakes put on. We want them taken off, just as my right hon. Friend has done this evening. But we must go further. We shall have to get used to the idea that we do not need a review. By the time a review had been carried out, the technology would have overtaken it.

Ms Glenda Jackson *rose*——

Mr. Gale: No, I am sorry. I have already given way several times. I hope that the hon. Lady will catch the Chair's eye later.

We need to realise that by the end of the century we are likely to end up with no more than three independent terrestrial television companies in the United Kingdom. We must also understand that there will be mergers—not only between television companies but between television and data and telephony companies; and between all of them and newspapers, too.

In the year 2000 and beyond there will be an electronic, digitally transmitted communications industry. The only way to bring that about is by economies of scale. We should see this process through with courage. Some Opposition Members, I know, agree with me. If we seize this chance with both hands, we will be left not with the rump of a United Kingdom television industry but with an industry at the forefront of a worldwide and powerful communications industry. That is my vision of the future.

12.41 am

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): I had entertained the vain hope that before any Conservative Member embarked on his speech he would begin by apologising to the House and the country for passing the Broadcasting Act three years ago. No doubt my contribution tonight will be a hopeless quest, as I am sure the order will be agreed to.

I should declare an interest. I am a member of the National Union of Journalists and belong to the broadcasting union. I worked for a number of years for Central Television. I have no financial interest in this matter—but I do wish that the Secretary of State had listened to one or two people who did not have a massive financial interest before he introduced the order. I should like to tell the right hon. Gentleman the simple truth about what has happened to independent television in the past six short years.

These events did not come about because of acts of God or the inevitable progress of satellite and cable. The right hon. Gentleman, like his predecessor, seems to think that this is all beyond his control. It pains me to have to remind him that he is part of the Government. Governments exist to control and to regulate in the best interests of the people.

Six years ago, commercial television had some faults but also one or two great strengths; one was that throughout the country there were powerful regional centres of production. More than 2,000 people were working at Central, in Birmingham, which I know best. There were four busy studios and a range of expert technicians—vision mixers, sound editors and so on, all of whom possessed an expertise that could be drawn on to make good programmes. Most of the company owners and managers lived and worked in the region and watched the output as and when it was broadcast.

As Conservative Members are phenomenally interested in accounts, I should add that commercial television, with the rest of the broadcasting industry, managed to contribute to a surplus on our balance of trade payments. We were net exporters of television programmes, and all the signs were that the viewers were quite pleased with what was going on, too.

What has happened to commercial television since then? No one denies that cable and satellite may have created instability, although the problems that they caused are not as great as the Government have suggested. It was the Broadcasting Act 1990 which caused massive destabilisation—no one who has studied the industry would challenge that assertion.

I do not know whether the Secretary of State has read "Under the Hammer", subtitled "The ITV Franchise Battle —Greed and Glory Inside the Television Business", which was written by an industrial correspondent. It should be required reading. The dust-cover explains that the book

> "tells the story of an extraordinary business circus that became, in the words of one television mogul, 'pure poker'".

That person was right.

As a result of the Act, Central—good luck to it—got the franchise for £2,000, while another, Yorkshire, paid £38 million for a franchise. No wonder that company has been destabilised. Will those free marketeers on the Conservative Benches please tell me where the logic and sense are in that system? The consequences of the Act have

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been utterly predictable. I do not know whether Conservative Members are too concerned about such issues, but employment in commercial television has dropped from 16,000 before the Act to about 8,000. Central has reduced its work force from more than 2,000 to about 800. Instead of running four busy studios in Birmingham, it now only regularly uses one of them.

Television programme production used to appear as a surplus in the balance of trade, but it now appears as a deficit. I do not even pray in aid the experiences of Opposition Members, because even the Baroness herself was disenchanted with the Act when she saw what happened to TV-am. I do not shed any tears over that, but Lady Thatcher described herself as bitterly unhappy about what had happened to that company. I believe that the Prime Minister also commented that the decision was not an optimum success, or used some other similar ringing phrase.

What are we being asked to approve tonight?

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): The hon. Gentleman suggested that Central had reduced its production facilities. Can he explain why? It cannot surely be because it paid too much for its franchise. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) has already said that a large national organisation called the BBC makes some very good regional programmes.

Mr. Grocott: Regional centres of production have been run down as a consequence of the Government's requirement to pass work out to independent producers. Another inevitable consequence of the Act has been a drift of television production to the south, because those independnet producers tend to be based in London, although they may have a shop-front somewhere else.

It is ironic that the only part of the network that has been protected by the Government is the merger between London Weekend Television and Carlton. The Government have made sure that London has been looked after.

The terms of the Act have operated for three years, but Conservative Members argue that they are now hopelessly out of date, despite the fact that they passed the Act. In that time, the Secretary of State has further destabilised the system. He has thrown good money after bad. He is now trying to tinker with an Act that is already bad. We already know two inevitable consequences of his actions: the industry will suffer further job losses, and decisions will be made in London and not in the regions.

The right hon. Gentleman has started to talk about regional programming in almost patronising terms. It is suggested that one can dismiss all the franchise requirements as long as companies make their regional half-hour news programmes, cover regional sport or whatever. That is supposed to be equivalent to providing for regional television. That is not what it is about. What we want in the regions are companies that make not only regional programmes but national programmes for the network. Companies have the facilities, the range of skills and the expertise to achieve that, but that will not be the result of the Government's proposals.

Central will be taken over by Carlton and managed and run from London. I belatedly ask the Secretary of State why no reference was made, in anything that he said or in press releases from the managers of the various companies that are now making Monopoly money, to the service that is to be delivered to the viewer? The order is all about the needs of the City and the need for companies to amalgamate to compete. There are no measures on how to deliver to the public the service which they have come to expect over the years and which once made British broadcasting admired and recognised throughout the world.

I ask the Secretary of State, although I fear that I ask in vain, to call a moratorium on broadcasting and to say, "We fiddled about too much and it has had a disastrous effect on the industry." Let us take an overall view of broadcasting and not pick off ITV, the BBC and other parts of the service. Above all, let us recognise broadcasting for what it can be—an outstanding, miraculous medium, which, at its best, television is, rather than something that is there for the delights of advertisers and financiers in the City. The purpose of broadcasting is to enrich our nation and to provide excellent programmes for viewers.

In vain, I appeal to the Secretary of State and to Conservative Members to consider television in that light. That is what they should be doing, but it will not be achieved by the order, which is why we should vote against it.

12.51 am

Mr. Tim Renton (Mid-Sussex): I agree with the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) on one matter—the importance of programming. Labour Members, including the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam), fail to recognise that it is all very well to talk about programming, but what about the cost? There is much difference between original production, which costs £50,000 an hour, and good original production, which now costs £500,000 an hour. One of the purposes of the order is to ensure that the production base of the ITV companies is maintained. That will be achieved by ensuring that enough good, strong companies have the financial strength to produce good, original programmes.

It is all very well to say that we must keep 15 companies, which will all make regional productions and which are important—let no one regard them as otherwise—but if they are too small, regional production simply will not be very good. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is trying to ensure that our independent television companies are big enough for the quality of programming to be good.

I wholly agree with the hon. Member for The Wrekin that not all the attention of boards, chairmen and managing directors must be on share prices and huge capital gains. If that were so, I should worry about it, too. What I want to see, however, is an independent television industry big enough to continue to produce extremely good new programming not only for the regions but for export around the world.

Before continuing—I promise that I shall not speak for long—I must declare an interest. I am a chairman of a new company called Interactive Telephone Services, which is trying to persuade all the television companies to do more interactive programming. That, of course, is declared in the Register of Members' Interests. None the less, I should say that to the House tonight.

One of the mistakes of the Broadcasting Act 1990—and I was one of its architects at the Home Office—was that we listened too much to the argument about the need for regional companies to continue. We were under tremendous pressure to ensure that there was not just one Scottish independent television company, but STV and Grampian, and that Border television continued rather than being merged with Granada or Tyne Tees. We bought that argument, but now, as others including my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) have said, the world has moved on. Those companies are not big enough and will not survive as they are presently constituted.

Ms Glenda Jackson: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Renton: I know that the hon. Lady is an expert on the subject, but if she will forgive me I would rather she made her own contribution than force me to give way to her as I wish to complete my speech reasonably soon.

Ms Jackson: In the time that the right hon. Gentleman has taken to say no I could have said what I wished to say.

Mr. Renton: Very well—I give way to the hon. Lady.

Ms Jackson: I am most grateful. The right hon. Gentleman referred to the contribution of his hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), who spoke with passion about the communications industry and the vision for the future. The communications that the hon. Gentleman mentioned are advertising communications—there is no future for programmes of quality. We have only to look at America, where there are three major companies which service nothing more than the advertising industry. They produce programmes of pap and the advertisements that surround them offend no one. Apparently that is the sort of future that Conservative Members wish to see for the British broadcasting industry—that is a disgrace.

Mr. Renton: With the greatest respect to the hon. Lady, she has totally misunderstood the point. The scenario that she has described is precisely what I do not wish to see and do not intend to see.

The hon. Member for Redcar did not answer my question about the Berlusconi and Bertlesmann takeover. I agree that we obey the EC rules about bids and acquisitions more openly than the Spaniards or the Italians, but as it stands, as from 1 January Berlusconi could make a bid for Central television. If the provisions are not changed, no big British company such as Carlton will be able to bid a higher price. I do not think that that solution would be acceptable to the House.

The hon. Member for Redcar quoted Lord Buxton. She might have mentioned that he is a founder of Anglia television and has for years fought for the independent survival of Anglia. If anyone is frightened about the takeover of Anglia by continental interests, it is Lord Buxton, because he knows very well that it would be hard for the company to resist it unless a large British company was prepared to take it over. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is paving the way for that to happen, for the survival here of fewer viable units within an independent television sector that will make good programming and also live up to the regional obligations which are written into the licences that the ITC will monitor.

I hope that the review that my right hon. Friend says that he is to conduct will investigate not only the relationship between broadcasting and the press but the relationship between the terrestrial channels and the satellite channels, and between broadcasting and radio. For reasons that we all know—due to the substantial growth of channels, particularly from the Astra satellites—it seems that the position needs to be investigated. I hope that it will come under close scrutiny in the investigation that my right hon. Friend is to conduct. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the difficult steps that he has announced this evening. They are only first steps and they are not easy steps, but it is important to take them.

12.58 am

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) prayed in aid of what the Government have done tonight the possible intervention into British television of Bertlesmann and Berlusconi. I strongly question whether anything that the Secretary of State has done tonight has erected an effective barrier against Berlusconi or Bertlesmann if they choose to intervene. The right hon. Gentleman's actions have little to do with protecting British television and have done little to strengthen the capacity of independent television to compete more effectively in other markets. There is already some successful media activity, and Britain has become a European centre for transnational broadcasting. It has become a home for such pan-European channels as MTV Europe, Super Channel, Japansat and Kindernet broadcasting to the Netherlands, and Middle East Broadcasting Centre, TV3 Scandinavia and Kanal 6 broadcasting to the Turks in Europe.

Substantial activities that did not require the permission of the Secretary of State or the alteration in the ITV map that he is countenancing are going on in this country. Many matters that were left unresolved by the 1990 Act are ripe for consideration. The issue of cross-media ownership is highly anomalous. It is particularly unsatisfactory that foreign companies can acquire British companies although British companies cannot enter the market. There is an imbalance between the position of a company such as Berlusconi looking at acquisitions here and the obstacles in the European Union countries to reverse bids.

The order does nothing to tackle the problems that face our television industry. What is being done is for financial reasons within Britain, and the consequence is a predictable narrowing of the regional base of broadcasting. During the passage of the 1990 legislation, that was regarded by the Government as the only real justification for maintaining the independent system as we knew it.

It is strange that the Government should pay so little regard to the views of their own appointed commission on independent television. They have cast to one side and have been somewhat coy about admitting the reasoning of Sir George Russell and his colleagues for seeking an extension of the moratorium. It is strange that the Secretary of State was in such a hurry to allow moves to be made when Sir George Russell and his colleagues made it abundantly clear that the change would be inevitable but should be made in the context of changes that are planned for the BBC in its charter review.

The commission said that changes should be made in the context of some proper assessment of the decline in advertising revenue for the network as a whole that would result from the increased use of cable and satellite. It also referred to changes that are bound to occur as a result of the

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settling down of the scheme that was put in place only a year ago and those that will arise because of the lack of parity of treatment. Companies had to pay vastly different sums to acquire franchises.

We are in the middle of seeing how the 1990 Act will work, and to change the ground rules in the way that the Government propose is at best irrelevant to the industry's pressing needs and at worst a further unnecessary destabilisation. We do not have a great deal to go on in looking at the effect of consolidation of the 15 regions, but we have seen what has happened to Yorkshire and Tyne Tees television. In an intervention, a Conservative Member spoke about the effect on Stockton.

My general impression from speaking to people in the north-east, and Newcastle in particular, is that that consolidation has not been to the benefit of regional broadcasting. It is not simply a matter of a decline in employment in Newcastle: I expect a further decline in broadcasting employment generally. Production activity is being reduced in that greaat and important conurbation of the north-east.

I cannot see any justification for the proposed takeovers at Carlton and Central other than the avoidance of production by Carlton and the probable stripping out of further capabilities from the two companies. They call that cost cutting and burden sharing and it probably means a reduction in their capability.

I had hoped that the Secretary of State would adhere to at least the objectives of the 1990 Act in seeking to maintain regional diversity and programme quality and to ensure a degree of stability in the industry while he conducted his review. He has not made the review any easier by the steps he has taken, and I hope that the House will not consider it appropriate to approve the order.

1.6 am

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): It seems incredible that we can be sitting here tonight with the Opposition saying that the moratorium should be continued when the wolves of Berlusconi and Bertlesmann are at ITV's door.

The order proposed tonight for the ownership of ITV licences is necessary because it will permit ITV to survive in a very hostile world—a world of international media giants and changes in technology which will permit about 104 possible channels. I have seen a demonstration in Winchester which suggested that we could be talking about 208 channels from an ordinary Astra satellite.

If ITV were confined by an ownership structure which was devised nearly 40 years ago when there was no BBC 2 and no Channel 4, it would have no future. Only the technologically and economically blind could possibly envisage that.

The core of ITV success has been its capacity to make United Kingdom programmes for United Kingdom viewers, as hon. Members on both sides of the House have said this evening. In 1993, far from independent television becoming weaker, the ITV companies spent more than £500 million on original domestic productions for their network. It is, and will continue to be, a major industry.

While many of us continue to believe that Britain produces some of the best television in the world, we are starting to fall behind our foreign competitors.

The United Kingdom trade balance for the import and export of television programmes tells a depressing story. In 1985 we enjoyed a £25 million surplus. By 1991 it had fallen and by the year 2000 it is forecast to reach £640 million as new broadcasters turn to cheaper imported programmes. That makes it doubly important for ITV companies to combine their strengths.

ITV companies must be able to discard the inefficiencies of their current fragmentation if they are to sustain their commitment to the United Kingdom broadcasting network and industry.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I am sure that my hon. Friend is right in large parts, but if the two takeovers in the newspapers at the moment mean that £2·5 million a week has to come out of programming costs to fund the loans for the bankers, how does that add to programming and production in this country?

Mr. Fabricant: I do not accept my hon. Friend's assumption First, there has been considerable talk by Opposition Members of Central Television being locally owned. That is not the case, as we know. Central Television is owned mainly by investors from London and its biggest single investor is in Dundee, which certainly is not the midlands. The acquisition of Central Television by Carlton would strengthen the two broadcasting organisations.

I am not going to speculate on where savings might be made, but there cannot be savings from programming. Although, as the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) said, the imposition of fines of 3 and 5 per cent. comes after the fact, like any fine, it is a deterrent. The threat of the licence being withdrawn is the ultimate deterrent. That would happen if the detailed requirements of the ITC licence awarded to both Central and Carlton were not met.

The world has not stood still since ITV was designed in 1955. It has not even stood still since the Broadcasting Act 1990. ITV needs a strong domestic base, and the confidence to meet new players from the United States of America, Europe and Japan. A number of objections have been raised to the new rules. Almost all of them are based on fundamental misconceptions of the way in which ITV is organised.

In the short time that I have left, I have three points to make. First, there is no threat to the regional nature of ITV in the new rules. Television stations and their owners are two different things, and they always have been. Nothing in the current rules requires any regional licence to be owned within its region. We have already heard that Central Television is not midlands-owned. It would be better served being owned by Carlton than being owned by Berlusconi or Bertlesmann. If regional ownership, with the essential guarantee of regional programmes, were such a vital necessity, why did the existing ITV companies reduce such regional programming, when it is not regionally owned? The real guarantees of regionality are in the ITC agreement.

The second guarantee is the powers available to the ITC, and I outlined that in my intervention to the hon. Member for Redcar, and earlier in my talk—*[Laughter.]* —my speech, my lecture. The ITC has an important role to play in the years ahead, and it is absurd to pretend that commercial restrictive ownership rules are a more workable way to protect the public interest. Regional programming is a valuable commodity, and it will be maintained.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Fabricant: No, I will not, as I have only one minute left.

Thirdly and lastly, what are the practical options available to the Government? Some have called for a moratorium on takeovers. We cannot stop the clock, sit back and carefully consider ITV ownership. There is no option available to us, because of the change in European rules.

I live in the midlands, and I would rather have Central Television putting out regional programmes controlled by Carlton than any programmes controlled by the Bertlesmanns and Berlusconis of this world. I commend the order to the House.

1.13 am

Mr. Brooke: With the leave of the House, I shall reply to the debate.

I shall leave until the end my response to the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam)—I intend that as a compliment to her representation of the Opposition. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) for his robustness and clarity, and for his continuing attention and vigilance on the subject that we have been debating.

The hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) was in favour of regulation of everything. This country is widely regarded as the best-placed market in the world for cable and telecommunications and the interaction between them, because of the Government's insistence on making sure that we avoid becoming over-regulated. The hon. Gentleman said in conclusion that there was nothing in my speech about sustaining the domestic production base. I can only refer him to the text of the speech that I delivered, where he will see that I made it clear that it was the second main objective of the Government's actions. With admirable appositeness, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) made exactly the same point —that the maintenance of the domestic production base lies at the heart of our policy. In the cross-media review, we shall not only consider the relations of broadcasting and the press but go much wider.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is a case not just of the ITC enforcing the provisions of the Broadcasting Act 1990 but of enforcing the terms of the licence based on the applications made by the franchisees, which include regional production of major network television?

Mr. Brooke: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. He is entirely right. On at least one major occasion this year, the ITC has returned to that very issue.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) also referred to cross-media ownership, but the foreign companies that might bid in this market will be subject to exactly the same rules as British companies. The rules apply to bidders from any direction. In response to what the hon. Gentleman said about regional output, I merely quantify what I said earlier. On the basis of the first nine months, there will be 11,000 hours of regional output in the current year, whereas there were 8,250 in the previous ones.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) impressed everyone on the Select Committee on National Heritage by his knowledge of this subject, and he added to his reputation tonight.

In my remaining two minutes, I deal with the remarks of the hon. Member for Redcar. I thought that there was in her speech a touch of "Stop the world, I want to get off." From what she said, one would not have thought that the Labour party opposed the introduction of commercial television in the first place or that it opposed the introduction of Channel 4. The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) said that regional television was dying, despite the increase in regional programming hours that I have described, and in particular animadverted on Granada. One would not think that Granada has just been nominated for 12 BAFTA awards, eight more than any other ITV company. The hon. Lady's position on the moratorium was essentially protectionist. The hon. Member for Redcar is said to be much more open minded.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), the Opposition's spokesman on broadcasting, said a couple of weeks ago that the Opposition were contemplating a "mid-course correction"—not before time, I should say, but so much for the intellectual continuity of the Opposition's case. I give the hon. Member for Redcar credit for having maintained the Opposition's enthusiasm for a moratorium, although her grounds have subtly shifted. The *Independent on Sunday* reported that the hon. Lady had

> "surprised observers by coming out in favour of complete deregulation of ITV".

I detect in her the characteristic of the Liberal Democrat —of running with the hare and apologising to the hounds when they catch up.

Bruce Gyngell, the former chief executive of TV-am, called the proposed changes

> "the best news I've heard for British broadcasting in the last 10 or 15 years."

I have never been much given to hyperbole——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business):—*

The House divided: Ayes 144, Noes 109.

Division No. 22] **[1.18 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*

Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Duncan, Alan
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Gillan, Cheryl
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Horam, John
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bradley, Keith
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
McFall, John
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Purchase, Ken
Raynsford, Nick
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Broadcasting (Restrictions on the Holding of Licences) (Amendment) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 29th November, be approved.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments. &c.)

NORTHERN IRELAND

That the draft Environment and Safety Information (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 19th October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

That the draft Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 18th October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

LEGAL AID AND ADVICE (SCOTLAND)

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Assistance by Way of Representation) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1993, which laid before this House on 18th November, be approved.

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Financial Limit) (Scotland) Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 18th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees),

SCHOOL MILK

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 7825/93, relating to the supply of milk and certain milk products at reduced prices to schoolchildren; and acknowledges the Government's efforts in securing an agreement which, whilst reflecting the need for budgetary restraint, safeguards the viability of the scheme.

STATE AID FOR COAL

That this House takes note of European Document No. 4569/93, relating to State aid to the coal industry; and endorses the Government's intention to work for Council assent to a replacement Decision based on the document in timely fashion before the present Decision expires on 31st December 1993.

COMMUNITY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 8107/93, relating to Community research and development; and endorses the Government's negotiating objectives of securing both excellence and value for taxpayers' money in these activities, enhancing their contribution to economic competitiveness, and seeking in particular an overall amount for the Fourth Framework Programme and a detailed breakdown of expenditure between activities that reflects the United Kingdom's interests and priorities.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Sunday Trading

1.29 am

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Despite earlier events, I rise to present a petition organised by the Association of Master Bakers and presented to me late yesterday by its president. The petition contains 15,000 signatures of owners, staff and customers of independent bakeries in England and Wales.

The petition declares that the future of many small food shops is being put at risk by the decision of many supermarket groups to trade on Sundays to the detriment of the variety, vitality and viability of traditional shopping areas in towns and villages in England and Wales, to the detriment of customer choice and to the detriment of employment prospects.

The petitioners therefore request that this honourable House of Commons debate the future of food retailing in England and Wales and take account of all relevant social, environmental and economic factors when debating the reform of the Shops Act 1950.

And the petitioners, remaining the loyal subjects of Her Majesty the Queen, offer their humble respect to the House of Commons.

I beg leave to present the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Foster Carers (Pensions)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

1.31 am

Ms Ann Coffey (Stockport): I am pleased to have this opportunity to bring the issue of foster carers and their access to pensions before the House. Perhaps I could begin with some facts. According to statistics produced by the National Foster Care Association, there are approximately 27,000 foster families in the United Kingdom and around 40,000 children in foster care. I congratulate the National Foster Care Association on its ceaseless campaigning on behalf of foster carers.

The majority of children in care or accommodated by any local authority are in foster homes. In my town of Stockport, 58 per cent. of children in the care of the local authority are in foster homes. Those children range from 0 to 16 years of age. The reason I am giving those rather dry statistics is to give an appreciation of the valuable service offered by foster parents to local authorities for children in need.

I shall give some more statistics. According to a written answer to a parliamentary question by the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) on 4 March, 1993, the average cost to the Exchequer is £102 per week for a foster placement, £530 per week for a children's home and £943 per week for a registered voluntary home. I make it absolutely clear that not many foster parents receive as much as £120 per week. Indeed, according to figures calculated by the National Foster Care Association and other sources, only 3 per cent. of foster carers receive any financial reward in the way of a wage. The remaining 97 per cent. receive only boarding-out payments.

As hon. Members will be aware, boarding-out rates differ. In the north west, which is of specific interest to me, the figures are £42·75 for a child up to seven years and £46·41 for a child from eight to 10 years. I could continue to give the boarding-out rates, but I think I have made my point. The boarding-out payment is intended to cover all the costs associated with care of the child including food, replacement clothing, heating, dinner money, hospital visits, family outings and many other items.

Foster parents, unlike child minders, cannot set their own charges. Such charges are decided by local authorities. For many years, foster carers have said that the boarding-out rate does not cover the cost of care, which is subsidised by the foster family out of its pocket and good will. I wish to emphasis that because I shall return to good will later in my speech.

I can remember visiting a children's home some 15 years ago when I was a social worker. That home had a residential nursery, as many children's homes had in those days. Happily, those days are gone because foster carers are available to provide family care to children. Indeed it would cost the Government a fortune to accommodate those 40,000 children in foster care. In Stockport alone, homes would have to be found for 167 children. By my estimate, that means six new homes. I emphasise those economic arguments because I know that the Government will appreciate them.

To return to the children—who are, after all, the important people in the debate—they are not easy children. They often come from disturbed backgrounds. They come into foster care with emotional, physical and educational

[Ms Ann Coffey]

difficulties. They come at short notice. They can stay for unplanned periods. They can be very needy of love and endless attention. Looking after them needs skill, patience and perseverance.

Foster parents have other tasks: for example, helping to write and give evidence in court and preparing children for eventual adoption. In addition, the Children Act 1989 requires foster parents to work closely with the children's family, which may involve visits from the family to the foster parent's home—a very sensitive area.

There is an increasing difficulty in attracting foster carers because it is becoming a tough job although it has its rewards. I fear that the Government are relying on good will too heavily and that that good will may be running out. Some authorities are having so much difficulty in recruiting foster parents that, for instance, one local authority has been known to use child minders as an emergency measure, paying them at an hourly rate. In some cases, that could cost up to £200 or £300 for an emergency placement.

In this debate I am asking the Government to provide their share of good will and do something for foster carers that will underline the fact that they are valued and that their contribution is valued. I am asking the Government to extend home responsibility protection to foster carers.

The recent Budget confirmed the Government's commitment to encourage men and women to take responsibility for their own pension arrangements. It also confirmed a move towards establishing a state pension age of 65 for women. That move poses an especial problem for women foster carers because the great majority of them are not in paid employment and are therefore unable to make private pension arrangements. Although a few foster families receive a small fee in addition to the normal cost of looking after children, approximately 97 per cent. of all foster families in the UK receive no taxable fee-paying element whatsoever. That means that women who are not in paid employment because they are looking after foster children in their own home are at a disadvantage compared with women in outside paid employment and those caring for their own children and not in employment, who receive some protection of their pension rights.

At present, home responsibility protection is automatically paid to anyone in receipt of child benefit, and ceases when the child is 16. I should like home responsibility protection to be extended to foster carers who are at home and not in paid employment.

As well as an extension of home responsibility protection to foster carers, I should also like there to be an extension of the maximum number of years that home responsibility protection can be granted to foster carers. Twenty years is the current maximum. Foster carers who have themselves been parents will possibly not start caring for other people's children until a later stage in their lives and are therefore likely to have used up most or all of their rights to home responsibility protection in caring for their own children.

Unless the maximum of years is extended, provision for home responsibility protection is unlikely in itself to have significant impact on the majority of foster families. Figures produced by the National Foster Care Association show that the average woman foster carer is in her middle to late forties. A sample of 4,185 foster families from 30 local authorities throughout the UK showed that 66 per cent.—two out of three—were aged over 40 and 62 per cent. were aged between 40 and 60. I should therefore like home responsibility protection to be extended to foster carers who are looking after children in their own home and do not have children under the age of 16. I should also like the number of years that they need to be in paid employment to qualify for a pension in their own right to be reduced.

The alternative to the extension of home responsibility protection would be to use the money saved from child benefit when children are looked after by local authorities to pay voluntary national insurance contributions for foster carers so long as they continue to provide a service, as sums are currently saved by the Government because child benefit does not pass from parents to local authorities or to carers after the first eight weeks of any care episode.

The Government may say that they would need an army of civil servants to identify and keep records of any entitlement to HRP or voluntary national insurance contributions for foster carers, but it is now possible for the local authority to inform the appropriate Government Department of the foster carers who are approved and registered by them annually. It would seem to be a fairly easy arrangement for the local authority at the end of each financial year to send a list of approved carers to the local social security offices. The officers could then record those carers either for HRP purposes or for the crediting of voluntary contributions.

I tabled a question on 27 April 1993:

> "To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will extend the home responsibility protection to foster carers who do not receive a financial reward from fostering; and if he will give reasons for his answer."

The reply was:

> "Eligibility for HRP is dependent on entitlement to certain benefits, primarily child benefit. To avoid double provision from public funds for the cost of child care, child benefit is not paid to foster carers who receive an allowance from the local authority. Consequently HRP is not available in these cases."—[*Official Report*, 27 April 1993; Vol. 223, c. *382*.]

However, I am not talking about the cost of child care, because it is clear that the Exchequer benefits from the contributions of foster parents. I am talking about the cost of foster care to the foster parents themselves. It is only fair that the home responsibility allowance should be extended to them.

In extending the allowance, the Government would offer recognition and show that they value the enormous amount of work done day after day by countless foster parents who pick up the pieces of desperate family situations and provide valuable care for the victims—the children. It would be grossly unfair for the Government to continue to withhold home responsibility protection.

To sum up the arguments, we need foster carers for children. Foster carers save money. They should therefore not suffer financially when they reach pension age after a lifetime of service to the community. No doubt the Minister will acknowledge that contribution, and he will be sincere in doing so. I ask him to carry that sentiment further and agree to consider the issue again. If he does, he will give a valuable and overdue message to foster carers. He will be saying, "We thank you for caring for our children and in return we shall try to look after you." Surely we do not want foster parents to be consigned to an old age of poverty on the minimum state pension as a result of their lifetime of service to the community. I ask the Minister to reconsider, and to extend home responsibility protection to foster carers.

1.41 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. William Hague): I congratulate the hon. Member for Stockport (Ms Coffey) on securing the debate, albeit at a time of night at which attendance in the House is much diminished. However, we are joined by my hon. Friends the Members for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) and for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce). My hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) is also with us —but, of course, he is here in his capacity as a Whip, and Whips never sleep anyway, so his being here is not the result of any special effort on his part.

I know from the background of the hon. Member for Stockport, and from the question that she asked earlier this year, which she mentioned, that this is a subject close to her heart and one of which she has great experience. I have listened carefully to what she has said and have been impressed by the care and concern with which she has put the issue before the House.

It is, of course, important for all people to think about their pension rights and to plan for their income in retirement, and I would not want to discourage foster carers or anyone else from doing so. On the contrary, the Department of Social Security is devoting considerable effort to encouraging people to consider the matter early in their working lives. Some foster carers will, of course, have built up or will be entitled to pension rights acquired at other times in their working lives, or through their wives or husbands, but I will discuss that aspect in a moment.

It may be useful for me to begin by clarifying briefly the conditions that have to be satisfied for receipt of state retirement pension. The basic state pension is paid at the full rate of £56·10 per week to anyone, man or woman, who has paid full rate national insurance contributions for about 90 per cent. of his or her working life. National insurance credits are available to assist people who are absent from the work force, and therefore not able to make contributions, for specific reasons such as sickness or unemployment. People are thus allowed a gap of some five years in their record without its affecting their basic pension. A scaled down rate of basic pension is available to anyone with reduced contributions, provided that they have at least a 25 per cent. record.

As the hon. Lady is doubtless aware, many married women have retained their right not to pay full rate contributions, choosing to rely instead on the pension paid to them on their husbands' contributions, at 60 per cent. of the husband's basic pension—normally £33·70 a week. While I am on that subject, it may be appropriate to mention that where a marriage ends in divorce a married woman who was seeking to rely on her husband's record should not lose out. On retirement, she is still able to use her former husband's record for the years of the marriage where her own record is insufficient.

Additional to the basic pension, of course, we have SERPS. People have been building up their rights to that additional earnings-related pension since 1978. It is becoming an increasingly large part of the state pensions provision and is set to become even more so as the scheme matures. Entitlement to the basic state pension can, of course, be improved through home responsibilities protection, to which the hon. Lady referred. That provision exists to protect the basic pension position of people who are unable to work regularly and are unable to make their own contributions because they are precluded from the employment field due to caring responsibilities at home. It applies to those who are caring for sick or disabled people at home, but its primary application and the one that is relevant to this discussion is in relation to people who are raising a family.

I should make clear for the record, because there is often confusion about it, that HRP is not a contribution credit and does not make up a deficiency in a person's contribution record. It reduces the number of qualifying years that a person needs to qualify for a full basic pension, and there is a maximum on the number of years, as the hon. Lady has already described.

HRP was brought in by the Labour Government in 1978. They designed it to be of benefit with only the simplest of qualifying criteria as a passport entitlement which was based on the receipt of a qualifying benefit—in this case, child benefit. HRP coverage in cases of child benefit extends until the child is 16.

As the then Under-Secretary of State and former hon. Member for Rotherham, the late Brian O'Malley, said at the time of the introduction of the relevant legislation in 1975,

> "it is right that we should adopt a 'broad brush' approach to this to keep the system as simple and as straightforward as possible . . . We should hope to identify most people eligible for protection during periods of home responsibilities by reference to social security benefits in payment . . . By far the largest group will be those who are at home looking after children and they will be readily identified through the proposed new system of child benefits which will replace the present system of family allowances."

So the broad brush nature of HRP is well established and dates back to previous Governments.

Why, then, it might be argued, can we not extend child benefit entitlement to foster carers? The purpose of child benefit is to provide a measure of financial assistance for families with dependent children. It is paid directly to the person having care of the child—usually the mother. As well as replacing the previous family allowance, it broadly takes the place of the tax allowances which used to be available to the working parent. It is an established principle of social security provision that there should be no double provision from public funds for the same contingency. For this reason, child benefit is not payable where a foster carer receives a fostering allowance from a local authority. Similar provision existed prior to 1977 under the old family allowance scheme. In my view, and in the view of Governments over many years, that is right. Clearly it would not be satisfactory to use taxpayers' funds to make double provision. I have to say that, in keeping with that long-established principle, we have no plans to change the existing provisions.

If child benefit cannot and should not be paid in those circumstances, could or should HRP be extended to foster carers by some other route? In theory, of course, it could be, although it could be administratively complex and would be a departure from the simple, broad brush nature of the system as was devised by our predecessors.

Successive Governments have taken the view that such a change should not be made, partly because of the factors that I have described, partly because the pension

[Mr. William Hague]

entitlements of foster carers can be built up in other ways and partly because of the provision made for foster carers elsewhere in the benefit system.

Many foster carers will, naturally, have a husband or a wife who is building up or has built up a full contribution record. A wife can be awarded a category B pension, raising the pension entitlement to the full state pension for a couple on the strength of the husband's contributions. If she is below pension age, the same addition to the husband's pension may be made as an adult dependency increase. Under the proposals made last week for equalising the state pension age, such additions and category B pensions will in future be awarded for a husband on the strength of a wife's contributions as well as the other way round.

Other foster carers will be bringing up children of their own at the same time as they are being foster carers. In their cases, HRP will already be available. I recognise that a majority of foster carers are over 40 and many will already have brought up their own children, with the result that the period during which they could claim child benefit will have come to an end. However, HRP may be of limited further value in many such cases, as the hon. Lady recognised, since 20 years is currently the maximum number of years for which HRP can be awarded. We plan to raise this to 22 years when the state pension age is equalised. The maximum will be 22 years for men and women. To raise it to more than half the working life required to claim a full state pension would seriously erode the contributory nature of the state pension scheme.

So it is by no means always the case that foster carers' pension entitlements will suffer as a result of their work, nor is it necessarily the case that their position would be improved by changing the basis on which HRP is awarded, although that would help some people. It can be argued that where pension entitlements might suffer, the state scheme leaves it open to people to take their own action to safeguard their pension provision through the payment of voluntary class 3 national insurance contributions, currently set at £5·45 a week.

On top of this is the additional consideration that the social security system already provides, quite rightly, some help to foster carers. A foster parent who satisfies the other conditions for income support can qualify for that benefit. Although people would normally be debarred from IS if they work more than 16 hours a week, foster parents are not debarred, however many hours a week they devote to fostering. The fostering allowance is totally disregarded, although no allowance is made in the IS assessment for the foster child.

Alternatively a person who is employed as a foster parent for at least 16 hours a week can qualify for family credit on the basis of that work. In the great majority of cases, of course, that person would be better off on IS, but again the fostering allowance is totally disregarded in the FC assessment.

This brings me to the subject of the fostering allowance itself. As the hon. Lady will be aware, the arrangements for fostering are covered by a comprehensive set of regulations which are the responsibility of my colleagues in the Department of Health. Fostering is arranged through local authorities who pay foster carers a weekly allowance to cover additional living costs associated with caring. Higher rates go to those caring for children with special needs. I am advised by the Health Department that the number of foster carers has remained fairly constant in recent years, at about 30,000. The amounts they receive vary from £50 to £200 a week, with the average being in the order of £100. I recognise, however, from what the hon. Lady said that some payments may be lower than £50. The fact that foster carers are recompensed by the local authority for the work they do is obviously another factor which must be considered when weighing these issues.

I would not wish to deny that the hon. Lady has raised a subject of perfectly legitimate concern for some people. She has presented her case powerfully. It does, however, have to be seen against a background of long-established arrangements which have been adhered to through successive Parliaments and Governments of both parties; of the need for tight controls of public expenditure now and in the future requiring all spending proposals to be judged against other priorities; of the alternative routes available for many foster carers to build up or purchase pension entitlement; and of the extensive and well justified provision already made to help them in their work. When we have, quite rightly, to reassure ourselves that every aspect of social spending is justified and defensible, I cannot conclude at present that there exists a sufficiently strong case for changing the present long-standing arrangements.

I accept, however, that the hon. Lady has raised some valid points on behalf of a group of people who perform a sterling service to the children in their care and to society generally, and I will look in detail at the points that she has raised and the implications of what she has proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seven minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 9 December 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords]*

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the British Waterways Bill *[Lords]* may, notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders or practice of this House, proceed with the Bill in the present Session and the Petition for the Bill shall be deemed to have been deposited and all Standing Orders applicable thereto shall be deemed to have been complied with;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the present Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the last Session;

That as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read for the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the last Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill, together with any minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on the Bill, shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the present session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the last Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the last Session.

Hon. Members: Object.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Battery Farms

1. **Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the welfare of chickens in battery farms.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): The Commission has been reviewing the battery hens directive. We await its proposals for a revision of the directive and for new standards for other systems. The Government wish to see the highest welfare standards set on a Community basis for laying hens in all systems of production.

Mrs. Kennedy: Is the Minister aware that it is illegal to keep birds in cages that are too small to allow them to spread their wings? The only exception to that law involves battery chickens. Does he agree that battery chickens deserve the same protection from cruelty as other birds? As part of his review, will he consider extending the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 accordingly?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Lady raises a very important point. The Government's position is plain: we wish to see the highest welfare standards set on a Community basis. We will not take unilateral action because to do so would place our egg producers at a great disadvantage. We are conscious of the need to improve the general welfare standards of battery chickens and will bear the hon. Lady's point in mind.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: My hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend are making considerable efforts to get a Europewide agreement on animal welfare, particularly in regard to battery hens. Does he agree that it would be absolute folly for our domestic markets if we were to take unilateral action?

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend is completely right. My right hon. Friend has no intention of doing such a thing. We have made it plain that improvements to the systems must be on a Europewide basis, thereby not disadvantaging producers, who have been under a great deal of pressure and have had difficulties for many years. We will do all that we can to help the egg production systems of this country and, at the same time, improve the welfare of battery hens.

Mr. Pickthall: Does the Minister agree with the egg producers in my constituency who say that they will be put out of business if they are forced to implement the Welfare of Battery Hens Regulations 1987, which come into force next year, unless they contain a certain amount of flexibility? They will be forced into massive capital expenditure to make the relatively small changes to the floors of battery cages which many of their European competitors have already made. That would put our farmers at a disadvantage.

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman is correct. We will issue guidance to the industry on the implementation of the

Welfare of Battery Hens Regulations 1987. As the hon. Gentleman rightly says, they will come fully into force on 1 January next year. I can assure the hon. Gentleman—and I hope that he will assure his egg farmers—that those rules and regulations will be enforced in a sensible, pragmatic and consistent manner. If he has any reason to complain, he should get in touch with me at once.

Pest Control

2. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken to secure safe, efficient and humane methods of pest control.

Mr. Soames: Responsibility for pest control lies with individual landowners and occupiers, who are free to use any legal method of control, including shooting, approved pesticides and traps.

Mr. Riddick: Does my hon. Friend agree that, from a conservation point of view, it is very important to control vermin in the countryside? Does he agree that one of the most effective and least cruel ways of controlling the fox population is hunting foxes with hounds—and does he agree that, from a national point of view, one of the most effective ways of controlling the pest population is ensuring that we have as few Labour Members as possible in the House of Commons?

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend has made an important and serious point. The control of pests and vermin in the countryside is indeed very important. It is not good enough to turn a blind eye and allow vocal minority groups to try to force unsatisfactory practices on the countryside.

As my hon. Friend knows, the Government remain neutral on fox hunting. For my own part, however, I whole heartedly agree with what he has said: hunting plays a very important part in the life of the countryside and the whole nation would be irreparably the worse without it.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: Has the Minister had any discussions with his colleagues in the Department of the Environment about the cost of eliminating pesticides from the water supply? Does he think it right for that cost to continue to fall on the water rate payers, rather than on the polluters?

Mr. Soames: That is really a question for my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of the Environment. The hon. Lady may be assured, however, that we work very closely with the Department on such matters. As she knows, Government policy is that the use of pesticides should be limited to the absolute minimum that is necessary for effective use—for the effective control of pests, compatible with the protection of human health and the environment. We feel that arbitrary reduction targets would not be helpful.

I assure the hon. Lady that I will mention what she has said to my colleagues in the Department of the Environment.

Fishing, Thames Estuary

3. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received about the allocation of fishing quotas to fishermen in the Thames estuary; and if she will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jack): Officials meet industry representatives on a regular basis to discuss the monthly quota management arrangements for white fish stocks. We are aware of the concern about availability of North sea cod in the Thames estuary and of my hon. Friend's constituents' concerns about the very tight monthly catch restrictions for North sea sole.

Mr. Whittingdale: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his answer. Is he aware that fishermen in the Thames estuary—for instance, those operating from Mersea island in my constituency—have been allocated a quota for sole of about 100 kg a month, which yields about £200? The cost of maintaining a boat may approach £2,000 a month. Does my hon. Friend accept that quotas of that size make fishing almost unviable for my constituents? Will he consider whether they can be given any help and, in particular, will he consider establishing a separate quota for the Thames estuary?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend is indeed a friend to the fishermen in raising that point, but I feel that his question goes to the heart of a wider issue—the overall problem, in all Community waters, of the current pressure on our white fish stocks. I am well aware of that problem, but, as my hon. Friend will know, our efforts to secure a year-round fishery in his area for both sole and cod have meant evening out the availability of those species throughout the year. The view was taken that it was better to allow some fishermen to catch sole all year round and retain seasonal fisheries than not to allow them to fish at all; however, I note what my hon. Friend has said and will bear it in mind in the coming negotiations.

Horticultural Products

4. **Mr. Pickles:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken to improve the marketing of British horticultural products.

Mr. Jack: Help to improve the marketing of British horticultural produce will come from the new marketing development grant and a study that my right hon. Friend has asked me to undertake of ways in which the sector's performance can be strengthened.

Mr. Pickles: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for his reply. Is he aware that growers of broadleaf and salad vegetables in my constituency are gravely concerned about the proposed EC directives on nitrates? Is he aware that, given the preponderance of vegetables grown under glass —in my constituency and throughout the country—the viability of the industry is threatened? The proposed directive is not really based on scientific justification and smacks of anti-competitive practice. What measures is my hon. Friend taking to protect British growers?

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for making that point —he does a service to the glasshouse industry. As he may know, before I came to the House I was involved in the fresh produce industry and therefore fully appreciate the seriousness of what he says. Our officials have been working extremely hard in their discussions in Europe to try to ensure that the United Kingdom's view on the way in which the directive affects our glasshouse growers prevails. We are currently without support on that matter, but we take my hon. Friend's point so seriously that my right hon. Friend the Minister plans to raise it in the next Agriculture Council

Mr. Ashton: Is the Minister aware that the marketing of horticultural products took a severe knock with last night's vote in the House and that thousands of greengrocer shops that have been opening on Sunday mornings will now find that the competition from Tesco and Sainsbury will force them to shut every Sunday? The Conservative party is supposed to be the party of small business men, yet it was predominantly its vote last night that will shut those greengrocer shops, especially on Sundays.

Mr. Jack: What the hon. Gentleman says is an insult to the small specialist greengrocers, who, with their expertise and knowledge of markets and different varieties, serve, whether six or seven days a week, with tremendous professionalism, those who buy vegetables and salads. Long may they continue to trade in that way.

Mr. Paice: Does my hon. Friend agree that effective marketing of horticultural produce requires markets to be as open as possible? In that light, has any progress been made on the agricultural and horticultural aspects of the GATT negotiations? Will he and our right hon. Friend the Minister make absolutely sure that no special interest groups in other countries are allowed to get in the way of a satisfactory settlement?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend knows that many members of the Government have, in their own way, been working extremely hard to help to secure a general agreement on tariffs and trade. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister will make her contribution to that next week.

Animal Transportation

5. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to improve the welfare of animals transported from the United Kingdom to the rest of the EC.

Mr. Soames: We have maintained strict national controls to safeguard the welfare of animals during transport both within this country and for export. Further detailed Community rules are being discussed and we are pressing for our own very high standards to be adopted.

Dr. Jones: Does the Minister agree that the export of livestock for slaughter is completely unnecessary and causes immense suffering to the animals concerned? Even if the Minister is not able to ban all such exports, should not she be taking immediate action to ban the export of sheep to Spain until we have a guarantee and are completely satisfied that the Spanish have stopped their appalling slaughterhouse practices, such as stabbing fully conscious animals with screwdrivers and short-bladed knives, as was recently revealed by the RSPCA?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Lady makes an important point. Plainly, the practices that were shown on the RSPCA video from Spain are completely unacceptable. My right hon. Friend has mentioned those matters not only to the Spanish Agriculture Minister but to the Farm Commissioner in Brussels. Banning the export of sheep to Spain is not possible under the single market agreement. As the hon. Lady knows, we did not allow animals to go to Spain for slaughter before 1 January this year. We have an agreement with the Spanish authorities on a chief vet to chief vet basis that our animals will go only to plants that are known to be fully approved to EC standards. I assure the hon. Lady that no animals go to any plant of the type that was shown in the RSPCA video.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: I hope that I can assume that my hon. Friend has read the comprehensive and unanimous report on that subject by the all-party Select Committee on Agriculture. Will he bear in mind two important factors: first, that it is in no one's interest to take live animals any further than is absolutely necessary and, secondly, that it is particularly in the interests of the owners of those animals to ensure that they arrive in good condition? That is a crucial factor in considering all those matters.

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend is right and his Select Committee made those points clear in its admirable report. This involves not only a humanitarian and ethical issue, which the British people instinctively and rightly wish to support, but the perfectly proper commercial consideration that if animals are improperly and inhumanely treated on their way to slaughter, they will not be in a fit state to be slaughtered when they get there, to the commercial disadvantage of those who wish to sell that meat. We have written to all those involved in the transport of animals reminding them of those important obligations. I assure my hon. Friend, his Committee and the House that at the Agriculture Council in Brussels next week my right hon. Friend the Minister will be fighting for a proper, honourable and sensible programme, which can be enforced, for the welfare of animals travelling here and on the continent.

Mr. Morley: The Opposition support the Minister's representations to the Spanish on those despicable practices, but did not the former Minister of Agriculture, the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), give an assurance that British livestock would be sent to only 68 of the best Spanish slaughterhouses—an assurance which was broken in that it was changed to EC-approved slaughterhouses? Is not it also true that, despite the Minister's assurances, there is no way of knowing to which plants in Spain livestock is going?

The Government have rightly agreed a derogation for horses from Britain going for slaughter, thus establishing the principle that the EC regulations can be changed. Does the Minister agree that it is unacceptable that animals from Britain can travel for as long as 60 hours simply to go to a slaughterhouse in Spain?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman and I had a good long canter round this course in Committee yesterday and he knows perfectly well that the Government take these matters extremely seriously. We have full confidence in the arrangements that have been made between Her Majesty's Government and the Spanish Government on the basis of chief vet to chief vet. After the RSPCA video, we took immediate steps to ensure that all the guarantees given to the Government by the Spanish chief vet were still in place and would remain in place, and we are confident that that is the case.

I completely agree that the unsupervised and unregulated transport of animals is unacceptable, but the hon. Gentleman must understand that it is no good parroting on as if the British Government were at fault. The problems occur not in Britain but in Spain, Greece, France and elsewhere on the continent, and it is to continental Governments that the hon. Gentleman should make known his strictures. We know exactly where we have to go and how to get there, but we must take our European partners with us in order to ensure proper enforcement of the rules, without which they are nothing.

Mr. Bellingham: Not so long ago, the Minister told the House that if animals were fit enough to travel, they should travel. Most hon. Members will agree with that, but is my hon. Friend aware that on many journeys animals are not properly watered or fed or given proper rests? Would not it make sense to have a compulsory rest period every eight hours or so?

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend is right. He is well informed on these matters, so I am sure that he knows the state of play in the negotiations, which are very much concerned with rest periods and journey times. However, those matters must be part of a package. No rules are worth the paper that they are written on unless the countries that are party to the agreement are prepared to enforce, on a proper and decent basis, all the rules to which they have signed up. When we achieve that, we shall have secured a real improvement in the standards of animal welfare, which everyone in Britain rightly wants to see.

Farm Incomes

6. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the average farm income for mostly sheep producers in the severely disadvantaged areas of *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): Details of incomes for specialist sheep produces in the severely disadvantaged areas of England and Wales are contained in the 1993 autumn review of the economic conditions in the hills and uplands, a copy of which is in the House Library.

Ms Eagle: Is the Minister aware that 57 per cent. of mostly sheep farmers in less-favoured areas in England, and 47 per cent. in similar areas in Wales, had to exist last year on an average income of less than £10,000? Does the Minister think that that is an adequate living for farmers who have a difficult job to do trying to farm in areas that are particularly difficult to turn into productive profit?

Mrs. Shephard: Of course, I recogise the importance in economic, social and environmental terms of farming in the hills. I remind the hon. Lady that the details of farm incomes were agreed by the farm unions. This year, we simply could not ignore the evidence of a rise in farm incomes of about 41 per cent. in England and 55 per cent. —admittedly on a lower base—in Wales. Also, although hill livestock compensatory allowances have been reduced by £25 million as a result of the public expenditure survey round, income from other sources to people who farm in the hills has increased by £100 million. That is not the sort of evidence which one can ignore when considering those arrangements.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the reasons why the income of sheep farmers in severely disadvantaged areas such as the North Yorkshire moors national park has risen over the past years is the 30 per cent. increase in the export of sheep to the continent? Is not it hypocritical of hon. Members to argue in one breath that we should provide more money for hill farmers and in the next breath say that we should cut off the very source of that increase in income by banning the export of live animals?

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend makes a good point because he knows the way in which farming works in his constituency. It is right that sheep farmers have benefited from the devaluation of the green pound, not only in terms of exports, but because the devaluation has increased the value of the support payments that they get by almost 16 per cent.

Mr. Beith: Is not the Minister using the one-off devaluation of the green pound to justify a severe reduction in the incomes of hill farms that are at the margin of viability? Is that to be the pattern for future years, or will the Minister seriously consider the future incomes of hill farmers and the danger to the whole conservation and life of hill areas if those farms go to the wall?

Mrs. Shephard: HLCAs continue to play a vital part in the viability of hill farms and incomes of hill farmers. As I have already explained, this year we could not ignore rising national incomes, which were agreed by the farming unions. Those aspects are looked at year on year and trends in farming incomes are always examined as we come up to the public expenditure survey round. Of course, I will review the position as we approach next year's arrangements.

Mr. Hicks: Does my right hon. Friend accept that good financial years are necessary not only to offset the years that are less good, but to enable the farmer to make necessary investment? Does my right hon. Friend realise that hill farmers make a positive contribution not only to the overall pattern of farming, but to the rural economy of those areas?

Mrs. Shephard: Yes, indeed. That is precisely why I stress the importance of hill farming to the economic and environmental well-being of the whole country. I am sure that my hon. Friend will wish to know that a couple of years ago, the average level of direct subsidies to hill livestock farmers in England was about £19,000. It is forecast that it will be £27,000 next year. That is a real increase and a real commitment to farming in hill areas which I am sure that my hon. Friend will appreciate.

Dr. Strang: Will the Minister acknowledge that between 1988 and 1990, hill farm incomes halved and that the figures that she has quoted today have to be set against that background? Will she accept that hill farmers require special assistance and that in many of the remotest parts of the country, the tourist industry is dependent on successful hill farming?

Mrs. Shephard: I am happy to confirm again my understanding of the importance of hill farming in those areas, in economic, environmental and social terms. But I should also remind the hon. Gentleman—it is a figure worth remembering—that there are some 67,000 hill farmers and next year they will benefit from a total of some £550 million worth of help through subsidies. That is a real commitment.

Agriculture Markets (India)

7. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures her Department has taken to open new markets for British agricultural-related businesses in India.

Mr. Jack: As part of the Indo-British partnership initiative announcement in January by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, I led a British mission to India in September with representatives of the British food and horticulture industry. They were able to identify new business opportunities, which are now being followed up.

Dr. Twinn: I thank my hon. Friend for his answer, and also for his visit and the good that it has done. Does he agree that the Indo-British partnership agreement has laid the way open for British technology in the food and horticulture industry? Will he now do all that he can to follow it up and ensure that British industry takes full advantage of that, to the benefit of British jobs and of India?

Mr. Jack: The point that my hon. Friend makes is vital, because the Indo-British partnership initiative has opened doors, both at high level in the Indian Government and in Indian business, for the whole of our food and agriculture industry to take advantage, particularly, of the economic reforms in India. I plan to hold a seminar at the beginning of next year, when those who went on the mission will report on their progress and have an opportunity to talk to others in the food and farming industry about possibilities for further export success with India.

Agricultural Wages Board

9. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received concerning the future of the Agricultural wages board.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The consultation period on the future of the Agricultural wages board ended at the beginning of November, a period which I had extended by two months. I am still considering the many responses.

Mr. Hall: Is the Secretary of State aware that the Agricultural wages board has a far wider role than simply setting terms and conditions of employment in the agricultural industry? It has an important role in maintaining the excellent industrial relations in agriculture, in careeer structures and in training. Does she accept the views of the National Farmers Union and the Agricultural Workers Union that it is essential that the Agricultural wages board is retained?

Mrs. Shephard: I am still considering the numerous responses, many of which contained the points that the hon. Gentleman made.

Mr. Cormack: Is my right hon. Friend aware that almost everyone associated with agriculture in Staffordshire is anxious that the board should remain? Will she take that carefully into account?

Mrs. Shephard: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Strang: Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that she has received 3,566 responses to her consultation paper and 14 petitions and that, of all those responses, only 11 favour abolition? Does she now accept that the whole agriculture industry wants the wages board to continue and that the sooner she announces that, the better?

Mrs. Shephard: I can tell that the hon. Gentleman has availed himself of the consultation documents, which have been placed in the Ministry library. The figures are more or less as he says and I will certainly take them all into account.

Mr. Garnier: Does my right hon. Friend accept that what my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) has just said about farmers in his constituency also applies to my constituency of Harborough? The farm workers, farm owners and landowners are adamant that the AWB should stay in place, but all three groups are equally adamant that a Labour Government should not ruin the best thing about this country—its agricultural business.

Mrs. Shephard: I shall say yes to all that.

Organic Farming

10. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she has taken to help those farmers using organic methods; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Ministry provides a broad range of help to farmers using organic methods, including a substantial research and development programme. An organic aid scheme is planned under the agri-environment programme.

Ms Hoey: The Secretary of State will be aware that nearly 70 per cent. of organic food consumed in this country is imported from Europe. Is not that deplorable? Why is this country not doing more to help organic farmers? In particular, in the new aid scheme that she has announced, why have the pioneers of the organic movement, who have pioneered methods, been excluded from help while it is being given to people who will now make money from the fact that they have been polluting their land for some time?

Mrs. Shephard: I am sure that the hon. Lady knows that organic farmers also benefit from the help currently available to all other farmers. I am also sure that she knows that I had an extremely amicable meeting with representatives of organic producers, which very thoroughly written up in this bulletin. From that, she will learn that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will be meeting them again soon to discuss marketing arrangements—a matter with which they feel that they need help.

As for helping organic farmers who are already in business, it was my view that it was better to use our resources to encourage more people to convert to organic farming if we were serious about increasing the number of people who farm in that way.

Sir. Ralph Howell: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if everyone in agriculture opted for organic farming the country would either starve or have to import vast quantities of food over and above what it imports today? Is she still of the opinion that we have been successful in reducing our cereal crop by 11 per cent., or 2 million tonnes, when the whole of the European Union has reduced its harvest by only 2·6 per cent? Is she aware that more than half of our partners actually increased their production this year? Is she still satisfied that that is the way forward?

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend is right to point out that organic farming is one way of reducing production. I do not want to sound ageist in any way, but some of us remember that before the war everyone was an organic farmer.

As for set aside, which was the point of the second half of my hon. Friend's question, we should in the first year consider the intention of set aside, which involves the amount planted. My hon. Friend has an eye for these matters so I know that he will have noted a 7 per cent. reduction in cereal planting in the EC as a whole. There has been an increase in production in some cases because of the base year that was taken and the fact that some countries in the EC, such as Denmark, had a bad year because of drought the previous year. We need to consider the figures over a period of time. I agree with my hon. Friend that they will need watching.

Dairy Farming

11. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she will next meet the president of the National Farmers Union to discuss the dairy sector.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regularly meet representatives of all sides of the agriculture industry, including the president of the National Farmers Union, to discuss issues of importance to them.

Sir David Knox: Will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that she will take an early decision about the milk marketing boards' reorganisation scheme in order to ensure continuity and income stability for dairy farmers?

Mrs. Shephard: The consultation period on the MMB's reorganisation scheme ended last week. With the Secretary of State for Wales, I am closely examining the proposals in the scheme and the very large number of representations received in the associated consultation. I shall make an announcement as soon as I can.

Mr. Skinner: When the Minister next meets representatives of the National Farmers Union to discuss the specific question of set aside, to which she has just referred, will she remind them that the Queen and Prince Charles have had more than £250,000 from the scheme? Does she agree that that should be knocked off the Civil List?

Mrs. Shephard: May I assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall do no such thing.

Horticulture

12. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are her scientific priorities to ensure the future competitiveness of British horticulture.

Mr. Jack: In the last financial year, we spent £15·4 million on research aimed at improving the industry's ability to meet the key market requirements of quality, flavour and availability.

Mr. Greenway: Have the large amounts of taxpayers' money which have been spent on research in the horticultural industry yielded any practical results? If so, will my hon. Friend give some specific examples of achievements in that sphere?

Mr. Jack: I am glad that my hon. Friend has asked that question because we had a question earlier on the subject of pesticides and I can tell my hon. Friend that our research resulted in the awarding of a Queen's award for work on biological control agents for insects and pests, which will reduce the need for chemicals. The famous Ballerina apple tree was developed as a result of our research and 1 million of them have now been sold in Europe. A new forecasting system for apple scab—I know that the Opposition think of nothing else—was also a result of that splendid research work.

Fishing

13. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she next hopes to meet the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations to discuss the state of the industry.

Mr. Jack: I expect to meet the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations next week as part of my preparation for the December Council of Fisheries Ministers.

Mr. Mitchell: I am delighted to hear that the Minister's next meeting with the NFFO will not be in court, like the previous one. I hope that he will allow us to divert him from his wicked ways, now that the judges have given him the opportunity—which he should have taken ages ago—to rethink his position on the days-at-sea limitation. Is it not sensible to improve the decommissioning scheme, rather than making sulky noises about scrapping it; to impose the type of conservation measures that the NFFO has agreed and urged on the Minister, and to try to reduce the industry in that way; and, as a third step, to reduce the piratical Spanish fishing that is going on in our waters and conserve the catches effectively that way?

Mr. Jack: On one point, the hon. Gentleman and I can jointly tread the path of righteousness, and that is on the subject of the Spanish. I have taken up the issue of enforcement on Spanish fishing in our waters, as the hon. Gentleman knows, with Commissioner Paleokrassas. We raised the subject of Spanish and Portuguese accession vehemently and robustly at the most recent Fisheries Council. However, the hon. Gentleman ought to study carefully the judgment in the recent case brought by the NFFO. It has brought uncertainty to the industry. The losers will be the fish. The judge made it clear that all parties concerned had an interest in the conservation and preservation of fish stocks under pressure. I am considering all aspects of that judgment for guidance on the matter as we proceed.

Mr. Harris: I strongly support all the arguments that were made by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell). Especially I ask, when does my hon. Friend expect to make a statement in the light of the setback that his policy undoubtedly received as a result of the recent court case? There is uncertainty, as he said. Surely he is not contemplating allowing that uncertainty to continue for possibly two years, now that the High Court has referred the matter to the European Court. Surely he should consider the policies that have been suggested by the fishermen and accept them.

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend does a singular service to the fishing communities that he represents in asking that question. I have to say to him, in all seriousness, that he knows as well as I do that we still have our community effort reduction targets to meet. I am considering carefully how we may go forward from that, but I understand the points that my hon. Friend makes about uncertainty. Had the action not been brought, we could have ended much of that uncertainty. Now we must think again and I hope that it will not be too long before I can respond to my hon. Friend's question.

Mr. Salmond: Does the Minister note that I also endorse the arguments that were made by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), which must make that something of an historic compromise in the fishing industry? Will the Minister have the grace to admit that it was not the fish that lost the court case; it was him? Would it not be the height of petulance to dump decommissioning as a reaction to his reverse in court? Would not a better course of action be to dump the days-at-sea legislation which is unwanted, and to keep decommissioning and expand it, because that is wanted?

Mr. Jack: May I point out to the hon. Member—who also represents Scottish fishing interests extremely professionally—that the judgment did not decide winners or losers. The judgment turned on the fact that the court in the United Kingdom felt unable to decide on the issue and referred it to the European Court. I understand the hon. Member's argument. He knows that applications have been received under the existing decommissioning scheme, and those are progressing. I will take his views into account, and those of other hon. Members who have mentioned that argument. As I said a moment ago in reply to the question by my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), I hope that it will not be too long before we can make the position clear.

Mr. John Townend: Does my hon. Friend agree that as a result of the judgment, restrictions on days at sea are dead for at least two years, and that he should move forward in co-operation with the industry on conservation measures and net sizes, so that the uncertainty is removed?

Mr. Jack: I spent most of the summer and early autumn talking to the industry and trying to establish a better dialogue on many of the matters that lie at the heart of my hon. Friend's question. That question raised many issues and, as I said in response to other questions, I hope that we can make our position clear in the next few days.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Minister accept that, whatever else the court judgment did not do, it did not rule out the continuation of the decommissioning scheme? Will he make an early announcement to extend that scheme, in order to earn the reputation that he seeks to achieve as the friend of the fish?

Mr. Jack: I thank the hon. Gentleman, at least for calling me the fisherman's friend. I am sure that my friends in Fleetwood would be glad to hear that. However, the clear message from the court case was that both sides agreed about the need to take the presure off the stocks under the greatest strain. The case also revealed that there was no final outcome. I am considering what the hon. Gentleman and others have said and, as I have said, I hope that we shall be able to make our position on the matter clear in the next few days.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 9 December.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is travelling to Brussels for the European Council meting and other meetings. I understand that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) is also attending a meeting of socialist leaders in Brussels—the Brussels fringe. I am informed that he will sign a communiqué, but I have no information about whether he has read it.

Mr. Brazier: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the growing concern among some Conservative Members that our defence cuts may have gone too far, considering the situation in Russia and the proliferation of nuclear weapons technology? Further cuts must mean a loss of capability. Surely, the lesson of the Gulf war was that it took almost all our Army and Royal Air Force logistic capability, ammunition and spare parts to keep only two brigades and a few RAF squadrons in being for a few days' fighting. Should not we review capabilities and commitments as well as costs?

Mr. Newton: I believe that the Government have struck the right balance between our commitments, our resources and our capabilities. Our aim is to maintain the effectiveness of our front-line forces, while improving the efficiency of support services in Whitehall and elsewhere, and I think that that is what we shall achieve. We shall certainly not adopt the policy of the Labour party conference, which only three months ago voted to scrap our nuclear shield and to cut our defence spending by about £7·5 billion.

Mrs. Beckett: Why, having run away from a debate on VAT on fuel this Tuesday—*[Interruption.]* The Lord President may not have heard me so I shall ask again: why, having run away from the debate on VAT on fuel this Tuesday, have the Government decided to run away next Tuesday from debates on statutory sick pay and on the increase in national insurance contributions?

Mr. Newton: The Government are in no way running away from debate. We provided an extra day for the debate on the Budget, but even that extra time did not enable either the Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen or their Whips to table the right motion at the right time. That was sheer parliamentary incompetence. Perhaps they were running away because they thought that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) might not be able to vote for what they tabled.

Mrs. Beckett: The Lord President has run away yet again from the question that I asked him. Is not the Government's problem that those two measures expose their hypocrisy and deceit? They claim that they are lifting the burdens on business when really they are piling them on. They claim to be the party of low taxes, although they have imposed the biggest tax hike in British industry. Is that why they are running away from proper scrutiny of the Bills?

Mr. Newton: It is quite clear that another reason why Labour Members did not get their amendment right is that they simply had not done their homework on the proposals. The combination of the SSP proposals and our proposals for employer contributions brings about a net reduction in the costs to British industry.

Mrs. Beckett: Does not the Lord President realise that these are important Bills which the British people will expect to hear debated? Does he not know that in the eyes of the British people the Government already stand convicted of deceit and incompetence, and now they are adding cowardice to the charge?

Mr. Newton: These are important Bills and we will ensure that they get appropriate time for debate in a way that is consistent with carrying through the responsible and effective policies in my right hon. and learned Friend's Budget.

Q2. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 9 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Oppenheim: Is my right hon. Friend aware that one country in Europe above all in recent years has faithfully followed the Delors prescription of ever-mounting labour market regulation, ever greater public spending, growing public sector debt and ever more intervention and meddling in industry? Spain suffers from 22 per cent. unemployment as a result of those policies. Is it any surprise that both the socialist manifesto in Europe and the shadow Chancellor espouse exactly those policies?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend might have added that that self-same Spain is one of the countries that have a national minimum wage, and it has 22 per cent. unemployment. My hon. Friend is right that what Europe needs above all is to cut its costs and develop more flexible labour markets. That is what we have been seeking successfully to do.

The way to increase unemployment is to espouse the policies of Labour Members, who have signed up to a 35-hour working week, a minimum wage and raising business taxes to the levels in other European countries. Heaven knows what else the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) is signing up to in Brussels this afternoon.

Q3. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 9 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Janner: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that since his Government were elected in 1979 with a law and order platform, recorded crimes in Leicestershire have increased by 237 per cent. but the Government have permitted the number of police officers to increase by only 7 per cent? Is not it a scandal that in those circumstances the Government have announced a second year in which the number of police officers is to be frozen? Is not it a scandal that all that the Home Secretary can call for is individual citizens to fight crime in the street? The Government have become one not of law and order but of crime and disorder.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. and learned Friend has set out a range of policies to support the police, to release from paperwork into practical action against crime a large number of police and to take effective action in the criminal justice field along lines which I hope Labour Members will support but which their record is one of consistently opposing.

Q4. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 9 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Twinn: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Japanese ambassador said that Great Britain is a trail blazer for free trade in Europe? Will he ensure that the Prime Minister and all the Government continue to put Britain, together with free trade, at the heart of Europe?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend points out accurately and encouragingly what the Japanese ambassador said. The ambassador went on to say:

> "I see no reason why Britain should not remain the most favoured location for Japanese investment in Europe as long as the factors which have attracted this investment remain in place."

Those factors will remain as long as this Government have anything to do with them. They would be destroyed only if we were unlucky enough to be inflicted with a Labour Government.

Mr. Barnes: Why am I having to put down question after question—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Barnes: When will I get answers to the questions that I have tabled about what is going on in the meetings of the Council of Ministers in Europe? There have been two Heads of State meetings, one in Edinburgh and one in Brussels. At those meetings, it was said that there would be transparency and openness, and that reports would be made to the House as to what the voting arrangements are in the Council of Ministers where the decisions are made.

The Prime Minister has promised that all Departments will give that information in answers, but that has not been done. The matter has been raised with the Leader of the House during business questions, but it has not been answered. The right hon. Gentleman will not even answer the letters that I wrote to him in June and in November. Can the House have an answer now?

Mr. Newton: The Edinburgh decision meant that the Council's rules of procedure had to be changed and that has taken longer in some respects than we would have wished. Our purpose remains precisely as was stated. I anticipate that my right hon. Friend will report to the House in the wake of the Council that is about to take place.

Q5. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 9 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Duncan: Given that the virtue of capitalism is that it harnesses private energy for the public good, will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the decision of Leyland-DAF to give £200 worth of shares to each of its employees for Christmas? Does not the success of that company in turning itself around prove that private enterprise and not socialist subsidy is the best recipe?

Mr. Newton: All right hon. and hon. Friends will be as pleased by that news as is my hon. Friend, who might have added that Leyland-DAF vans has also announced an £8 million development programme.

I am not surprised, but I thought that we might have heard from the Opposition given their concern about Leyland-DAF a few months ago. The Opposition like to broadcast only bad news. My hon. Friend will recall that the Labour party wanted the Government to pump millions of pounds of subsidy into Leyland-DAF, as had the Dutch and Belgian Governments. As it is, the Dutch Government spent £100 million of taxpayers' money in subsidies and it has saved fewer jobs proportionately than we have.

Q6. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 9 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Llwyd: Yesterday at Station road in Llanrwst in my constituency, a serious flooding incident devastated eight or 10 businesses as a direct result of negligence by contractors which were employed by the Welsh office. Will the Leader of the House impress on his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales the need for full and urgent compensation for those businesses?

Mr. Newton: First, on behalf of the whole House and through the hon. Gentleman I express sympathy to his constituents for their unhappy experience. I think that all hon. Members would want to join in that.

Beyond that, I do not wish to comment in detail on something that I have not had a chance to look into. As the hon. Gentleman will have noticed, my right hon. Friend is in the Chamber and I am sure that he will examine what he has said.

Q7. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 9 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thurnham: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the latest local government ombudsman's report, which shows that maladministration by council housing departments is the biggest single cause of complaint? Does he agree that this Government have done more than any other to promote private ownership? Is he aware that the Opposition now agree that the private rented sector badly needs a boost?

Mr. Newton: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend's long and welcome interest in housing. Of course, I am well aware of his new pamphlet and, by some happy chance, I have a copy with me. It is yet another example of fresh thinking in housing, and I welcome my hon. Friend's contribution to the debate. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, who wrote a foreword to the report, will want to discuss the ideas in my hon. Friend's pamphlet with him.

Q8. **Mr. Olner:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 9 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Olner: Is the Lord President aware that due to the inclement weather yesterday in the midlands and the north there have been no trains through my constituency of Nuneaton from Liverpool and Manchester? Does not that show the frailty of the infrastructure on the west coast main line, which is being stretched to breaking point? Would the right hon. Gentleman care to comment on the fact that what was said in the Budget was only a promise that might be fulfilled in two years? Will the Government now pump prime the infrastructure of that line by putting money into it?

Mr. Newton: Given what my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said at the time of the public expenditure announcements in respect of the west coast main line, that is one of the most ungenerous questions that I have heard for some time. It also bears out the old joke that the Government even get blamed for the weather.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Yes, Madam. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 13 DECEMBER—Estimates Day (1st allotted day).

There will be a debate on external relations, in so far as they relate to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's support for peacekeeping operations, followed by a debate on measures relating to individual industries, in so far as they relate to the Department of Trade and Industry's aerospace support. Details will be given in the *Official Report.*

Money resolution relating to the Statutory Sick Pay Bill.

At 10 o'clock the House will be asked to agree the civil and defence votes on account and the outstanding winter supplementary estimates.

TUESDAY 14 DECEMBER—Timetable motion on the Social Security (Contributions) Bill and the Statutory Sick Pay Bill.

Debate on the common fisheries policy on a Government motion.

Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill.

WEDNESDAY 15 DECEMBER—Proceedings on the Statutory Sick Pay Bill.

Ways and Means resolution relating to the Social Security (Contributions) Bill.

THURSDAY 16 DECEMBER—Proceedings on the Social Security (Contributions) Bill.

FRIDAY 17 DECEMBER—Debates on the Adjournment.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committees will meet at 10.30 am on Wednesday 15 December to consider European Community documents as follows:

Committee A, document No. 6888/93 relating to the Court of Auditors' Report on Fishing Fleets capacity; and document No. 7378/93 relating to the Fishing Fleet Transitional Guidance Programme 1992.

Committee B, document No. 9268/93 relating to own resources.

[Monday 13 December:
Estimates Day
1.
Class II, Vote 2, Foreign and Commonwealth Office: other external relations, in so far as it relates to support for peacekeeping operations.
The Third Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee of Session 1992-93 on The Expanding Role of the United Nations and its Implications for United Kingdom Policy (HC 235) and the Government Observations thereon (Cm 2382) are relevant.
The Fourth Report from the Defence Committee of Session 1992-93 on United Kingdom Peacekeeping and Intervention Forces (HC 188 and 369) and the Sixth Special Report from the Committee of Session 1992-93, containing the Government's observations on the Committee's Report (HC 988) are also relevant.
2.
Class IV, Vote 2, Department of Trade and Industry; measures relating to individual industries, in so far as it relates to aerospace support
The Third Report from the Trade and Industry Committee of Session 1992-93 on the British Aerospace Industry (HC 563) is relevant.
Wednesday 15 December:
European Standing Committee A-Relevant European Community documents: (a) 6888/93, Court of Auditors Report on Fishing Fleets Capacity; (b) 7378/93, Fishing Fleet Transitional Guidance Programme 1992. Relevant European Legislation Committee Reports: (a) HC79-xxxvii (1992-93); (b) HC 79-xxxvii (1992-93) HC 48-i (1993-94).
European Standing Committee B-Relevant European Community document: 9268/93, The Communities' Own Resources; Relevant report of the European Legislation Committee: HC 48-i (1993-94).]

Mrs. Beckett: Will the Lord President confirm that his announcement means that the Government are not only guillotining the Statutory Sick Pay Bill and the Social Security (Contributions) Bill but intend to deal with all stages of those Bills in the House and in another place by giving precisely one day for the consideration of each Bill?

Since the Government decide the dates of the recess and the timetable for business here and in another place, does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate that no one will believe that it is not because the Government want the minimum public scrutiny and awareness of these proposals that they are making arrangements for the debates that are as extraordinary as they are disgraceful? Does he acknowledge that the Statutory Sick Pay Bill loads extra bureaucracy on employers and that the Bill about national insurance will raise taxes for every working person, resulting in revenue to the tune of £2,000 million a year? Is not that one of the worst examples yet of the Government's insolence and utter contempt for the democratic process?

Mr. Newton: As I told the right hon. Lady in one of our exchanges in different capacities about 10 minutes ago, the combined effect of what we propose on employers' contributions and on statutory sick pay will reduce, not increase, the burdens on industry.

On the main thrust of the right hon. Lady's points about the timetable motion, I naturally regret that it did not prove possible to reach agreement through the usual channels on ways of handling those Bills. Such agreement would have corresponded to what we, and I think industry, believe to be the need to make speedy progress with these aspects of my right hon. and learned Friend's Budget so that the necessary arrangements can be made and put in place in time for industry to operate them in an orderly fashion from April. That is a sensible purpose.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): In view of the fact that a successful conclusion to the GATT negotiations is just about the most important issue for the next decade and must be reached next week, can my right hon. Friend confirm that, whichever way it goes, a statement will be made to the House—hopefully, a successful one?

Mr. Newton: I accept my hon. Friend's remarks about the importance of the GATT negotiations, which is universally recognised in the House. Further progress will be among the objectives of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in Brussels. I cannot at this stage give a definite undertaking about the formal timing of any statement, but as matters develop I shall bear my hon. Friend's request in mind.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Having regard to various factors that have affected the farming income of livestock and arable producers, will the Leader of the House urgently find time to debate on the Floor of the House the hill livestock compensatory allowance changes and cuts, against which a prayer has been laid? The Government owe the industry an early debate on that very important subject.

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise to add an extra debate to the business that I announced for next week. However, the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that next week's Consolidated Fund and Adjournment debates will present a number of opportunities for such matters to be raised. Apart from that, I shall bear the hon. Gentleman's request in mind.

Sir Terence Higgins (Worthing): Given that the intention of the so-called unified Budget was to produce more focused debate—although at one stage members of the Opposition Front Bench thought that the House was still debating the Loyal Address—may we have an early debate on the report of the Procedure Committee which published the Government's comments on the Budget procedure and its rebuttal of them so that the House may learn from the experience of the past few days and reach a more sensible arrangement?

Mr. Newton: After studying the Procedure Committee's report and responding to a number of questions in the House, it seemed sensible to me and to the Government to review that procedure in this cycle before reaching conclusions about further changes that might be made. I doubt that there will be time for that in the next week or two. We should see how the process works with the Finance Bill and the like, but I have it in mind that we should at some appropriate moment take the opportunity to review the position in the light of this year's experience.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early day motion 218.

[That this House, recalls that after the Marchioness disaster, and despite widespread and continued calls for a public inquiry, Her Majesty's Government refused such requests, but instead referred the inquiry to its own Marine Accident Investigation Branch; congratulates Channel 4 television on its "Despatches" programme concerning those events, which demonstrated the secret, inadequate and incomplete nature of that investigation; and thus calls on Her Majesty's Government to initiate forthwith a public inquiry into the disaster, comparable to those held into the King's Cross and Clapham tragedies and, after consultation, to make proposals for an investigation into the failure of public procedures, bodies and persons in respect of those events and into the means of ensuring safety of navigation on the River Thames.]

Consequent upon last night's programme on Channel 4, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the official report into that terrible happening was published two years after the event and that the programme showed it to be inadequate, incomplete, incompetent, inefficient and probably incorrect? In view of Government policy relating to open government, if that early day motion were debated next week, what possible grounds could there be for opposing it?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman knows that there has been a comprehensive inquiry by the marine accident investigation branch, and another was undertaken under the chairmanship of Mr. John Hayes. They made a number of recommendations that led to changes on the River Thames and other United Kingdom waters. I am advised that no new evidence has been produced to warrant a further inquiry and that the evidence cited in the television programme covered no ground that was not examined during the MAIB investigation.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the villages of this country are facing a growing crisis? Warwickshire county council, for example, has produced a plan that would virtually eliminate rural schools—and last night's decision on Sunday trading, about which I make no complaint, will place extra pressure on village shops. In view of those and other factors, does not my right hon. Friend think that it is time to examine that matter in detail?

Mr. Newton: As can be seen from what we said when concern was expressed about rural sub-post offices, the Government attach great importance to these matters, and I shall draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): Will the Leader of the House find time next week to debate the incredible and already discredited report by the National Radiological Protection Board into the effects of radiation on veterans of British nuclear tests? Does not he think that it is disgraceful and scandalous that the Secretary of State for Defence has had neither the courtesy nor the courage to come to the House today to hold himself accountable for the ridiculous position in which it seems that American, Canadian and Australian service men can contract cancer when exposed to nuclear bombs, but British service men cannot? The House and those service men surely deserve better than that shoddy treatment.

Mr. Newton: I acknowledge the hon. Gentleman's long-standing interest in these matters, and I am not accusing him of being irresponsible, but I am not quite sure on what grounds he based his suggestion that the report has been discredited. It has not yet been published, but is due to appear in the *British Medical Journal* this weekend. I suggest that he and others concerned with this unhappy and difficult matter should read what is said before jumping to conclusions.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Will my right hon. Friend find time soon for a full-scale debate on the subject of drug abuse? There is growing concern in my constituency about the number of burglaries and serious crimes against old people in their own homes which are linked to the crime of drug abuse. It is leading my constituents to question whether we are doing enough about this serious subject, which is causing a great deal of increased crime.

Mr. Newton: I can assure my hon. Friend that the Government share her concern that we should be as effective as possible in these matters and we are currently

[Mr. Newton]

reviewing various aspects of how they are tackled. I cannot promise her a debate in quite the terms that she seeks, but I draw her attention to the fact that it sounds like a good subject on which she could bid for a debate on the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Will the Leader of the House consult his right hon. Friends with a view to a statement being made before the end of next week which will reassure the United Kingdom engineering steel industry that it will not be allowed to suffer further harm as a result of sharp and official practice by the Governments of other member states?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will know that the Government have consistently argued for policies that I think are in line with what he wishes. I cannot promise him a debate or a statement next week, but I can assure him that the Government will continue taking what we believe to be the right stance on these matters in Europe.

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for an early debate on education in view of the recent chief inspector's report which reveals that, although standards are generally good, they suffer in some minority areas? The debate might provide an opportunity to underscore the importance of the Government maintaining performance league tables to ensure that standards are increased.

Mr. Newton: I should like to direct my hon. Friend to the possibility that he, too, could apply for a debate on the Consolidated Fund. Also, he may have an opportunity to make his point to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education who is due to be in the House on Tuesday. My hon. Friend will have been pleased at my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's indication earlier in the week that we now intend to move on to tables which will cover the number of hours taught each week in each school, which will be further useful information.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman raise with the Prime Minister the conduct of certain of his Ministers? Is he aware that there is a long-standing tradition in the House that any Minister, or Member, who reveals any aspect of the Budget before the Chancellor has spoken had to resign? That was in the good old days when conduct of government was more honest. More recently, such people have had to apologise. Will the right hon. Gentleman point out to the Prime Minister that the Secretary of State for Education, having been summoned to the House by Madam Speaker to hear her reprimand, did not have the courtesy—*[Interruption.]* You silly boy.

Madam Speaker: Order. I am listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Faulds: I am glad that you are listening, Madam Speaker. I wish others would join in.

In view of the reprimand, instead of slinking away—undistinguished gentleman that he is—the right hon. Gentleman should have had the courtesy to come to the Dispatch Box and apologise to the House. Will the Leader of the House try to resurrect some form of proper conduct towards the House in Ministers?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend behaved entirely properly. He explained what had happened and acknowledged what you, Madam Speaker, had said. Of all my colleagues, he is the least appropriate to be described as "slinking", which I think was the word that the hon. Gentleman used.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May we have a debate early next week on the draft EEC proposal concerning the transport to slaughter of horses? The French proposals—which will have to be considered by the Government by the middle of next week—are that horses should be watered only every 15 hours and fed only every 22 hours. Bearing in mind that equines need to be fed and watered little and often if they are to survive in good health, ought we not to debate the matter so that the Government can be pressed to support horses, as they have always done?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend has good reason to know that the Government have consistently sought to advance the cause of animal welfare in Europe. I will ensure that my right hon. Friend is made aware of what he has said this afternoon.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Will the Leader of the House arrange an urgent debate next week, for greater clarity and the avoidance of ambiguity, about what the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris), as chairman of the British-Irish inter-parliamentary group, said when he was speaking to journalists in Dublin last week? He gave the impression that it was his view that there should be a united Ireland, but that the Unionists should be brought gently along that road. May we have a debate to clarify that that is not the view of the Government or of the House, and that it is certainly not the view of the majority of people in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that my hon. Friends will note the hon. Gentleman's comments. Despite the seriousness with which the hon. Gentleman views the matter, it would be difficult for any Leader of the House to get involved in promising debates about what was said by individual Members, as distinct from Ministers. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster will note what the hon. Gentleman has said, and I will bring it to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it was possible to debate statutory sick pay last week? The Government cannot be accused of refusing sufficient time to debate it because the Budget debate was a day longer than usual. Perhaps my right hon. Friend will arrange a seminar on procedure for the Opposition Front Bench.

Mr. Newton: It might be worth arranging a seminar in view of the Opposition's failure to table the right amendment at the right time. As to the first part of my hon. Friend's question, he is right: the statutory sick pay proposals, being public expenditure proposals, were absolutely in order during the course of the debate.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): In view of the right hon. Gentleman's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) about the Marchioness, will he look again at the question of safety at sea, instead of waving the banner of deregulation every day of the week? Will he also look at the question of safety on our rivers, where some of the most basic requirements are obviously being ignored?

Mr. Newton: I will take this opportunity to make it absolutely clear that, while the Government wish to deregulate wherever possible, there is no question that we intend to do so in ways that would be seen as jeopardising people's safety. That is not our purpose at all.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that his decision to apply a timetable motion to the national insurance contributions legislation will be welcomed by businesses in my constituency, who will welcome the opportunity to plan with certainty for next year's contributions in an orderly way? Further, does he agree that the proposals can hardly be said to have been rushed through the House because they were announced in the Budget nine months ago?

Mr. Newton: It is true that the proposal was in the last Budget, although it is also part of the judgment made in the current one.

My hon. Friend's first point was absolutely right. As I tried to explain to the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), we need to make speedy progress with the legislation if the changes are to operate from April in an orderly way.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): In view of today's Public Accounts Committee report, may we have a debate on why £40 million that should have been spent on patients was wasted by Wessex health authority; why the Government ignored the fact that the authority had broken its own rules, the Department of Health's rules, the Treasury's rules, EC rules and GATT rules—its behaviour was ultra vires, and verging on the corrupt; and why its chairman, who, having given a commitment to his Secretary of State, then told the authority's solicitor to ignore that commitment, was "punished" by being knighted and being promoted to the chairmanship of a £4 billion national health service executive?

Mr. Newton: We welcome the PAC's very thorough report on the so-called RISP project in Wessex regional health authority. It will be considered very carefully, and in due course a formal response will be issued in the appropriate way. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that a considerable amount has already been done to put matters right, in the wake of what happened in the Wessex authority.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): The World Health Organisation has recognised the crucial importance of targets in relation to the "Health of the Nation" strategy that the Government have rightly put into practice. There is increasing concern about the greater incidence of asthma nowadays: it kills some 1,500 people each year. Will my right hon. Friend arrange a debate in which we can discuss whether asthma should be included in the health target policy?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend may wish to raise the matter next week; he will have several opportunities to do so. I shall, however, draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. I have had some experience of the problems of asthma in my own family.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Members of all parties will welcome the opportunity next week to discuss aspects of the common fisheries policy. Is the Leader of the House aware that, earlier today, the Minister responsible for fisheries said that a statement would be issued indicating the Government's stance on particular aspects of that policy, including the days-at-sea issue? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is vital for such a statement to be made before the debate, and before the deliberations of Standing Committee A? Otherwise, hon. Members will be debating in a vacuum, and we shall do a gross disservice to a vital industry and to the communities and families who depend on it.

Mr. Newton: I am glad that I have been able to respond to some of the representations made by the hon. Lady, among others, asking for such a debate. I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the hon. Lady's request about the timing of any announcement that the Government are able to make in response to the court case.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): I am sure that my right hon. Friend knows that the British Waterways Bill—an opposed private Bill—was in Committee for 13 weeks during the last Session. However, because it has appeared on the Order Paper in the current Session and has been opposed on each occasion, there will be no opportunity to debate it in Committee. Is that not unfair to its promoters, and expensive for people who are, ultimately, taxpayers? Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on the Floor of the House so that the Bill can make progress?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will know of the responsibilities of the Chairman of Ways and Means in respect of private Bills, but I will certainly look into the point that he has raised.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Given the enormous importance of the matter and the nearness of the holiday season, will the Leader of the House give us an absolute guarantee that hon. Members will be given at least 48 hours' notice before the Government's decision on THORP—the thermal oxide reprocessing plant—is announced?

Mr. Newton: My colleagues in the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food are still considering the issue in the wake of the further consultation that was undertaken. I cannot yet give the hon. Gentleman specific undertakings in regard to the timing of any announcement that they are able to make.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): May we have a debate next week about the application of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry for objective 2 status for areas of the United Kingdom under the European Community's infrastructural funds? In that debate we could highlight the underhand attempts of Labour Members of the European Parliament to knock out London and north Kent from the applications.

Mr. Newton: Both the relevant parts of London and Kent that the Government put forward in that context have a good case, otherwise the Government would not have put them forward. I believe that I am right in saying that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry is pressing the case in Brussels this very day.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House assure us that the debate on Monday on the estimates will be wide enough to go beyond the subject of peacekeeping operations so that we may raise the question of human rights in Turkey and ask what the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is prepared to do for British citizens such as the three lorry drivers, one of whom, Mr. Tony Quinn, a constituent of mine, was detained without charge for eight days on matters for which he had no responsibility and in appalling conditions? Indeed, he still remains in prison. His family is extremely worried. It is important that we should have a debate so that his family know what the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is able to do to get those people reunited with their families for Christmas.

Mr. Newton: I am aware of the case to which the hon. Gentleman refers and can assure him that our consular officials are doing what they can to provide advice and establish precisely what the position is. As to his question about a debate, I would want to take advice before advising him on your behalf, Madam Speaker, on what might or might not be in order during the estimates debate. If by some chance it is not in order, the hon. Gentleman is well aware of the opportunities afforded by the Consolidated Fund and Adjournment debates.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): My right hon. Friend will be aware that, earlier this week, the Select Committee on Social Security published its report on the Child Support Agency and said that the Government's general policy was correct and right and proper in ensuring that the children of this country are properly supported, if need be by absent parents, with adequate maintenance. In consequence, it was favourably received by the Secretary of State for Social Security. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that there is enough time in the timetable next week before Christmas for an urgent statement, by the Secretary of State for Social Security if necessary, announcing that he will accept, or partially accept, the recommendations of the Select Committee?

Mr. Newton: I cannot give my hon. Friend an undertaking about the timing of the Government's response to the Select Committee report, but he is certainly right to say that the Government welcome its support for the general principles on which the Child Support Act 1991 is based and that the Government will consider the recommendations carefully.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Before the House rises for the Christmas recess, may we have a statement next week about the German general who is held responsible for the massacre of many British prisoners of war in France in 1940 and who will not be brought to justice? Is not it a very odd situation—my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) has raised the matter many times—that a notorious Nazi mass murderer can get away with that, be a successful business man in Germany, have an army pension of more than £20,000 a year and not be brought to justice for a notorious crime against humanity, a crime against our fellow citizens? What sort of British Government will not put the utmost pressure on the Germans to ensure that that Nazi is brought to justice at long last?

Mr. Newton: I must make the basic point that Britain has no jurisdiction over foreign nationals unless they are in the United Kingdom. The German authorities have been investigating the incident to which the hon. Gentleman referred and the British Government have given them every assistance, including full access to all the British files on the subject.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): In the light of recent reports that four out of every five personal pension plans that have been sold in the country have been based on inadequate information and will leave future pensioners without adequate provision, will the Leader of the House find time for an urgent debate on the matter so that we may debate the failure of the Government's policies?

Mr. Newton: It is clear that some poor advice was given, particularly to those transferring from occupational to personal pensions, but that is only a relatively small proportion of the total number of personal pension holders and at least 4·5 million are not in that category. It is not clear on what scale that has happened, nor how far investors have been disadvantaged. The hon. Gentleman will know that the matter is being actively and vigorously investigated by the Securities and Investments Board. Its approach is the right way to tackle those concerns, but my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor has made it clear to the board that those concerns must be investigated and remedies put in place.

Ms Jean Corston (Bristol, East): Will the Leader of the House find time for the Secretary of State for Social Security to make a statement to the House about his Department's practice in replying to parliamentary questions? In written answers to me, three dated 16 July 1992 and one on 28 October 1992, 16 November 1992, 20 July 1993 and 26 July 1993, I was told, through *Hansard*, that the information that I requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost or that it was not departmental practice to give information in the form in which it was requested. However, at a meeting that I attended with Mr. McLennan, the head of the Government Statistical Service, and departmental statisticians on 2 December, I was told that the information that I had requested could be made available to me in any form in which I wanted it. Surely, if it is available to me now, it could have been printed in *Hansard*. Therefore, will the Leader of the House, who represents a Government who profess a commitment to open government, and in view of the public interest aspect of this, arrange for an early statement?

Mr. Newton: Happily, although my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is not present, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People is and he has heard what the hon. Lady has said and has undertaken, in a whisper to me, to look carefully into what she has said.

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): Will my right hon. Friend arrange at the earliest opportunity a debate on the west coast main line to allow many hon. Members to welcome the Government's Budget decision on that and so that we may explain to the House that we appreciate that this is a major step forward and a recognition of the importance of that line to all parts of the United Kingdom from the Province of Ulster, through the west of Scotland and down the north-west and the west midlands? There is much to do beyond what the Government have already announced, but no responsible person could do other than welcome that.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. His remarks stand in marked contrast to a question put to me earlier today when I was answering on behalf of the Prime Minister. Even so, I cannot promise my hon. Friend an early debate.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): Now that we have seen the total demise of the coal industry in the north-east of England as a result of the Government's policy, will the Leader of the House arrange for a debate on the rising unemployment in the north-east and the situation in which some miners find themselves?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise the hon. Gentleman the debate that he seeks, but, having had some considerable experience of the north-east in the year that I was a Minister at the Department of Trade and Industry, I think that he might at least acknowledge that the Government have done a huge amount, not least in attracting overseas investment here, to provide new employment opportunities in the north-east.

Mr. George Mudie (Leeds, East): The Leader of the House will have caused grave alarm by the complacency of his answer on the Child Support Agency. Is he aware that thousands of decent people face Christmas going deeper into debt and genuine despair because of the workings of the Child Support Act 1991? On behalf of many hon. Members, I appeal for an early debate on the Select Committee's report. This is a worrying problem to many people.

Mr. Newton: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that there was no complacency—certainly no intended complacency—in my reply. I acknowledged that the report needs to be examined. It will be carefully examined and there will be no unnecessary delay in coming to conclusions.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is not it nothing short of outrageous that the Government have introduced guillotines on two important measures when during the course of the calendar year they have arranged business in only seven months? Does the Leader of the House recall that on Friday we had a vote to ensure that the Session continued a week longer up to Christmas and he got all the Tory Members of Parliament to back him to lengthen the holidays and shorten the time for debate? We could have been debating the social security arrangements for two more days rather than introducing a guillotine. It shows the Government's utter arrogance and contempt not only for the House of Commons but for millions of people who will suffer because of the changes to national insurance contributions and sick pay. They stink to high heaven.

Mr. Newton: While I recognise that the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) have persistently made such a point, it is notable that they have not been universally supported by all Opposition Members. Generally, I am under constant pressure in the House to announce recess dates as far ahead as possible and to give Members adequate time for duties in their constituencies, as I have sought to do. As I said earlier, we have just spent six days debating the Budget and those matters could have been discussed in that time. Next week the House will have a chance to vote on two of the proposals.

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): Will the Leader of the House arrange an early debate on the health service, especially in the light of the British Medical Association survey published today confirming that patients of GP fundholders, even those who are less seriously ill than patients of non-GP fundholders, are treated first?

Mr. Newton: I do not accept the suggestion about a two-tier service, but, in any event, I cannot undertake to provide time for a debate next week.

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent): Is the Leader of the House aware that in north Staffordshire there is a special orthopaedic clinic that is available only to patients of GP fundholders? May I also draw to his attention the fact that about 70 people who are employed by the ambulance service in Staffordshire are soon to be transferred to the west midlands and are to lose around £65 from their weekly wage? Will he give an assurance that there will be an early debate on the health service in the west midlands so that the Secretary of State for Health can come to the House and be accountable and responsible for the way in which the Government and the fragmented health service are flouting the law in respect of the transfer of undertakings and the European directive?

Mr. Newton: I draw the attention of the hon. Lady to the debate on the Consolidated Fund and other opportunities next week to raise such issues. I cannot promise a debate, but I shall bring her remarks about specific cases to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Has the Leader of the House seen early day motion No. 5?

[That this House calls for a change in the regulations affecting the operation of teachers' superannuation schemes so that a dependant's pension can pass to the spouse of a retired female teacher upon her death on the same basis as occurs for the widow of a male teacher; notes that this anomaly has only been rectified in connection with female teachers who retired in 1988 or afterwards; and calls for equality of treatment between male and female teachers, especially as their superannuation contributions have been made on a common basis.]

It concerns the equality of treatment in teachers' superannuation schemes and the rights of female teachers who retired before 1988 to ensure that a dependant's pension can pass to their spouse in the way in which it would to any other female teacher who retired after 1988 or to a male teacher. Could he arrange a debate?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise a debate. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education is due to answer questions on Tuesday 14 December. I gather that the position is rather complicated and goes back to 1972 when the facility was consistent with the arrangements for male teachers. I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Consolidated Fund Bill and Christmas Adjournment

Madam Speaker: I have a short statement to make about arrangements for the debate on the motion for the Adjournment, which will follow the passing of the Consolidated Fund Bill on Tuesday 14 December. Members should submit their subjects to my office not later than 9 am on Monday 13 December. A list showing the subjects and times will be published later in the day. Normally, the time allotted will not exceed one and a half hours, but I propose to exercise discretion to allow one or two debates to continue for rather longer and up to a maximum of three hours. Where identical or similar subjects have been entered by different Members whose names are drawn in the ballot, only the first name will be shown on the list. As some debates may not last the full time allotted to them, it is the responsibility of Members to keep in touch with developments if they are not to miss their turn.

May I also take this opportunity to remind hon. Members that, on the motion for the Adjournment of the House on Friday 17 December, up to eight Members may raise with Ministers subjects of their own choice. Applications should reach my office by 10 pm on Monday next. A ballot will be held on Tuesday morning and the result made known as soon as possible thereafter.

Points of Order

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Could you clarify the nationality requirement for membership of this House? Should one be a citizen of the United Kingdom to be elected a Member? If so, will you look into the growing practice of Members travelling to the EC having attached to their luggage labels declaring, "My country is Europe"? I believe that statement to be fallacious. It is an insult to Members that that is plastered on their luggage.

Madam Speaker: What the hon. Lady said in the first place is not quite correct. In my time as a Member of this House, there was a Member who was not a British citizen.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In what way can you preserve the rights of Back Benchers by preventing the Government from encroaching on the time that is normally allocated to the debate on the Consolidated Fund Bill? It appears that on Tuesday evening the social security legislation and guillotine motion will soak up all the time for debate and that the Consolidated Fund debate may not start until 10 o'clock or even later.

I should be grateful for your guidance, Madam Speaker, on whether you are prepared to tell the Government that the usual amount of time for the Consolidated Fund debate will be preserved by you, because it is an important occasion for Back Benchers to raise subjects. Indeed, the Leader of the House has continuously used it as an excuse not to provide debating time. It would be unfair if, unknown, the Government were eroding that important debating time.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Let me first try to help the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). His point of order is a business question which he might have raised with the Leader of the House a few moments ago. However, I am concerned about the eroding of private Members' time and I take seriously the matter that he has just raised with me.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. My colleagues and I abstained in the voting in the Chamber yesterday evening, basically because we considered that English Members were perfectly capable of deciding whether English shops should open on Sundays; England deserves that measure of self-government. Will you confirm that it would be perfectly in order for English Members of Parliament to exercise a similar self-denying ordinance over Scottish local government, a Bill relating to which stands on the Order Paper today, particularly given the resentment and anger that there will be in Scotland if Scottish local democracy were determined by English Conservative Members parachuted on to Committees dealing exclusively with Scottish legislation?

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman realises that all Members of the House are free either to vote or to abstain whenever they wish. It is not for me to speculate about their reasons for voting or abstaining; it is up to individual Members.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You have explained on a number of occasions that you are not responsible for Ministers' words. However, I should be grateful if you would use your good offices to point out to the President of the Board of Trade that his answer in response to an intervention that I made two days ago was inaccurate——

Madam Speaker: Order. I understand the hon. Gentleman's frustration, but he began his point of order —which is not a point of order for me at all—by saying that it is not my business. Indeed, it is not my business to comment on what Ministers or Back Benchers say in the House. I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman must find another opportunity to pursue that matter.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Your statement may have provided at least some of the guidance that I seek. You may recall that, yesterday, I raised a point of order pointing out that a report was to be published today into the effects of radiation on British nuclear test veterans. You helpfully advised me that Members of the Treasury Bench had heard what I said. They may have heard it, but they certainly did not act on it as the statement was made today outside the House and inside the House by means of a planted question.

In his reply to my business question, the Leader of the House expressed surprise that I had claimed that the report was already discredited. I should like the opportunity to explain to him and to other hon. Members why I believe that it is discredited. What action can I take?

Madam Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman would like to come and see me, I might be able to advise him, but I cannot advise on procedural matters across the Floor of the House. He will know that there may be an opportunity for him to raise the matter next week and he may consider it at that time.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), you said that you were worried about arrangements for the Consolidated Fund debate. In view of the short time available for hon. Members to enter the ballot for the debate, will you, in accordance with what happens with Adjournment debates, extend the application time from 9 am, when few people will have travelled down to Westminster, although I shall be here, to 10 pm?

Madam Speaker: I know that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is always here in good time but that, although he will be here at 9 am, many others who have a long way to come will not be. I am therefore prepared to extend the application time until 1 pm.

BILL PRESENTED

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETC. (SCOTLAND)

Mr. Secretary Lang, supported by Mr. Secretary Gummer, Mr. Secretary Redwood, Mr. Michael Portillo, Mr. Allan Stewart and Sir Hector Monro, presented a Bill to make provision with respect to local government and the functions of local authorities; to make amendments in relation to local government finance, local authority accounts and the records of local authorities; to establish a Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority for the purposes of the Transport Act 1968; to provide for the establishment of new water and sewerage authorities; to provide for the establishment of a council to represent the interests of customers and potential customers of those new authorities; to provide for the vesting in those new authorities of the property, rights and liabilities of the Central Scotland Water Development Board and of such property, rights and liabilities of regional and islands councils as those councils have as water authorities, as providers of sewerage and in relation to dealing with the contents of sewers; to provide for the dissolution of that Board; to cancel certain obligations to contribute towards expenses which have been incurred by local authorities in making provision for sewerage or disposal of sewage in rural localities; to create an office of Principal Reporter and transfer to him the functions of reporters to children's hearings; to establish a body to facilitate the performance by the Principal Reporter of his functions; to amend the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 in relation to reports made with a view to and for the purposes of children's hearings; to amend section 21 of the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Act 1989; to amend the law relating to roads and the placing of traffic signs on roads; to make amendments in relation to valuation and rating; to abolish the Scottish Valuation Advisory Council; to empower local authorities to make grants to ethnic minorities; to confer on local authorities the function of promoting economic development; to provide for the establishment of area tourist boards; to make amendments in relation to lieutenancies; all as respects Scotland; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 6.]

European Communities

[Relevant documents: European Community Documents Nos. 6203/93, Annual report from the Commission on the fight against fraud in 1992 and its action programme for 1993, 8366/93, Commission proposal and supplementary report on regulation 386/90, 8340/92, on Sweden's application for EC membership, 5725/93, on Finland's application for EC membership, 7839/93, on Cyprus's application for EC membership, 7838/93, on Malta's application for EC membership, and 9806/93, on the Edinburgh Growth Initiative, and the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Foreign Affairs Committee on 23rd November 1993 (HC 28-i).]

Madam Speaker: I must inform the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I draw your attention to two points relating to the motion? First, excluding a number of documents about the Budget, there are, by my count, at least eight distinct documents dealing with other matters. That is, of course, in order, although it may not be desirable for the purpose of orderly debate and scrutiny.

The second point, irrespective of the volume of material, which I believe that the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) will illustrate, concerns the question of notification of documents which are to be debated and their availability in the Vote Office. They are technically available, as they have arrived in the past 36 hours. I understand that the Government have undertaken to debate matters that are to be on the agenda of the European Council which is to start tomorrow. Unless we debate the matters that are likely to be raised then, which may place the Government in difficulties with regard to documentation, we shall not have the opportunity to influence whatever may be said there by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary. If we do not have sufficient time to peruse even a few documents and determine what they are, let alone those before us, what chance is there of an orderly debate to allow us to influence the deliberations, however marginally?

I ask you, Madam Speaker, to consider those points and perhaps to give some guidance to the House, because, without improved procedures, we shall surely not be able to exercise our democratic rights in what is supposed to be a democratic Community.

Madam Speaker: I have listened carefully and with considerable sympathy to what the hon. Gentleman says about the complexity of the business before us. Indeed, I have the papers on my desk and I am familiar with the task before hon. Members in going through such documents. In particular, I am concerned that some papers mentioned by the hon. Gentleman have only recently been available to the Select Committee itself and to the House as a whole. However, as the hon. Gentleman knows, my direct responsibility as Speaker is to rule on whether today's debate is in order. I can confirm that it is.

As for the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's point, it will be for Ministers, during the course of the debate, to justify and to explain the form and timing of the motion that they have tabled and give the reasons for them.

4.19 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the White Paper on developments in the European Community, July to December 1992 (Cm. 2168), the White Paper on developments in the European Community, January to June 1993 (Cm. 2369), the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by HM Treasury on 6th December 1993 on the Commission's recommendation for the broad guidelines for economic policies under Article 103(2) of the Treaty establishing the European Community, European Community Documents Nos. COM (93)700, the Commission's White Book on growth, competitiveness and employment, COM (93)545, the Commission's report to the European Council on subsidiarity, 7194/93, on reinforcing the effectiveness of the internal market, 7665/93, the Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1994, 9303/93, the letter of amendment No. 1 to the Preliminary Draft Budget for 1994, 8012/93, the Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1994, and 9922/93, the European Parliament's proposed amendments and modifications to the Draft Budget for 1994, the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by HM Treasury on 22nd November 1993, relating to the Council's decisions on the European Parliament's proposed amendments and modifications to the Draft Budget for 1994, the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by HM Treasury on 2nd November 1993, relating to the revision of the Financial Perspective for 1994, and OJ C309, the Annual Report of the European Court of Auditors concerning the financial year 1992, together with the replies of the Institutions.

I am sorry not to be able to stay to the end of the debate, because I have to go to the European Council with which it is partly concerned, and that is part of the dilemma to which the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has just drawn our attention. I will deal with one of the most important papers later. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will come hotfoot after me to Brussels, but he will be primed with the arguments made in the debate, which he will wind up.

This is the first main debate on Europe since the battle of Maastricht was brought to an end at the end of July. That battle, in which we all engaged for many months, was conducted at a level of debate—parliamentary gamesmanship, I suppose—which made it difficult from time to time to focus exactly on what was at stake for Britain and for Europe. Now we can do that.

Is the treaty of Maastricht, in the plain light of day, the nightmare that was described night after night through our long debates?

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Yes; it is.

Mr. Hurd: A few hon. Members persist for a little longer in saying that it is, but, of course, it is not. On the contrary, the treaty and what now follows mark, I believe, a new realism. The declaration that marked the treaty's entry into force was agreed at the special European Council in October. The declaration said:

> "Ratification has been the occasion for a true public debate on the construction of Europe, its aims and its methods. That debate has been salutary. It has revealed weaknesses. There are many to whom Europe seemed distant, anonymous and interfering. For that reason, we wish to introduce greater transparency, openness and decentralisation in our procedures. We want a Europe close to the citizen and intervening only where necessary to pursue our common interests. The unity of our action can and must be reconciled with the diversity of our traditions. Effectiveness can and must be reconciled with democracy."

A few years ago, only the British representative at the Council could have produced and uttered a paragraph of that kind. In October, it was agreed by all 12 Heads of State and Government. That is what I mean by saying not that the debate on those matters is over, but that it is beginning to move in the direction with which most people in the House would be sympathetic.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I should like to get on a little bit; then I will give way to the hon. Gentleman.

For many, the dream of a European Union was pursued on the continent as if it were a holy grail. No one could define it and it was a sacrilege to question it. As Hilaire Belloc said of the microbe:

> "Oh let us never never doubt
> What nobody is sure about".

There was that feeling about European Union.

Now we have begun, in the treaty, to achieve a surer sense of the balance between the nations of Europe and its common institutions. We are trying to preserve what is best about sovereign nations—their history, identity, culture, pride; while overcoming what is worst—xenophobia, swollen nationalism, trade barriers, even war. No one pretends—or no one sensibly pretends—that the treaty provides a permanent answer. The debate continues; the argument moves on; but certain important principles are now established. We shall remain nation states within our common enterprise, with separate identities.

The most recent important organisation in Europe to pronounce on the treaty was the German constitutional court in Karsruhe. It put it this way in October:

> "the Maastricht Treaty . . . founds an association of states with the goal of an ever-closer Union of European peoples organised as states, and not a (single) state based on a European people".

So the Community is not a belt, moving us slowly and inexorably towards a super-state. Of course, there are some people who would like it to be; there are even some people in the House who would like it to be. I have just seen a rather remarkable speech that was made by the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) this morning.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is it a petition?

Mr. Hurd: No; it is not. It is a vision. The right hon. Gentleman has visions, rather in the same way as St. Joan had voices. He has several a day. They do him a certain amount of good between elections, but not much good at general elections. He had a vision this morning. What is more, it was a positive vision, because he told us so. As part of that vision, he wanted to see the European Parliament catch up with the Council of Ministers in power, with equal law-making rights over more issues—one could argue about that. Then he said:

> "We want the Ministers to make decisions in public without single nation vetoes".

I do not know what that means. I have not heard the right hon. Gentleman or the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy), who is to speak for the Liberal Democrats today, say that before. Do they want majority voting on everything—on immigration, and on all matters of foreign policy? Is that the policy of the Liberal Democrats, the policy which they will parade before the country in the lead-up to the elections in June?

That is almost as bad as the policy that the Leader of the Opposition signed with his own fair hand when he was attending the Socialist International in Brussels a few weeks ago.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is going to speak. Before he intervenes, I trust that he is acquainted with the vision.

Mr. Kennedy: The Foreign Secretary is in no position to talk about visions, in view of the "war of attrition" speech that he delivered the last time that we debated matters European, at the end of the Maastricht process—I notice that all the old faces are back today.

As the right hon. Gentleman is beginning his speech in rather an odd way for a British Foreign Secretary, in asking questions about Labour and Liberal Democrat policy, and our links with other European parties, may I ask him about British Conservative links with the European People's party and its commitment to federalism, to which the Conservative Members of the European Parliament wish to subscribe for the forthcoming Euro-elections? Is that the Foreign Secretary's policy? It seems to be the policy of his MEPs.

Mr. Hurd: That is not the policy of the Foreign Secretary or that of the MEPs. It is a policy of the people with whom they are in alliance. That is entirely different from the Leader of the Opposition going to Brussels and subscribing personally to a policy, and from the right hon. Member for Yeovil having visions and describing them. That is an entirely different proposition——

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I shall give way to the right hon. Gentleman in a moment; I am dealing with the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye at the moment.

We shall be happy to debate those matters from time to time and at greater length.

Dr. Cunningham: We shall deal with the manifesto of the European People's party later—and, for that matter, the friendly attitude of M. Le Pen towards the opt-out from the social chapter, which is so far the sole province of British Ministers. Before the Foreign Secretary reads two errors about my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition into the record, may I correct him? First, there was no meeting of the Socialist International; he was wrong about that; it was the party of European socialists. Secondly, we signed no manifesto committing ourselves to a federal Europe.

Mr. Hurd: I do not have the Leader of the Opposition's vision in my hand now, but it was a striking and positive one. The Conservative MEPs and all our candidates will fight on a manifesto being fashioned now—a process in which I may have some part. It will be a British Conservative European manifesto. Neither the leader of the Liberal Democrats nor the leader of the Labour party will be able to make a similar claim about their independence of thought in such matters.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Can we clarify the issue and put it beyond debate? Is it true that all the Conservative MEPs were present in Athens from 11 to 13 November, where astonishing proposals were drawn up, including taxation by the EC? The press were led to believe that all except one had agreed to the proposals. If we could clear up that matter we could put it back to sleep. Is it not true that the MEPs were in Athens, and approved the document?

Mr. Hurd: I advise my hon. Friend to wait and see the manifesto on which all our candidates will fight the election, and then to contrast it with the vision announced by the right hon. Member for Yeovil today, and with the European socialist document to which the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) personally put his name a few weeks ago in Brussels.

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I must make some progress, but I promised to give way to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), and I shall do so later.

There are areas of policy for which we believe the mechanisms of Community decision making were not designed—this is the whole point. The Maastricht treaty —I ask my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) to focus on this—recognises that there are many areas of European work for which the Community mechanisms are not designed. That is why there are two pillars in the Maastricht treaty establishing intergovernmental pillars of co-operation.

But there is more than that. Even where the Community has a role, action at European level must be the exception, not the rule. That is the principle of subsidiarity now enshrined in the treaty as article 3b. I am well aware, from all the debates we had about subsidiarity, that some people, including perhaps my hon. Friend, regarded this as a bit of an ugly duckling. But I am happy to say that it is developing slowly into quite an impressive swan. *[Interruption.]* I shall develop that thought.

In Brussels tomorrow and on Saturday, the European Council will consider the Commission's report on subsidiarity. The report is much more impressive than one would have thought likely a year or so ago. It is a substantial call for the simplification, revision or repeal of unnecessary or over-prescriptive legislation. It is a report from the Commission which was once widely seen as the custodian of the centralising faith.

The Commission has recommended that the infamous drinking and bathing water directives need a complete overhaul. They are over-prescriptive and in some cases scientifically outdated. Hon. Members may remember the nonsense about the Community classifying carrots as fruit in a directive on jam. The Commission is now moving right away from its attempt to say what should and should not be in particular foods. Its only concern should be to ensure that safe, properly labelled products are freely traded in the Community under the single market. Food legislation needs to focus on that simple objective. *[Interruption.]* The right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) is taking his bisque a bit—does he want to intervene again?

Dr. John Cunningham: The Foreign Secretary talked about water and water quality directives. If what he said is true, why did the Conservative manifesto for the European elections in 1989 say that the directives would apply tough new controls over the quality of drinking water, including stringent limits on levels of nitrates, and ensure that all our bathing waters meet relative European Community standards? Why did the Government promise the electors that they would implement the directives if they have now changed their mind?

Mr. Hurd: While the directives are there, we must make every effort to implement them. What we are saying is that they are excessively complicated and should be simplified. We are not the only ones saying that—the Commission is also saying that. The right hon. Gentleman has inadvertently given me the proof of my point. The argument has moved on. Whereas in 1989 it was regarded as being perfectly natural that there should be all these detailed regulations, it is not so regarded in 1993, even by the Commission. That is good news and the right hon. Gentleman should welcome it, rather than deprecate it.

The Commission's proposal affects about one quarter of all EC legislation and takes on board 16 out of the 24 suggestions put to the Commission by the British and French Governments. Some of the legislation will be scrapped altogether and some will be simplified. The Commission recognises the need to do less, to do it better and to do it with a lighter touch. We shall say that more should be done. At the summit, we shall urge that the suggestions made by the Commission, welcome in so far as they go, should be acted on by the Community immediately.

The process of subsidiarity is under way. But it is a process. It will not be completed this year and it will not be completed next year. It is a constant process of simplification, rationalisation and repeal.

Mr. Gapes: In the process of considering subsidiarity, does the Foreign Secretary agree that,

"the functioning of the market remains subordinate to general welfare and social justice"?

Those words are taken from the draft manifesto of the European People's party and were reported in *The Times* yesterday. Does the Foreign Secretary agree that the functioning of the market remains subordinate?

Mr. Hurd: No. I believe that the functioning of the market is the most effective way of ensuring their prosperity. As I shall prove shortly, that is a growing view on the continent, as it is in the House. Only the British Labour party seems to lag behind, as the right hon. Member for Copeland proved again with his remarks about the social chapter. When the right hon. Gentleman started to praise the social chapter, he was in the swim and was with the fashionable current. He does not seem to know what is happening on the continent now. He does not seem to know that people on the continent are worried about competitiveness and about labour costs being heaped on employers. The right hon. Gentleman is drifting out of touch.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: I must get on.

The post-war centralising tendency of Europe has been carried beyond the point of public acceptance, not just in Britain but in Denmark, France and Germany. There has been a widespread perception that what the summit said in October—the declaration of all 12 nations—was that the Community interferes too much in national affairs. If that is true, we must be more selective in the future. We must work together effectively, but on a more selective basis and in areas where there is public support for the process.

At the top of tomorrow's agenda will be the European economy.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): It is nice to have lists of powers that the Commission might divest or might centralise back to the nation states. Does my right hon. Friend agree that considerable input should be given to suggestions that things that should be repatriated or decentralised should come from national Governments and national legislatures? Does he support moves that could be devised to pull together lists of competences that can be removed from the centre at the suggestion of nation states and Parliaments?

Mr. Hurd: Those lists are not of competences, but of what the Community should do within those competences. Of course, the EC has to respect the competences that were laid down in the treaty. The competences will come under review probably in 1996, when another look will be taken at the treaty.

We are talking about what use the Community makes of those competences. My right hon. Friend was right to say that those procedures are not just for the Commission, and it is up to member Governments, advised by their Parliaments, to put in suggestions. That is what we and the French have done. We made 24 suggestions, of which the Commission has taken up 16. The Germans put in a list, and they were not satisfied with the response. They will be pressing for more, as we will be pressing for more.

My right hon. Friend is quite right about the procedures. Nation states make suggestions which the Commission considers and, in this case, accepts 16 out of 24.

Mr. Enright: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: I am going to get on, but I have the hon. Gentleman in my sights if he persists.

At the top of tomorrow's agenda will be the economic debate, and that is as it should be. We have argued consistently that the Community should address the issues that are of real concern to the people of Europe, and not just get absorbed in institutional introspection.

Mr. Winnick: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: No, I must get on.

We all now agree that the Community must turn its energies towards contributing prosperity and the creation of jobs. The Commission's paper on growth, competitiveness and employment arrived late, as was pointed out with some zest and force by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor in Brussels a few days ago. That was too late, either to allow a proper and informed debate in the House or to allow the Heads of State to give it the consideration that it deserves during the next 48 hours.

We agree with a good deal of what the paper says. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor will want to say more on that when he winds up, but much of the analysis is right. The Commission has moved a long way in the past year or so. It has moved well beyond the British Labour party in analysing why Europe has failed to create jobs to the same extent as the United States and Japan, let alone the new Asian competitors.

The Commission is now drawing attention to the costs of employment in Europe and contrasting those increases in costs with the relative increases in other countries. It has not yet drawn the conclusion that we should like and said to Commissioner Flynn that he and the Social Council should no longer do what the British Labour party wants them to do. That would make Europe less competitive and hinder the creation of jobs. The Commission has no longer drawn the logical conclusion of its analysis, but at least it is a good thing that it now shares the type of analysis that we have been making from these Benches for some time.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): My right hon. Friend shows his customary courtesy by giving way. I fully agree with him on the issue of costs. Does he agree that the greatest distorter of costs in the recent past was the workings of a fixed exchange rate? I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the Prime Minister's article in *The Economist* in which he said that he did not wish to,

> "pursue sellotape policies—patching together the unmendable—or to play the politics of illusion—pretending that it was never broken."

He was speaking about the ERM. At the coming Euro-summit, will we still oppose either official or unofficial attempts to reintroduce fixed exchange rates?

Mr. Hurd: I did not appreciate that that was an issue. I shall be surprised if anyone at the summit tries to push in the direction that my hon. Friend suggests. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor may wish to comment on that. For the time being, reality has imposed a sudden silence on that area of policy.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I have a long speech and wish to make progress but I shall give way to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick).

Mr. Winnick: The Foreign Secretary said that Maastricht is no longer an issue. Is he not aware that there is not the slightest sign that the British people are any more enthusiastic or supportive of the treaty than they were when we debated it? Mass unemployment is a curse in the Community countries and, whatever the document says and whatever good we hope that it may do, it will be constantly undermined by the deflationary criteria of the treaty itself—the issue that so many of us tried to emphasise in our debates. That type of economic convergence can only produce more unemployment, not less.

Mr. Hurd: I am sorry that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman because he is simply making speeches that he has made before. We believe in convergence. It is desirable for all member states, which form our main market, to pursue what we and the Council regard as sensible financial policies. We must not think that we can breeze our way out of recession simply by spending more, let alone by putting up trade barriers. There are differences between the two sides of the House, and that is certainly one of them. We agree with the treaty about the convergence criteria, although we do not agree that they should be compulsory. We agree with much of the White Paper's analysis but not with its prescriptions.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Will my right hon. Friend give way before he moves on?

Mr. Hurd: I have moved on.

We are not attracted by the idea of the Commission's borrowing large new sums to help finance trans-European networks. Access to capital is not the problem. There is a good deal of headroom in the European Investment Bank as a result of last year's Edinburgh agreement. It is not right to encourage new borrowing at a time when the Commission has rightly stressed the need to reduce

[Mr. Hurd]

deficits, as is stated in the treaty. As I have said, the Commission is right to listen carefully to advice from the British and other Governments and from other people.

Mr. Gill: Will my right hon. Friend give way on that point?

Mr. Hurd: I should like to finish this point and then I shall give way to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) who has been trying to intervene for some time.

There has been a groundswell of concern in this country and on the continent about a lack of competitiveness in Europe. A notable new voice is that of the European round table which represents leading industrials from all over Europe. In an unprecedented statement last week, it condemned the pernicious effect on employment of the EC social charter and the dangers of social regulation, which it said threatens to introduce protection levels higher than those in any member country which would hamper employment opportunities. That is what I mean when I speak about the new mood of realism in Europe.

Just a few weeks ago, the Commission toyed with plans to force companies to introduce compulsory work sharing schemes. Now the accent has moved—not totally but partly—to where it should be, on creating an environment in which companies can generate new jobs.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The right hon. Gentleman has emphasised matters relating to employment. What is going on in the GATT talks about the European airbus project? The right hon. Gentleman will know that more than 2,000 plane makers in my constituency make the wings for that magnificent aircraft. It appears that President Clinton has been seeking to gain advantage by telling employees in Seattle who make the Boeing airbus that our airbus, the wings for which are made in my constituency, is unfairly subsidised. Can the right hon. Gentleman assure the work force that I represent that this project is safe in the GATT round? Will he assure them that he and his Cabinet colleagues have been able to safeguard the future of this great project, which is important not only to Britain and to my constituents——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I think that the Foreign Secretary has got the question by now.

Mr. Hurd: The airbus is a fine and successful plane. In the GATT negotiations, the issue of civil aircraft is one of the two that are outstanding between the European Community and the United States. I shall close my speech in a few minutes by speaking about GATT. Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan and Mickey Kantor, the US trade representative, are seeking to solve that and to have the agreement made general by all those involved in the GATT negotiations. All the European negotiators are well aware of the importance of that project to this country and to others, not least because of what the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside said about employment.

Mr. Gill: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hurd: I shall, and then I should like to move to other matters and conclude my speech.

Mr. Gill: My right hon. Friend spoke about the Government's advice to the Commission. What is their advice on fixed exchange rates—are they said to be good or bad? Before my right hon. Friend answers that, would he care to consider that when Britain was on the gold standard between 1925 and 1931, unemployment more than doubled and that that was exactly what happened during our two years' membership of the exchange rate mechanism?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that the Commission is seeking or that we are providing advice on that theoretical matter at present. Our view about the third stage of economic and monetary union has been illustrated, defended and supported in the House many times in the past year and is well known. However, it is not an issue, as the Prime Minister said in his article in *The Economist*, which was quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher).

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): I should like to ask about the detail of the Delors White Paper. Will the Foreign Secretary confirm that two of its major investment proposals are help for expediting the channel tunnel rail link and for improving water quality? What possible benefit to Britain is there to outright opposition this weekend to those proposals?

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor is going to the summit and will answer the hon. Gentleman's specific questions in his winding-up speech.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I have a good deal of ground to cover in my own bailiwick and shall leave my right hon. and learned Friend to answer for matters that are in his.

The Maastricht treaty is not just about doing less at European level: it is also about doing more where that makes sense. An example is the common foreign and security policy. We have been co-operating with our European partners on foreign policy for years. In the treaty, that has now developed into the CFSP, the common foreign and security policy, in which we expect to play a leading role.

There are two ways of dealing with the matter, and one is purely rhetorical. One can say that it is marvellous and a new era and deal with it in purely generalised terms. I do not believe in that approach. I believe that we should tackle this brick by brick, case by case, and settle on matters that are decided unanimously in the Council of Ministers. That is what we have begun to do. Some of those matters are quite small and practical and they are immediate, such as sending parliamentary observers to the parliamentary elections in Russia on Sunday. That is action by Britain, but also on a European level, to encourage the democrats in Russia in one of the main tests of their future. We are all putting together our ideas for humanitarian aid to Bosnia. I shall not go into that in detail today.

Sir Teddy Taylor: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have been here for 28 years and I have never seen hon. Members talking to people in the Box. Is that allowed? I think that it is an outrage and a scandal.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing attention to the normal courtesies of the House.

Mr. Hurd: Common action on Bosnia focuses on helping the UN to maintain humanitarian supplies, increasing the level of financial and personnel support and opening Tuzla airport to humanitarian supplies. This morning, I talked with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Ogata. The latest news is somewhat better and more hopeful, because convoys are getting through. That owes much to her work and to that of British troops in central Bosnia—to which Mrs. Ogata paid tribute.

No right hon. or hon. Member who has listened to debates in the House can have any illusions about how much we can do in Bosnia. We cannot impose a settlement, for a solution must be worked out by the parties concerned. Only those who are doing the fighting can stop the fighting. However, a humanitarian effort is being made and there is a reasonable case for joint action by the European Union. The same is true of monitoring elections in South Africa next April.

Those are examples of ways that we can, brick by brick —and without losing any independence of action on our part—build on the work that is done by Europe. That is true not only of my areas of interest but of those of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary—asylum, immigration, the fight against terrorism, drugs and crime. They all cross borders and we shall not deal with them effectively if we seek to do so only within these islands. We must work together, and the treaty provides a way that we can do so—not under Community institutions but by co-operation between Governments.

The first ever meeting of the Council of Interior and Justice Ministers less than a fortnight ago showed how they want to secure those priorities, which will also be discussed at the summit. In the fight against drug trafficking and cross-border crime, we shall complete by next October negotiations on the convention establishing Europol, the start of Europol drugs unit operations early in the new year, a shared approach to asylum and more practical and effective arrangements covering extradition.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor will deal with the Community's economic and monetary policy when he winds up this debate, but I will refer to a matter that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East and others have rightly harped on from time to time—fraud in the Community. It is a problem, and no one knows precisely how much it costs. When major problems occur within member states, they are difficult to stamp out because Community institutions do not have the power to exercise complete control over the implementation of Community policies at national level—and my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East would not want them to have those powers.

Part of the solution is to improve Community financial management and to ensure that spending is cost effective. The treaty expands the role of the Court of Auditors because we propose that it should do so. The problem of fraud goes further and requires a more active approach, and we expect the Commission to produce ideas soon.

Mr. Gill: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hurd: I have already given way to my hon. Friend. Perhaps I should press on and allow other right hon. and hon. Members to enter the debate.

In a single market, too, people must believe that rules are applied firmly and fairly before they can be expected with good grace to submit themselves to new disciplines. The onus must be primarily on national Governments to develop their own enforcement systems. We support the Commission's efforts to promote fair and even enforcement across the Community. The Department of Trade and Industry's single market compliance unit under my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) fights for British companies, which suffer if other member states do not apply Community legislation.

We are second only to Denmark in fulfilling our Community obligations, but we are careful not to over-regulate—as sometimes happened in the past. That is part of my hon. Friend's work, which is also concerned with the deregulation Bill mentioned in the Gracious Speech.

The Community's enlargement is one priority of British policy and will be tackled again at the summit in the next few days. Progress has been made. Negotiations are under way with four applicant countries—Austria, Sweden, Norway and Finland—and they are reaching the difficult issues, including some relating to agriculture. Scandinavian agriculture tends to be more highly protected than continental or British agriculture. We will urge the Greek presidency to keep the momentum going. We want to complete negotiations by the beginning of March 1994, so that the four applicants may enter the Community at the beginning of 1995 if that is their decision. Meeting that timetable is a tall order but it is achievable.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): The right hon. Gentleman made no mention of Macedonia and recognition of that name. Would he care to do so?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is perfectly correct. There are many other matters on which I have not commented, and I do not want to say any more about that issue at the moment. I advise the hon. Gentleman to watch this space.

Mr. Enright: Or Cyprus?

Mr. Hurd: Or Cyprus, Kashmir or many other matters of great interest. I am not dealing with them today because it is just possible that other right hon. and hon. Members want to speak.

The GATT negotiations are the most important international activity at present, and the summit will be dominated by continuing uncertainty. It is a drama, despite its technicalities and immense length. On Tuesday, we managed with difficulty to persuade the Council to allow the Commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan, to return to Geneva to get on with the negotiations. Some wanted him to hold back while we argued about this and that, but, at the end of the morning, it was agreed that Sir Leon should return.

It was an awkward moment, because negotiations with the United States, which had continued through the night, were incomplete. Sir Leon had to report to us on audio visual, films, television and civil aircraft—on which I answered a question earlier. There was still a gap, albeit not a huge one, between Europe and the United States. When that appeared, all the Ministers felt that they had to bring out of their pockets a lot of old demands. There was a great deal about textiles, maritime transport and Mediterranean products. We even heard about the tariff on shelled almonds. We had demands of our own. We should like to do more for our textile industry and to see American tariffs on woollens lowered more than has been offered. We shall continue to pursue that point, but there comes a time—and

[Mr. Hurd]

we have reached it—when we must consider the fundamental reality of the negotiations as the clock ticks on.

Agreement comes from compromises, and they mean that particular interests must be subordinated to the general interest. In Europe and throughout the world, it is in the general interest to create jobs through more open trade. That is the essence of the negotiations.

The Heads of State and Government will be bound to discuss that issue when they debate the European economy tomorrow morning. It would be unreal to talk about President Delors's White Paper and economic and monetary matters without mentioning that uncertainty—the prospect either of a huge error that will put the world back into protectionism and a procession of trade fortresses, or of the huge prospect of success that could be gained this time next week if, after seven years, the negotiations are concluded.

The present plan is that detailed discussion within the Community will take place on Saturday afternoon or on Monday, in the Foreign Affairs Council. The French and others want to discuss matters not included in GATT, such as commercial defence instruments—the Community's machinery for dealing with unfair competition from outside, whether it be safeguards or anti-dumping.

There is the question also of agricultural spending. The Government's firm view is that agricultural spending by the Community must continue to be contained within the agricultural guidelines and own-resources ceiling agreed a year ago at Edinburgh.

The discussions among the 12 are continuing while our representative, Sir Leon Brittan, is negotiating at Geneva with Mr. Kantor, under the auspices of Peter Sutherland, the director-general of GATT. Those negotiations are going ahead in parallel. I do not know what the outcome will be, but I know that the stakes are high. I am more hopeful than I and some others were some weeks ago, but we are not there yet. It will be a huge test of the good sense of the world whether, in a week's time, we will be able to report to the House, in one way or another, that the negotiation has been successful after seven years. I do not think that there is any country round the table in Geneva that has more at stake than the open trading and worldwide trading country called Britain.

It is relevant to the sort of Europe that we want. If we can achieve a GATT agreement in the next few days, it will be a fine way of opening the new phase in the economic history of Europe. That new phase needs to be marked by reducing trade barriers and subsidies, whether in agriculture or elsewhere, and by increasing the openness of the European and world trading system.

5 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I beg to move, at the end of the motion, to add

'but regrets that the approach of Her Majesty's Government to developments in the European Community has failed to advance Britain's interests.'.

In a moment of heat in July, at the end of the Maastricht debate, I recall the Foreign Secretary making a rash promise to the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) that in future he and his colleagues would be consulted closely about European matters. I assume that the Foreign Secretary's speech was the first product of that consultation because it was disjointed and, in some places, he seemed more like a spectator of what is going on in the European Community than a player. Nowhere was that more obvious than when he talked about GATT. It would have been reassuring to the House and the country if he could have imparted some feeling that Britain is fighting for British interests, whether it is the airbus or something else, in the same way as the French are fighting for their interests during the final days of these important negotiations.

I agree with the Foreign Secretary about the importance of reaching an agreement. It is important not only for us, the rich and powerful economies, but, perhaps even more so, for the poorer nations of the world and the more than 100 countries which are desperately hanging on and hoping that we in the west can settle our differences and reach an agreement that will be beneficial to them.

It was difficult to reconcile the right hon. Gentleman's comments about the Government creating a Europe that intervenes only when necessary with what we are discussing today. The pile of documents before us does not look to me like a Europe that intervenes only when necessary.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): That is the past.

Dr. Cunningham: It is not the past—it is the present and the future. Eurospeak comes in megabites rather than sound bites and we have plenty of evidence for that today. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) was right to protest to the Chair about the late arrival of documents and the reasonable inability of anyone to have read them all. On that point we can share some fellow feeling with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. We know from his own admission that he never bothers to read European documents. He does not think that it is worth his while. He confessed that he did not read the Maastricht treaty. I have not had time to read all the documents either. It is not a sensible way for us to conduct important business for huge documents of this complexity and importance to land on our desks within hours of the start of the debate.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks, which were about procedural issues and not necessarily to do with merit. Will he take account of the fact that the Select Committee, which is charged by the House to look at the documents and to summarise them and assess their political and legal importance, was able to look at only some of them yesterday afternoon? Therefore, the reports arrived in the House only last night or this morning, making it difficult for hon. Members even to read the reports on the reports.

Dr. Cunningham: I agree with my hon. Friend.

I begin with a different set of priorities. I am not dismissing the Foreign Secretary's priorities as less important, but I want to talk about some of the external affairs of the Community which are discussed in the documents.

The Foreign Secretary referred briefly to Bosnia. He did not tell the House—I shall give him the opportunity now —what has changed in respect of the European Community's attitudes, policies and commitments in Bosnia since the last meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council, from which there was a declaration. Has there been any additional response to the appeals of Mrs. Ogata for more aid finance? Has there been any response to the

United Nations' appeal for more troops in Bosnia? Has the European Union changed its position in any way since that Council meeting and its declaration in Brussels some weeks ago?

Have the Government changed the position that the Foreign Secretary enunciated during our debate on the Queen's Speech when he hinted that they were thinking of ending all aid to Bosnia? It seems unthinkable to many of us that in the middle of a bleak and horrendous winter, with millions of people relying on international aid and hundreds of thousands of them likely to be living well below subsistence level, we should be stopping our aid to those tortured people in Bosnia and elsewhere. We believe that the European Community should be increasing aid and support for those people. Can the right hon. Gentleman tell us whether that is likely to happen?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is misrepresenting me. The most important thing that has happened as a result of the latest European decisions is a fresh round of intensive negotiations. We want to see whether the Serbs will add to the amount of territory from which they are prepared to withdraw and whether the Croats will allow the Muslims to have access to the sea. Those are crucial points and there is now revived discussion—I cannot say conclusions—of a sort that there has not been for some time.

I talked to Mrs. Ogata about aid. She paid high tribute to what is happening now in central Bosnia, where, with the help of British and other troops, convoys are once again getting through. That is a big advance. It is not yet enough and we want to open Tuzla airport. Mrs. Ogata believes that she has enough resources to last until the end of the year. I told her that we would be making an additional British contribution before the end of the year.

I never said that in the near future we intend to withdraw aid or troops. We are committed for the winter. I said simply, as have others—it is a statement of fact—that in the spring we will need to take stock. Those concerned with organising the fighting and profiting from the aid should not assume that the international community will continue month after month, year on year, with the present system and the present stationing of troops. It is not realistic for them to suppose that. That is not a threat; it is simply a statement of fact for next year.

Dr. Cunningham: I take it from that that the British Government intend to increase their aid finance to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It would have been helpful if the Foreign Secretary had been able to give us a figure.

Is it reasonable to be talking about ending sanctions against Serbia when the Serbs have 40,000 troops persecuting the population of Kosovo? They have thrown out the monitors from the conference on security and co-operation in Europe. The president of Kosovo was in London this week and I assume that the Foreign Secretary, like me, had an opportunity to meet President Rugova and his Prime Minister. Was the Foreign Secretary able to give them any assurances of support from the European Union about a concerted foreign policy to bring relief to them?

I want to deal with the middle east, not least because Chairman Arafat will be in London next week.

Mr. Butcher: What about the documents?

Dr. Cunningham: From a sedentary position, the hon. Gentleman says, "What about the documents?" I can assure him that, among many other things, aid to the occupied territories is referred to in those documents. He is demonstrating that he has obviously not read the documents and is unaware of that fact.

Mr. Butcher: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: I am not giving way on a sedentary intervention.

Chairman Arafat will be in London next week and will have discussions with the Foreign Secretary and, I expect, the Prime Minister. Will the Government give economic assistance to the emerging Palestinian Administration? Will the new organisation established by the Palestinians at the request of the international community—the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction—be assisted not only by cash but by expert help? They need consultancy and economic expert advice to enable them to use the assistance that they are seeking and will no doubt be given. I understand that they are seeking relatively small amounts to help them establish a modern management expertise within their reorganisation. I urge the right hon. Gentleman to respond positively to the request when it is made.

I was curious as to why we heard so much about the recent Maastricht treaty debates. I should have thought that the right hon. Gentleman, more than any other, would have had his fill of that. There are more important Community developments to discuss and I will turn to some of them in a moment.

As to what the Foreign Secretary had to say about manifestos, the chairman of the Conservative party has put out a brief and, in the interests of greater accuracy, we all have a copy of it. He is hardly "Storming Norman"; "boring Norman" best describes him.

Among other things, the right hon. Gentleman has the gall to talk about socialist taxes in Europe. Next year, 1994, will be the year of Tory taxes in Britain: increased VAT, increased national insurance and more income tax on people's bills. I am surprised that the chairman of the Conservative party had the nerve to include anything about taxation in his brief.

As to the right hon. Gentleman's point about the European Peoples party, this is what the chairman of the Conservative party says in his letter to Conservative Members:

> "the European Peoples party will also meet to agree an Action Programme. We in the Conservative party are not members of the EPP."

It goes on:

> "The alliance of Conservative MEPs with the EPP"——

Mr. Hurd: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: I will in a moment.

> "The alliance of Conservative MEPs with the EPP Parliamentary Group brings centre-right parties together".

It brings them together and they are in an alliance, but of course the right hon. Gentleman adds the caveat:

> "We are not bound by any Manifesto or declaration of the EPP".

They are working together and it brings centre-right parties together, but they are pretending that they have nothing to do with them.

We all know why. The manifesto of the European People's party says:

[Dr. Cunningham]

> "The social policy, which has as its goal the increasing prosperity of all branches of society, finds its inspiration and justification in the values which are the basis of society: justice and solidarity."

It is completely committed to the social dimension in Europe and says so in several other places in its manifesto.

The Foreign Secretary was advancing the thesis throughout his speech that, in Europe, people, parties and Governments were somehow coming round to his way of thinking. The only problem with that thesis is that every Conservative party in Europe endorses this manifesto, which in turn endorses the social chapter. Chancellor Kohl's party endorses it, the French Conservatives endorse it and all the other European Conservative parties endorse it. There is a fraud at the centre of the Foreign Secretary's argument because—as has always been the case—after a year of bluster, argument and charade the only political party in Europe that supports the British Conservative party is the French fascist party of Mr. Le Pen—perhaps we should say Mr. Poison Le Pen.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is trying to gallop away. He failed to quote a key sentence in the right place. He quoted it a little later because he saw that some of us had it.

> "We are not bound by any manifesto or declaration of the EPP."

The right hon. Gentleman left that sentence out and brought it in later only because he saw that we had it. That is the key question. It is the key difference between our position and that of the British Labour party in respect of the European socialists and the position of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), who wants to abandon all national vetoes in the Community.

As to the social chapter, when the right hon. Gentleman first made that speech it was broadly accurate. Across the continent, employers in particular are waking up to the dangers that the orthodoxy—whether social democrat or christian democrat—has imposed upon jobs in those countries. That is the way in which the debate is going and I gave evidence of that in my speech.

Dr. Cunningham: All the bluff and bluster in the world cannot disguise the almost solitary position of the British Conservative party. The right hon. Gentleman cannot name a single Government or Conservative party in Europe that shares his view. He should stop misleading the House and the British people by pretending that somehow soon Europe will cast aside a social dimension to the development of the European Community. It will not happen and it should not happen; nor do we want it to happen. The right hon. Gentleman and his right hon. and hon. Friends are the only ones who want it to happen, as all the arguments, debates and documentation make clear.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Has the right hon. Gentleman had time to read, among all the other things he has tried to read, the contribution of the federal German Government to the Commission's White Paper? It says:

> "Non-wage labour costs including social security contributions should be scrutinised closely since in Europe they have reached a high level in relation to wages. Social welfare expenditure, which burdens the economy as a whole, should be restrained".

The German Government document is virtually identical in language to the Government's submission to the Commission. It is clear that the right hon. Gentleman simply has not followed the way the debate has gone. We now have many friends among other Governments on the continent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand that hon. Members want to get deeply involved in the debate, but interventions should be short.

Dr. Cunningham: I shall not give way again if they are as long as that.

It is astonishing that that intervention comes from an hon. Member who has just voted for national insurance increases for the whole British population. He is telling us that the German Government warn against increased employment costs. He has just voted dramatically to increase employment costs and costs on employees. The Government have conned the British people. They promised in their manifesto that they would not increase national insurance charges, but it is the first thing that they did when they presented the first unified Budget—and the hon. Member for Esher voted for it. I could go on and mention VAT, increased fuel tax and sick pay—all loading extra costs on to employers, industry and commerce—and the hon. Gentleman is warning us of what the federal German Government is telling us. We do not need the warnings; we can see how the Government are loading employment costs on to employers and employees in this country.

Our partners in Europe are going ahead with the social dimension and with economic and monetary union. We have lost the European monetary institution of Frankfurt because of the Government's pig-headedness and the Tory party is now marginalised and isolated in Europe.

It is no good the Government telling us about lifting burdens. I have a copy of the review produced by their own committee of inquiry, staffed by their own civil servants. It is entitled "Review of the Implementation and Enforcement of EC Law in the United Kingdom". One of the committee's first findings is reported in paragraph 2 of the executive summary of the document, which states:

> "We have found little evidence to support the allegation that the UK deliberately adds requirements when transposing EC law."

The report contains many more interesting observations, for instance:

> "Officials felt that there was a failure to recognise the subtleties of negotiation in Brussels and thought that as a consequence they had not achieved all that they might have done."

It states delphically:

> "Ministers should be aware of this problem."

What those officials are really saying is that Ministers' pig-headed, stubborn attitude in Brussels is costing the country dear.

The report also contains a section on costs and benefits and makes recommendations. It appears that our wonderfully inept Government found themselves in the ludicrous position of almost agreeing fire safety regulations that would cost this country an additional £2 billion, because of their obstinacy. The report says:

> "had our recommendations been in place we estimate that nearly £300,000 of effort devoted to drafting unnecessary Fire Regulations would have been involved."

It continues:

> "Ministers should be aware of the dangers of an inflexible negotiating position. We asked whether officials were content with the Ministerial steer they had been given . . . we encountered a significant number of instances where officials felt 'boxed in' by inflexible negotiating positions set by Ministers. They suggested that the 'no, but' stance they were required to adopt in

negotiations marginalised the UK. This was confirmed by UKREP in Brussels and EC Commission officials to whom we spoke."

That was said by British civil servants working for the Government. They commented, in their own report, on the ineptitude and stupidity of their own political masters, who had made a mess of things in Brussels. It is no good the Foreign Secretary shaking his head; I have the document. A copy is in the Library, so that any hon. Member can read it. I do not know whether it has been hidden away from those currently occupying the Government Front Bench —they look a little puzzled—but I advise them to get hold of a copy: it makes very interesting bedtime reading.

The idea that it is all the fault of Brussels that we have problems because of the European Community is another of the myths and false arguments erected by the Foreign Secretary and his right hon. and hon. Friends. Brussels legislation is a burden: all those socialists in the European Community, dumping all this awful legislation on us. In fact, eight of the 12 member Governments are either Conservative or Conservative-led coalitions. The reality is even worse than it appears: the Foreign Secretary cannot even get his Tory friends in Brussels to agree with him on the British position. Even with the advantage of those eight Conservative Governments, the British Government cannot secure a decent deal for the United Kingdom. Their failure and ineptitude is at the heart of the difficulties in our relationship with the Community.

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): Would the right hon. Gentleman care to speculate on the words that officials might have used if the Labour party had been negotiating in Maastricht two years ago, and had carried through the strategy that it then supported—that of backing full monetary union, with no subsequent parliamentary vote at the time when it was to come into force?

Dr. Cunningham: I will not speculate on what officials might have said, but I am certain that a Labour Government would have secured a much better deal for Britain and the British people than the incompetents on the Conservative Benches.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: No; I have just given way.

It is not just a question of what officials say about the impact of the Government's actions. The Equal Opportunities Commission has just commented on the changes in maternity pay and the proposals for implementing the European Community's pregnant workers directive. It states:

"The European Commission Pregnant Workers Directive therefore represents a welcome advance in UK maternity protection. However, the EC is concerned that the spirit of the Directive is being lost in its translation into UK legislation, an approach which we do not believe is in the best interests of women or their employers. The Commission wrote to the Secretary of State for Employment on three separate occasions during the passage of the Directive through the European Commission, urging the government to take the opportunity offered by the Directive to review UK maternity rights and introduce new framework legislation. We indicated that we would be willing to participate in the consultative process, which we recommended should be wide-ranging."

Although the Commission wrote to the Secretary of State three times, its advice was not acted on. The report continues:

"consequently, the opportunity to eliminate the underlying problems inherent in the current scheme, and to put in place a simple, coherent and comprehensive scheme is being lost. Maternity leave and maternity pay will continue to be covered by separate legislation."

That is just another practical example—but perhaps a more important one—of how the interests of British people, in this case pregnant women, are being damaged by the Government's attitude to the European Community.

The Foreign Secretary and his hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) mentioned labour and wage costs. Figures from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development for 1991—the most recent that I could obtain—give the unit labour costs in manufacturing industry for various countries. If we take the United Kingdom figure as 100, the United States figure is 115, the Japanese figure 98, the German figure 124, the French figure 144 and the Italian figure 128. Apart from Japan, each of those countries has a higher figure than Britain.

Let us examine the productivity figures—again, taking the United Kingdom figure as 100. The United States figure is 175, the Japanese figure 150, the German figure 140, the French figure 139 and the Italian figure 121. Every other country has higher productivity per employee than the United Kingdom. If we examine unit labour costs— combining productivity and investment with output—we find that this country has the worst record of all, with the exception of Italy.

The real problem is not that our labour costs are higher than those of our competitors, or even that our added employment costs are higher. The problem is much more fundamental: it is lack of investment, skills and proper training. The idea that cutting labour costs, freezing wages or taking safety standards away from industry will somehow enable us to compete with Taiwan, Singapore, Korea or Hong Kong is absurd—not least because the same source reveals that, if our labour manufacturing costs are taken as 100, the Taiwan figure is 35, the Singapore and Korean figure 34 and the Hong Kong figure 27.

Who believes that it is realistic to expect us to get labour costs down to those in an advanced industrial economy? That is entirely the wrong way in which to approach the problem, as anyone with an ounce of sense, experience or knowledge of manufacturing industry will know. This is the stupid ideology of a party that has run out of ideas and almost run out of the political honesty to face up to the problems brought about by its 14 years in office.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): On that point, the Foreign Secretary quoted the Delors report and said that it supported his arguments, but the beginning of it says just what my right hon. Friend has been saying—that there is no miracle cure, nor a drastic cut in wages and a pruning of social protection to align our costs with those of our competitors in the developing countries. The report says that it is socially unacceptable and politically untenable. Such an approach would only worsen the crisis by depressing domestic demand which also contributes to growth and the maintenance of employment. So much for the Foreign Secretary.

Dr. Cunningham: I am pleased that I allowed my hon. Friend, who is my own Member of Parliament, to make that effective intervention.

There is a plethora of evidence on labour costs. I recommend that Ministers look at the latest survey of Swedish employers, which shows that Great Britain had the fifth lowest labour costs of the 17 major industrial countries surveyed in 1992. It further shows that 72 per

[Dr. Cunningham]

cent. of wage costs were wages and 28 per cent. were additional costs—the added-on costs to employment. Only in Ireland, Canada and Denmark are additional costs lower as a proportion than in the United Kingdom. That is another myth from the Tory party blown out of the water: that somehow we in Britain are pricing ourselves out of the market.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford) *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: Not at the moment.

The tragedy is that, despite all that, we do not have a good trading record—far from it.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: In a moment; I want to make the point because the two things are connected. Do not worry, I shall give way.

Who does not want to be efficient and more competitive? Of course everyone does. The bogus argument is that somehow, by working some trick with our employees' wages and conditions, we can bring it off. Despite that advantage—this is the point that I want to make before I allow the Chancellor to intervene—the Government manage, because of their incompetence, to sustain a trade surplus with the 10 poorest nations in the world and a trade deficit with the 10 richest nations of the world. It is an appalling record.

If we look at the OECD figures for the 17 largest—I think they are the largest—industrial nations, we have a trade deficit with every one of them in terms of visible trade.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The first point that I wish to put to the right hon. Gentleman is on wage costs. As he accepted with approval a quote from the White Paper, I am sure that he will accept that two themes come strongly through in the White Paper. Throughout Europe, it is necessary that wage increases should be below increases in productivity for the foreseeable future. There is also the argument in the White Paper, described under the heading of solidarity, which is how the Commission and the President usually describe it, that those in employment should accept considerable constraint in their wage increases for the foreseeable future because there are so many unemployed people.

In the forthcoming pay round in this country, if the Labour party is so instantly converted to the White Paper that appeared on Monday that it now has a policy on those issues, will the right hon. Gentleman commit the Labour party to the principles set out in the White Paper?

Dr. Cunningham: I shall come to the White Paper in a moment. *[Interruption.]* I shall make my own speech. If I had to rely on Conservative Members to make my speech for me, it would be a pretty shambolic affair. I shall make my own speech, if Conservative Members do not mind.

I notice that, despite the fact that the Chancellor said that he would intervene on the subject of wage costs, he did not refer to the figures that I quoted. Of course we are in favour of productivity and greater competitiveness—it would be mad to be otherwise—but the reality is that productivity and improved competitiveness should not depend on low pay. Nor should it depend on taking away health and safety safeguards.

Competitive success should bring higher, not lower pay. It should bring higher rewards for skill and endeavour, not just higher dividends, as happens now under the Government. It should not bring largely inflated salaries for directors and board members, as continues to happen under the Government—the privatised water industry is an obvious example.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I have not finished with the right hon. and learned Gentleman yet.

In 1979, 50 per cent. of profits went into dividends in this country. Internationally, even that was a high level. Under the Conservatives, the figure has risen to 70 per cent., which is disastrous for long-term investment prospects. That figure is broadly twice as high as the figure for Japan and Germany, our principal competitors.

It is in those facts and figures that we find the reasons for the real failure of Britain as a manufacturing and trading nation—not in decent protection for people at work, or in the directives of the European Community, but in the 14 years of economic and industrial failure over which the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his right hon. and hon. Friends have presided and have voted for again in the past couple of weeks.

We cannot and will not accept that the major burden of change should be borne by the weakest—the low-paid, the unwaged and the unemployed. Nor will the British people accept the increasing burdens of the incompetence of the Government being heaped on them ever more frequently. A policy to promote productivity growth should be based on enhanced training and education, improved skills and technology, effective research and development, modern and sophisticated infrastructure and a far better level of investment than the British working population have ever enjoyed under the Government.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer asked me whether I accept the broad arguments and thrust of the charter for Europe's industrial future—the report from the European round table of industrialists. Yes, I do. There is much in it with which we agree. For example, we certainly share the view that

> "a return to more rapid and sustained economic growth should be the central target of policy. The second element of growth must be a substantial increase in investment".

We share the view that:

> "Transport, energy, financial and other costs all require similar attention. Plans exist to modernise Europe's infrastructure but there is no sense of urgency to put them into action . . . one is to mobilise Europe's massive scientific resources",

but the Government have demobilised this country's scientific and technological effort more often than not.

> "The second is to pay closer attention to lifelong education and training, raising the skills of everybody from young children to experienced working people."

The answer to the right hon. and learned Gentleman is an emphatic yes; we share all the aims and objectives of the proposals. *[Interruption.]* The Conservatives are the only people whom I have heard say that they do not want to see the social chapter implemented. The right hon. and learned Gentleman mutters "UNECE"—the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe—but that is just not true. That is another of the misrepresentations that have frequently come from the Government Benches.

Finally, I shall turn to the Delors paper, which is similar both in analysis and prospectus to the employers' paper to which I have just been referring. It talks about the need for greater investment and more urgency. It talks about the ability of the European Union working together to tackle the horrendous and rising levels of unemployment in Europe. It talks about the need for social cohesion and solidarity.

I would add to the paper the need for the European Union to start confronting more actively the horrendous outbreaks of racism and fascism that we are seeing, including that in this country. I am not one of those apologists for Britain who says that it is going on in France, Germany and Italy but not here. That is not true either. That is one reason why we support the appointment of a European Commissioner for racial equality. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Conservative Members say no, but why should we not have a commissioner with responsibility for racial equality in Europe? They should ask some of the members of the ethnic minority communities in our towns and cities. They would soon find out that they want more effective action to protect themselves and their families from the squalid abuse, intimidation and violence from which some of them suffer daily.

In the European Community now there is a real opportunity. It began, after much argument and debate, at Edinburgh in the final days of the British presidency. It was built upon at Copenhagen. It is being built upon to promote the use of information technologies, to provide basic trans-European services, to continue to create an appropriate regulatory framework, to develop training on new technologies, and to improve industrial technological performance.

Within the new package of proposals before the summit this weekend there are proposals to accelerate the financing and development of high-speed transport links between Heathrow, London and Dover. The Foreign Secretary ducked a question on that from my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). There are proposals to help us to finance the cost of meeting the EC drinking and bathing water quality directives.

Will the Government tell the British people that they will vote against those proposals and turn down this opportunity—that appears to be the answer—all for the sake of an extra 8 billion ecu in new money? That is what is being proposed in the White Paper.

Mr. Jenkin: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: No, I am just coming to the end of my remarks.

How does that, and for that matter everything else, square with all the promises made in the Tory European election manifesto of 1989? It does not. In that the Tories specifically promised that they would ensure that all our bathing waters met relevant EC standards. In case the Foreign Secretary wants his officials to check, that is on page 47. They say that they will

"apply tough new controls over the quality of drinking water".

There are a few more amusing comments in the document. The Government will not be writing these things next year. They certainly will not be claiming:

"We have put the torch to a bonfire of controls."

They certainly will not be claiming:

"We have put Britain's finances in order".

They certainly will not be claiming:

"An active and whole-hearted approach to the Community has breathed new life into our partnership with our neighbours."

They will not get away with any such drivel in 1994.

The vital debate for the future of Europe to which the success of Britain is inextricably linked will go on in 1994 and, as ever, the divisions in the Tory party will damage Britain's interests in Europe and the Government's redundant ideology will damage the British people.

The Opposition are committed to their European ideals and policies for Europe, which have been well established for long enough now. We will take these arguments to the people in the European elections in 1994 and I am confident that we shall win.

5.42 pm

Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones (Watford): It is some time since I addressed the House from the Back Benches and the House will be relieved to know that I do not intend to regale it with personal experiences, anecdotes or justifications of my time in Government.

I was privileged to serve under my noble Friend Lady Thatcher for eight years. It was her leadership and faith which restored the belief in economic liberalism, not just in Britain but beyond in the wider world. It was her instinct which sensed the historic importance of perestroika and was instrumental in rallying western support for that important process. My noble Friend is entitled to take full credit for that—and, indeed, she does. I was also fortunate to serve for two and a half years under my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major).

The very success of the Conservative party during the past decade has wiped off the slate most of the big issues that we have debated in the House in recent years.

The cold war has become, in Sir Michael Howard's phrase, a chill peace. Socialism—and its more exuberant form of expression, communism—has been revealed as the political junk bonds of the 1980s.

As for the European Union, the subject of our debate today, at least for those who saw it as an inevitable march towards a single European state, it will never be "glad confident morning again".

But history has not ended here. If anything, it has become much more difficult and, I believe, much more hopeful. A new agenda must be set, a more matter-of-fact agenda perhaps; a new agenda with a rather low-on-rhetoric count than the one to which we have become accustomed. In my judgment, no man in Britain is better qualified to set out that agenda and take it forward than my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

I stand on these Benches as a volunteer, not as a conscript. Therefore, I hope that the House will believe me if, looking back on my career, I say, "Je ne regrette rien." Nor do I expect to have any regrets in the future when I give my right hon. Friend and his Administration the unswerving support that they deserve.

I want to make just two main points about the subject of our debate today: first, on the upcoming European Council itself and, then, on how the new European Union offers a prospect of a Tory agenda for Europe around which the Conservative party can unite.

I welcome the subsidiarity report that President Delors is putting forward to the European Council, to which my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary referred. At first glance, it would seem to open the prospect of repeal or

[Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones]

amendment of at least 25 per cent. of the current statute book, including, in addition to those mentioned by my right hon. Friend, the acquired rights directive.

The inclusion of article 3b in the Maastricht treaty, the follow up to it by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister during our presidency, and now this excellent report are tributes to my right hon. Friend's negotiating skills and as good an example as one can find of why the Maastricht treaty is a substantial improvement on the Single European Act.

The action plan for Home Office Ministers on interior justice matters is also extremely welcome. I shall return to that later in my remarks, but suffice it to say that our commitment to law and order in the United Kingdom is not sufficient in itself. The report provides the Government with an opportunity to take the battle for law and order into the same international arena as that in which criminals themselves operate.

It is extremely encouraging that the ECOFIN report on broad economic policy guidelines does not set out unreasonable country-specific targets for interest rates, unemployment levels and so on, but rather concentrates in a non-binding way on setting out prudent policies that seek to reduce deficits and to nudge our respective economies towards convergence.

The so-called growth paper, to which the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) referred, is clearly an attempt at a Commission bounce, and I am delighted that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor and his German colleague, supported by most other Finance Ministers, have every intention of sitting on it firmly.

There must be no question of the Commission's being authorised to borrow in the markets and then lend on to finance the sort of infrastructure projects to which the right hon. Gentleman referred. Such off-budget expenditure would drive a horse and carriage through the financial perspectives agreed at Edinburgh.

The common positions agreed on South Africa and on the humanitarian aid to Bosnia are good news. I very much hope that Britain will be in the lead in pushing ahead and it will not be too long before we are able to agree common positions on the middle east process and on the so-called Balladur principle. I shall return to why I believe that the common foreign and security policy gives added value to Britain's foreign policy efforts. I hope that the House will forgive me for taking advantage of this glass of water as I am becoming ill with 'flu. It appears that the upcoming Council is one in which the agenda is increasingly sensible and pragmatic and where Britain finds herself either in the pack or leading it.

I turn to my second and more general point about Britain's future role in the new European Union. The European Community was founded by men who saw that the greatest post-war challenge was to bring about reconciliation and prosperity to the nations that were ravaged by war. They saw a united, single European state —what we call federalism—as the goal.

Britain, a late entrant, although ravaged by that war, was not humiliated by it and, therefore, we have no ghosts to bury. We have never looked to the Community as a guarantor of our liberties—we look to the House and our own constitutional history for that. That is why the whole thrust of the finalité politique is one which few of us in Britain have been able to embrace with enthusiasm. Without the idealism of Schumann, Monnet, and, if I may say so, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), the European Community would not have succeeded as I believe it has now done in burying those ghosts. I mean no disrespect when I say that the period that future historians will no doubt describe as "the European Community—the early years" is drawing to a close. The dogs bark and the caravan moves on.

The Maastricht treaty and the events that followed marked that turning point. The challenge—quite as great as the one that faced Schumann and Monnet—is to bring the wider European family together after the ravages of communism and to find the instruments for working together so that the wider European Union may be a bastion for democracy and an influence for good in the world. Maastricht gives us the tools to do just that.

I shall outline in shorthand a Tory agenda for Europe —based on the Maastricht treaty—which can unite us all on the Conservative Benches and unite the growing number who think as we do in our sister parties in Europe. Our first priority must be to make intergovernmentalism work. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has rightly placed law and order high on our national agenda, but the fight against crime, drug trafficking, fraud and illegal immigration is a trans-frontier fight and we must carry that banner on a Europewide basis with exactly the same enthusiasm and commitment with which we have carried it here.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): On that point, is the right hon. Member satisfied that the arrangement into which the police forces and, above all, the security services are entering on an intergovernmental level will guarantee the protection of civil rights for all people inside the European boundaries?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Lady for asking that question, as it leads me directly to my next point. I stress to the House that intergovernmentalism, jargon for the co-operation between member states, outside the mechanisms of what we call the Community proper and not under any jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice —any change in the law would be made in this House—is a relatively new departure. If we do not make it work and show results, the federalists will be back, eager to move the whole pillar into the single structure. I shall comment later on how the House should scrutinise that. That is a top priority for Britain and especially for Conservative Members.

The common foreign and security policy is not an entirely new concept. Like so much else, we owe it to my noble Friend Lady Thatcher and to the Single European Act. The common foreign and security policy simply takes what was called European political co-operation a stage further. Of course we must retain, and do retain, the ability to act alone, but we should not lose sight of the fact that acting together—as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister did with such effect on the safe havens policy in northern Iraq—we can achieve an added value for our own foreign policy.

The European defence dimension is contained, outside the Union, but in the Western European Union. The WEU's relationship with NATO and with the European Union involves a good deal of theology, with which I shall not burden the House. Britain's policy is straightforward. NATO is, and must remain, the cornerstone of our defence. At the same time, we must work hard with our European allies to ensure that the WEU becomes more and more capable of reaching those parts that NATO cannot or may not wish to reach, but we must not allow well-meaning Euro-enthusiasm to blind us to the fact that NATO, and NATO alone, has the command structures, the logistical communications and lift capacity to defend the values in which we believe.

All that has relevance to current negotiations on enlargement. No one has been stauncher than Britain in advocating the admission of those EFTA countries that wish to join the Union or in defending their right as neutrals to join. As they face up to the need to adjust their neutrality to the changed world, we must make it clear to them—and discuss it with our allies, the United States—that joining the WEU is not a soft option and a sort of Euro-friendly defence package. A WEU agreement to defend Finland or Austria means nothing. Defence is an area where one jolly well should mean what one says.

I shall comment on the new priorities in the classical pillar of the Union—the Common Market itself—the first being parliamentary democracy. The treaty contains a declaration on the involvement of national Parliaments. The House needs to continue to improve the working of the excellent new Committees that scrutinise EC legislation.

We also need—the point to which the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) referred in her helpful intervention—to find a proper way, especially in home affairs and interior judicial matters, of scrutinising the intergovernmental work and to seek ways in which national Parliaments can work together in partnership with the European Parliament in the scrutiny of classical EC legislation once it has left the House. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House—in consultation with others, because it is a non-party and general House of Commons matter—will take a lead and encourage other national Parliaments to join us.

In taking forward the enlargement negotiations, we must seek to ensure that there is no dilution in qualified majority voting, especially the way in which the blocking minority is now put together. I regard that as a matter of crucial importance. I certainly do not want to see a Union dominated by the larger member states. The present weighting is already favourable to the smaller nations. The EU is in a state of permanent negotiation. I believe that Lord Monckton said that if one wants successful negotiation, one must ensure that the lions get the lions' share.

As President Delors said on the subject of subsidiarity and the role of the Commission, the presumption from now on is that competences lie with member states, unless they are specifically transferred to the Union. Our task, as I said earlier—this is why the report of the Council is so encouraging—is to make that a reality. If we do, much of the suspicion that has rightly built up around the Commission in this country in recent years will disappear.

If the Commission takes heed of the new post-Maastricht mood, stops trying to be a 13th member state and gets on with the task of acting in the areas in which its competence is clear, using its advantage in not being a member state to broke deals and break down member states' vested interests, it will find that it has a strong ally and supporter in Britain.

The European Council—the organisation to which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is travelling this evening—has always seemed to me the most British institution in the Community. It is intergovernmental; it stands above the whole Union; it has no set procedures, other than those of custom and practice; and, above all, its writ runs in every corner of the Community. It can make anything happen and, importantly, it can stop anything happening. Heads of Government and Foreign Ministers meet on their own—no officials attend. I hope that I will not offend the House if I say that it is rather like the House of Commons—idiosyncratic but supreme. British Prime Ministers—Lady Thatcher and my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon—have tended to do extremely well at European Council meetings. They are well briefed, hardened by battle in the House, and take a lot of tricks.

The Council should meet more often and give more guidance to the institutions of the Union. If the Prime Minister can meet his Cabinet in the United Kingdom once a week, surely he can find a more regular slot to meet his European counterparts in the Community.

I am conscious that other hon. Members want to speak, so those are just a few of the areas where there is a real Tory agenda under the new European Union. The time has come when we must stop arguing about whether we like the Union. That is like arguing about whether we like Whitehall. It exists, and we must make it work as best we can in the interests of our people and our country.

I spoke at the outset about the old agenda. There, the instincts of Conservative Members were right. We were right on defence, on the model of society, and on Europe. We now face the challenges of setting and winning the new agenda. I am as happy as anyone else on the Conservative side of the House to wallow in a nice warm bath of my own prejudices. I am happy to return to basics, because the basic instincts of the Conservative party are right.

But the new agenda that we must create is about more than giving little homilies to single mums about family values. It needs muscular thinking and involves hard decisions. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and his Government have the vision and courage to set that new agenda and make those choices. If my right hon. Friends have the wit and nerve to follow them, we shall win that new agenda, just as we won the old one.

6.3 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The big issue in Europe today is unemployment. The European summit that meets tomorrow will undoubtedly have unemployment at the top of its agenda.

I do not apologise for not following immediately the remarks just made by the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), who covered a considerable range of topics but did not mention the economy.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I am sorry to intervene on my right hon. Friend so early in his speech, but, given that the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) has a close association with Spain and that unemployment there is now some 22 per cent., I should have thought that he would at least have made a passing reference to unemployment.

Mr. Shore: I fully understand my hon. Friend's point and I shall discuss the extent of unemployment throughout the European Community.

[Mr. Shore]

I shall not be tempted to cover the whole range of matters before us. Indeed, I must protest strongly, because I have never taken part in a more absurd debate than one that is triggered by a pile of documents which few of us have the strength to carry into the Chamber. I address my remarks to the business managers of this place. If the House of Commons is to be taken seriously, it is wrong to allow a debate on such a massive scatter of subjects. Not only must we discuss the European Community's budget, which is always a subject that requires intense scrutiny; not only must we discuss two of the six monthly reports of events in the European Community; not only must we discuss an immense report on fraud in the Community, which certainly deserves scrutiny; but, on top of that, we have significant papers that are going to the summit meeting that begins tomorrow and should be the major focus of our debate. It is wrong for the business managers to have planted on us such an immense mass of business that it unfocuses the debate and is difficult to make sense of in the end.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I intervene only in response to the intervention by the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes). It may help the hon. Gentleman to know that unemployment in Spain is not 22 per cent. but substantially more. It will not have escaped his notice that, for 10 years, Spain has had a socialist Government who follow slavishly the social policies that he and other members of the European Community advocate.

Mr. Shore: My only comment is that the Spaniards have been good Europeans. They are faithfully following the dictates of economic and monetary union and convergence, and are suffering and paying the price as a result.

Unemployment is the proper focus of this debate. The picture is bleak. According to the latest edition of Euro-Stat, September 1993, the Community now has more than 17 million unemployed, which is 10·6 per cent. of the work force. In this country, the figure in September was 10·3 per cent., which is a little below the average. On the same date, the figure was 11 per cent. for France; 11·2 per cent. for Italy; and approaching 22 per cent. for Spain. Only in West Germany was the percentage rate of unemployment in single figures.

Worse, there is every reason to believe that unemployment will increase substantially in 1994, and probably also in 1995. The general consensus is that it is likely to rise to 20 million on existing policies in the next two years. I think that we know why. In the Community as a whole this year, the growth in gross domestic product was minus 0·4 per cent. In 1994, it will not be more than about 1·8 per cent. If we look further into the figures we see that, for each of the past four years, GDP growth in the Community has been well below the productive potential of GDP in the Community countries, which is roughly 2·7 to 3 per cent. That is well below the level at which unemployment is stable, so we shall inevitably see a great rise in the number of unemployed.

This point is worth emphasising because it may help to dispel at least two illusions. The first illusion is long lasting but, good heavens, I do not know why it has lasted so long. It is that the European Community is a great area of economic growth. Many people thought so in the 1960s and late 1950s. It has hardly been so since and certainly is not today. It has a far more worrying record of high unemployment and slow growth than Japan or the United States, our two major competing areas in the world economy.

It is also worth pointing out that, although we in Britain are rightly critical of the Government's performance on growth and unemployment, we sometimes go around as though we had an inferiority complex and appear to believe that everything would be better if only we could plunge ever deeper into the European Community. The figures do not support that argument. British rates of unemployment and growth are very close to those of the Community or even slightly better at the moment, largely because we are at a different stage of the cycle. If we are serious, the question that must be discussed here and at the European summit is what is to be done about unemployment.

In this mound of documents, three relate directly to unemployment, and I presume that will come before the Heads of Government at their meeting. The first document is the Government's Green Paper which displays its obsession with labour market flexibility and labour costs as though they were the crucial elements in maintaining competitiveness. Although the Green Paper was published in July this year, its approach and content will undoubtedly be echoed by the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer at tomorrow's summit.

The second relevant document is that containing the Commission's economic policy guidelines for stage 2 of economic and monetary union under the Maastricht treaty, in particular the fulfilment under article 103(2) of the Maastricht treaty of its obligation to draw up such guidelines. That is the first important step towards imposing a common economic and monetary policy on member states.

The third document is the White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment, which became available in the Table Office only late yesterday evening. It appears to be an up-dated and fuller version of papers that have previously been before meetings of ECOFIN and other groups. It carries President Delors' peculiar personal stamp and authority and gives his analysis of the causes of unemployment and a broad outline of his thinking on how it can be combated.

I can deal with the first document quickly because it is merely a comment on the various drafts of the Community's White Paper or White Book. It is interesting because it reveals the extent to which Government thinking on competitiveness is dominated by a factor which, although important, is only one of many that affect competitiveness and productivity—namely, labour costs, whether direct wage costs or indirect social service costs. No one in his right mind would deny the importance of labour costs as an element of competitiveness, but I hope that we are far too knowledgeable to accept that those costs are or should be allowed to dominate our thinking.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) gave some excellent examples of real costs per unit of output which need studying if we are to be sensible in our approach to these matters. It is true that many industries, and especially services, do not enter international trade at all and do not therefore have any direct impact on international competitiveness. Of course, labour costs affect competitiveness, but surely we cannot help but entertain the part played by managerial skills, technology, product innovation, marketing and the various other elements that we know jolly well are crucial to competitiveness.

Dr. John Cunningham: My right hon. Friend makes a very important point. The chemical industry, with which I have had a long association, provides our biggest crude trade surplus of about £3 billion a year. For the chemical industry, it is the cost of raw materials and energy, rather than of labour, which imposes the biggest burden. The present Government more than any other have continued to increase the costs of energy to the chemical industry.

Mr. Shore: My right hon. Friend cites just one case but I can cite another which is perhaps even more impressive. The pharmaceutical industry employs highly skilled and highly paid people, but its labour costs are miniscule compared with the product of its expensive research and the vast markets that it has gained as a result.

An additional point, which has not yet been mentioned, is that costs are imposed on industry and firms by macro-economic policies. No one can deny that if industry is saddled with high interest rates, or if corporate enterprises are saddled with particularly high direct taxation, they will be at a competitive disadvantage.

Anyone who ignores a crucial third issue—the exchange rate—is being very unwise. Good heavens, it would be almost as foolish to be obsessed with labour costs, as some Conservative Members are, as it would be to say that one can commit oneself to a full range of labour costs and improve social services and at the same time commit oneself to a fixed exchange rate. That is one set of circumstances in which additional and indirect social or wages costs will lead to a lack of competitiveness and the loss of jobs. Nothing could be more foolish than to advocate measures such as the social chapter and at the same time commit oneself to a fixed exchange rate, let alone a single currency—so much for a relatively minor point in our discussion of unemployment.

In any discussion of the Commission's approach as set out in its two papers, we are faced with two entirely contradictory policies. The first paper deals with the economic and monetary guidelines that the Community is to pursue under the Maastricht treaty. It is clearly deflationary, and it will be put before the summit this weekend. The second paper is President Delors' White Paper or White Book and suggests the opposite—stimulating the European economy.

The two documents suggest that we are dealing with a serious case of schizophrenia. The deflationary provisions of the Maastricht treaty, especially those for EMU, were framed in 1992 by a committee of central bankers under the chairmanship of a Mr. Delors. The proposals include a massive cut in public expenditure throughout the Community, which it says will be necessary to eliminate the so-called excess borrowing requirement and which will reduce public sector borrowing to no more than 3 per cent. of gross domestic product. A further aim of that document is the creation of a European central bank whose prime purpose will be to achieve price stability and the elimination of inflation.

The same Mr. Delors now has proposals for increasing public expenditure, provided only that it is at the Community level and embraces particular projects such as information highways, new technologies and the trans-European networks favoured by Mr. Delors and the Commission. The extraordinary thing is that Mr. Delors, who is now committed to his White Book proposals to stimulate job creation, is still insisting on the meticulous observance of the EMU provisions in the Maastricht treaty.

The Commission's recommendations in the second of those documents on the broad guidelines of economic policy say that the Commission

> "reaffirms its commitment to the EMU process and timetable as agreed in the Treaty on European Union. To this end, it will intensify its efforts at achieving economic convergence."

To the same end, it will

> "start the process of deficit reduction"

in the member states. It will mean

> "reducing budget deficits to the reference value indicated in the Treaty on European Union (3 per cent. of GDP). The Community could achieve this goal by 1996-97."

It is there in the very document before us and before the Heads of Government at the summit this weekend.

I notice, and so should those of my hon. Friends who have taken a more sanguine view of the Maastricht treaty, that there is no reference in that reiterated commitment to EMU stage 2 to the need for counter-recessionary policy in the middle of a vast slump. The old policy has been re-stated—the remorseless drive to a deflationary Europe. As for price stability, the key, the arch of the temple, is that

> "a rate of inflation of no more than 2 to 3 per cent. should be reached for the Community average by 1996."

Wages must not be allowed to grow. That is an interesting one—very near a statutory incomes policy, but not quite. Wages must not be allowed to grow and exchange rate stability must be maintained.

Virtually every country in the European Community —not least our own—has what the Community describes as an excess deficit or borrowing requirement. The effects now of a cross-European contraction of public expenditure and public borrowing are bound to lead to still greater unemployment. Indeed, in the case of four countries, Spain, Greece, Portugal and Ireland, the beneficiaries of the so-called cohesion fund which was set up under the Maastricht treaty, their access to that fund is now to be made conditional upon their performance in convergence under stage 2 of economic and monetary union.

Nowhere in the Commission's—President Delors'— White Paper on employment are the contradictions confronted between what he is urging now and what he is at the same time urging under stage 2 of economic and monetary union. It is a document that is more concerned with analysis, as we have heard, than with recommendations for action. It calls—I note that with satisfaction, in a sense—for the creation of 15 million new jobs by the year 2000. Excellent. Who can possibly disagree with that?

The only clear proposal that emerges, however, is that the Commission should be allowed to borrow about £20 billion and spend it during the next four years on the Commission's chosen projects. I am not quite sure about the figures—they seem to differ according to which paper one reads—but £20 billion is an impressive figure, although when one compares it to the total GDP of the European Community it is tiny indeed. It would have only a cosmetic, as opposed to a real, effect on the mass unemployment problem of the nations of the European Community. Moreover, if the Community countries obey the guidelines of the Maastricht treaty they can subscribe to the Commission's £20 billion loan only by further cutting their own public sector borrowing requirement.

Trans-European networks may be attractive but, with the doubtful exception of the channel tunnel rail link, there

[Mr. Shore]

are more important priorities for the United Kingdom. I say that the link is "doubtful" because we know that vast planning problems have yet to be settled before the route can be finalised. We now know that there is an incompatibility between the British electrified lines and the French ones. It is almost a joke, is it not, that French trains rushing through the channel tunnel will not be able to proceed, as we are now informed, on our own southern lines? They will have to be drawn, perhaps, by diesel traction engines, but anyway that is hardly something to get too excited about, as some of my right hon. and hon. Friends may be tempted to do. I would think that, from our point of view, if any money were available to be spent on infrastructure it could best go first to the west coast main line and to the refurbishment of the London underground system, which is so near to collapse.

Amendment (a) to the Prime Minister's motion, in the name of my right hon. and hon. Friends and myself, makes clear our belief that the deflationary criteria that are enshrined in the convergence provisions for economic and monetary union in the Maastricht treaty must now be abandoned as the only way of getting back on to the high road to expansion and creation of new jobs.

Our policy for Britain is to pursue a strategy to ensure —please mark these words—

> "that all instruments of macro-economic management, whether it concerns interest rates, the exchange rate or the levels of borrowing, will be geared to sustain growth and rising employment".

I fully subscribe to those excellent words, which directly defy the provisions of the Maastricht treaty on the surrender of control by nation states of their interest rate and exchange rate policies, and which further directly repudiate the Maastricht treaty's propositions for reducing the so-called excess deficit to a mere 3 per cent. of GDP.

Those words are of course those used by my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition at the TUC conference in September, 12 weeks ago, and reaffirmed in his speech to the Labour party conference in October, two months ago. I am delighted that he and I are now as one in our objections to the central doctrines of the Maastricht treaty.

I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), the shadow Chancellor —I am sorry that he is not here—is to wind up the debate. I hope—I am sure that the House will wish me well in that hope—that he will give a resounding endorsement to what my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition said to the TUC conference and to the Labour party conference.

Beyond that, and the use of those instruments of macroeconomic policy ourselves, I strongly recommend and urge that the other countries of Europe break with the restrictions of the Maastricht treaty and pursue sensible reflationary policies themselves.

6.26 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): It is a shame that we shall not be able to vote on amendment (c). It would have been helpful to the House and to the public in general if we could have simply recorded the fact that the debate is pointless, worthless and useless, and can have no influence on determining developments in the wide range of issues that are mentioned in the huge pile of documents. It is terribly important that people should realise that, in the House and outside.

I ask hon. Members, look at that huge pile of documents, dealing with vast expenditure! There is nothing that we can do and, no matter how we vote about anything, it is simply a waste of time. It might help the unemployed and those people who are suffering if we were to get across the simple message that no matter how they vote, no matter what they do, the power has gone. The second message that we have to get across—although it is sad to say so, when we have the always most courteous Foreign Secretary opening the debate—is that it is important that we start telling people the truth.

I heard, and all of us heard—and I am sure that he meant it—the Foreign Secretary say that we now have control of the funds; we are not going to have overspending; we cannot go across the budget. In Edinburgh, however—I have the letter here from the Agriculture Minister—even though there was a budget laid down for spending on agriculture which one could not exceed by a penny because the Foreign Secretary and civil servants would prevent us, in practice they agreed to exceed it by an extra £1 billion on the basis that that was a special reserve fund.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): Does my hon. Friend agree that half the problem with the CAP is that, although it is aimed at farmers, to help to sustain their income—that may be a laudable aim—60 per cent. of the money goes to the administration and only 40 per cent. reaches the farmers?

Sir Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend is so right. The CAP is totally wasteful and damaging to almost every interest. I find in my constituency, and I am sure that Treasury Ministers find in theirs, that poor people have to pay more and more for their water rates because vast sums are being spent on huge machines for taking out of the water the nitrates, pesticides, and all the other things that are thrown into the ground in order to produce more and more food. We have to spend a fortune on destroying or dumping those substances.

I was at Hanningfield recently, and I wish you had been there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to see how the Essex water company—now privatised and French-owned—is spending millions of pounds on a new procedure for taking out pesticides. I asked, "Wouldn't it be better if we didn't have all those nasty nitrates and things in the ground in the first place?" I was told, "Of course." And it is the water rate payer who foots the bill.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) told people the facts of life, and he will accept that there is little point in saying to the voters. "Those nasty Tories are putting up your water rates; Labour will not do that," when we know what is really going on. Poor people are suffering and their burdens are increasing.

Secondly, it is sad to hear all the assurances being given to try to pacify us. For example, our courteous Foreign Secretary—with sincerity, doubtless—talked about all the things that were going wrong, with people breaking the rules, and told us that the Commission would now impose fines. I have been looking at the figures, and they are frightening. The Court of Auditors report is one of the big documents that I mentioned earlier, and it shows that, although millions of pounds have been levied in fines, only 10 per cent. of them have been collected. There is a great new mechanism to sort everything out, supported with enthusiasm by the Liberal Democrats and designed, once again, by those clever Foreign Office civil servants to ensure that people do not do nasty things. Yet the fines are still to be paid; only 10 per cent. have been paid over many years.

Thirdly, we must watch carefully what is happening on the continent today. It is frightening, and I hope that the Economic Secretary to the Treasury will answer one simple question. I have been horrified to see that the other European countries have been borrowing vaster and vaster sums of money. All of us, even those who do not have degrees in economics, know that that simply cannot go on, because there is a limited amount of money to lend—unless we start printing.

The whole message of Maastricht and of the EC is that one should not print money. Even the Leader of the House would stop us if we tried to print money in this country. Continental countries are borrowing huge sums of money this year and next. Germany is borrowing £57 billion, and we are told that France is borrowing £30 billion—although we know that that sum has now increased. Italy is borrowing £70 billion; and Belgium is the worst of all. Where will the money come from?

The Treasury in Britain is in good condition, because the currency is strong, so we are ahead of schedule. Unfortunately, the European countries will not be able to do that. I understand that some money can be borrowed domestically. In Britain about £22 billion can be obtained from the institutions. But much of the money has to come from other sources. Where will it come from?

I have been told by my friends who advise the insurance and banking firms of which I am a director that, basically, it is the Arabs and the Japanese who provide the cash. But the poor old Arabs are having a difficult time these days, because the price of oil has dropped like a stone, so they do not have so much to lend. The Japanese, too, have plenty of problems of their own, and are holding on to their money. I hope that the Minister will comment on that, because I fear that early next year, because so much money is being borrowed and there is a limited amount of money available for loan, there will be a sharp rise in interest rates on the continent. I realise that that may not happen—although I believe that all the conditions are in place—but if it does, what the blazes will we do about it?

There are now 17 million unemployed people on the continent. That is a horrendous figure. We can see the instability in Europe; it is shown by what has happened in Germany. We have seen the uncertainty and the attacks on minority groups there. In Italy—a delightful country—people voted for fascism or communism in the local government elections, not because they especially like those things but as a way of saying, "Please let us have a strong Government." With an unstable situation, and unemployment high and rising, if there is a sharp rise in interest rates, what on earth will we do about it? I fear that there is a horrible danger.

Our Ministers at the Treasury and the Foreign Office, or at least most of them—now that there has been one resignation things are much better—are decent, respectable, sincere people. But it worries me sick that we are deluding ourselves about what is happening. I have been worried about what happens to poor people and the unemployed in the EC ever since I came to the House. I have probably been considered a silly minority person, putting forward a minority view, but it makes me sick to see people made unemployed unnecessarily because of the stupid exchange rate mechanism and all that came with it.

The facts are there and we all know what they are. It makes me angry to see poor people suffering because they have not got the money to pay their electricity bills or even to buy a light bulb when I know that, even according to the Foreign Secretary, all those people are paying an extra £28 a week for the stupid CAP. Think what a boost it would be to poor people in Britain if we could say, "You can have £28 extra a week—and an extra £3 a week for the cost of membership of the EC." I have been talking about such things for a long time.

I know that Britain is now more popular in the EC. That nice chap Boris Johnson, who writes for *The Daily Telegraph*, says that Britain is more accepted because the Chancellor of the Exchequer has been

> "disclosing his personal support for the goal of a single Euro-currency."

That may make him more popular in Brussels, but whether it does or not, please let us face up to the possibility that something nasty may happen. We must ask ourselves what we shall do if it does.

I am afraid that we British are comforting ourselves by saying that we are the best in Europe, but we all know that we are doing well economically not because we have a brilliant Government or a brilliant Opposition, but because we had the boost of getting out of the ERM. That made our currency and our interest rates drop like stones. It is rather like having an Australian uncle who sends one £1,000 to help with one's financial hardship—it makes one feel good for a while. But that is not happening on the continent. It does not help us or the people there if we take the attitude, "We are the best in Europe and we are doing terribly well."

Will the Minister say whether he thinks that I am right in any way to say that there may be a terrible problem with a sharp rise in interest rates on the continent next year? Will he tell me what we can do about that if it happens?

It is too late for Parliament to control the legislation. Maastricht has been passed, so to that extent our power is useless, but we must think, "What about the people?" What about the poor and the unemployed of Europe, who are now in a horrendous position? What shall we in Britain do if by chance things continue to get worse, and we have the social upheavals and misery that we have seen in Europe?

Conservatives must face the facts. We cannot go on kidding ourselves about the European People's party, and saying that we are not linked with it, and have nothing to do with it. We may say that although we all sit together and work together, we do not agree on anything, but everyone knows the score. There was a meeting in Athens in 1992. The Conservative Members of the European Parliament and the members of the European People's party were there, and a great document was drawn up to say that the EC should be given powers of taxation.

We should not bother about all the talk about federalism, because a federal Europe would be better than what we have now. I do not understand why Ministers keep saying that they will fight to the death to avoid a federal Europe. If we had a federal Europe, at least some things would belong to us. However, at some stage the Conservative party will have a real problem in deciding how to carry on with our stable mates——

Mr. Cash: Would my hon. Friend care to know that the congress of that great European People's party is meeting this afternoon? Furthermore, it appears that it may publish its manifesto tomorrow. It was not so long ago that Mr. Herman, the rapporteur of the Christian Democrats, published the European Parliament's working document on a new constitution which said that if we did not go along with it all we would be expelled. Does my hon. Friend not think that that is becoming an increasingly reasonable proposition, from some people's point of view?

Sir Teddy Taylor: All I am saying is that the Government and my hon. Friends—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) does not agree. But he is a good guy. *[Laughter.]* I mean that sincerely; I am not trying to be funny.

It is crucial to stop pretending that people are stupid. We cannot go into the European elections and treat people as stupid by saying that we do not really have anything to do with the European People's party; the names of the candidates simply happen to be in the same box. It will not wash. Similarly, we should not think that people are stupid when we talk about the EC. They know what is happening to unemployment on the continent. They are not daft. They know what is happening to prices which they must pay unnecessarily. They are not stupid. They can see the damage that is being inflicted by the mad EC system of everything being based on artificial prices and more money being spent.

I have been a Member for a long time. The same thing happens every time we debate a treaty. Ministers say, "Do not worry—we will get tough with the nasty Euro-guys. We will kick Mr. Delors down the stairs. Everything will be sorted out." Sadly, it is continuing—more money, more power, more waste, more extravagance, less conservatism, less control for the people and more control for the bureaucrats.

This is a pointless, useless debate and all we can do is to express our views. The crucial point is that we must appreciate that something nasty will happen early next year. If we do not wake up to it, and if we do not treat people as adults and stop pretending that they are stupid, we will have a horrible democratic mess.

6.40 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Although I do not share the train of thought of the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) in these matters, I certainly respect his consistency and tenacity on the issue. I shall begin by congratulating him on making a pointed, useful contribution in what he described as a "pointless, useless debate". I say that although I do not necessarily agree with his prescriptions or preferences for what should happen.

I certainly share to a degree his analysis of what has happened in terms of what both he and I agreed during debate on the Maastricht treaty. Although we voted different ways on the legislation, we agreed that there should have been a referendum so that many of the issues could have been thrashed out in public halls up and down the country to a much greater extent than ever took place. Looking at what has happened subsequently, we also agree that more openness would have been appropriate.

I also agreed with the hon. Gentleman's description of the Foreign Secretary as being a man of great courtesy. That courtesy was on display again, but the Foreign Secretary was a bit disingenuous when he switched his attentions to both Labour Members and Liberal Democrats early in his speech. I think that he realised that he was digging himself a hole because he abandoned that strategy and returned to his prepared text.

For the record, the Foreign Secretary was, in the time honoured phrase, quoting my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) "entirely out of context". I have the text in front of me. The Foreign Secretary was quoting my right hon. Friend not simply out of context but in complete contradiction to his conclusion that there was an inescapable need for compromises and give and take at the European level. That is what any sensible pro-European people who believe we should remain within the institution of Europe would acknowledge.

The hon. Member for Southend, East put his finger on the central difficulty with his honest appraisal of the state of opinion in his party. The central difficulty for the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor is that they are both known to be enthusiastic pro-Europeans and they know that a substantial section of their parliamentary party does not share their view. They are constantly appealing to two audiences. They are trying to be pro-European and constructive, as they want to be, and at the same time they are trying to sound sufficiently Euro-sceptical and negative so as to placate and keep some semblance of unity on their side.

We are not daft. The hon. Member for Southend, East is right. We should treat the British like sensible adults and say that there can be differences within parties as well as across parties on the European issue, rather than try to pretend that the circle can for ever be squared. Of course, the Foreign Secretary must try to square the circle because he finished the previous Session with a great speech in which he said that we should draw three lines under his party's disunity. He was referring to Tory Members. We know that the circle will not be squared. The Minister and the Government know that that will not happen and there will always be a difference of opinion. It will be a difficulty for the governing party, not least in the run up to the European elections next year.

If I had to use a phrase to sum up the Foreign Secretary's demeanour today, it would be that in politics as in so many other things, "one can choose one's friends but one cannot choose one's family". I think that that is how he feels when he looks over his shoulder and sees what he must deal with as far as European politics and his party are concerned.

Maastricht was not the end of the matter. The Economic Secretary was the personification of that only last week when he steered the relevant orders and instruments through the House. Maastricht is only another staging post along the way. Indeed, it is simply the beginning of further aspects of integration and European development. Last week we were talking about the European investment fund and the European Investment Bank. Given that we are in the festive period of the year, it may be best to say that with Maastricht we planted the tree but we will see decorations and baubles being added to it as time goes by. *[Interruption.]* Although I did not hear the comment from a sedentary position, I am happy to give way to the hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith).

Some of us argued for the social chapter. Last week, in the short debate on European matters, it was acknowledged that we will get the social chapter through the European institutions, even if we did not sign up for it, because it would be inconsistent for individuals in the European Community to be denied rights that they could get in the other 11 member states. In due course, much of the social chapter will come to Britain in a judicial way, which further reinforces the nonsense of what the game of mirrors over the past 12 months was all about.

At least we can take heart from the fact that more of a social and political dimension to Europe is developing. Last week, we heard about it with regard to the European investment fund. It was acknowledged that in due course the fund will be an instrument for regional intervention and will assist different regions in Europe. That is the way in which many of us would like to see Europe develop.

The intervention of the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), who is the Chairman of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, was interesting and significant. He spoke about progress on subsidiarity since the passage of the Maastricht treaty and the repatriation of certain rights to member states. I have not heard the word "repatriation" used in terms of constitutional rights since the Canadians repatriated their constitution from the United Kingdom. In passing, I must say that many hon. Members, especially the Liberal Democrats, can take great heart from what happened to the Conservative Government in the Canadian general election under a first-past-the-post political system. We congratulate our fellow party in Canada.

"Repatriation" is not the right word to use in this respect. The correct word is "federalism" which is the other side of the coin of subsidiarity. Subsidiarity is all about moving away from the supranational level at Brussels and giving the decision-making capability to member states and nation states such as Wales, Scotland and England and the regions of England. That is the way in which subsidiarity should develop.

We are not talking about repatriating rights that have disappeared to Brussels. It is only in so far as making federalism work in a sense which the rest of the continent understand—taking decisions close to communities and individuals that will be affected, rather than taking decisions centrally. In other words, subsidiarity does not stop when it crosses the English channel; it should diffuse throughout the United Kingdom as well.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman referred to what happened to the Conservatives in Canada. Does he acknowledge that the beneficiary of the defeat was Bloc Québécois? In terms of his advocacy of federalism, does he appreciate that the Canadian example is the best evidence of the breaking up of a federal system? Is he endorsing an argument against the federalism which he previously advocated?

Mr. Kennedy: Although I introduced the Canadian comparison, I do not want to go too far into it. Bloc Québécois represents less of a threat to the integrity of Canada than Parti Québécois did about 15 years ago when it also controlled provincial government. However, Bloc Québécois does not control provincial government at present and is unlikely to do so after the forthcoming elections.

What was more significant about the Canadian result—the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) should be more concerned about this—was not simply Bloc Québécois but the emergence of the new party towards the west of the country. That shows how a single party, which must fight geographically on more than one front, can be completely obliterated without too much of a collapse in its share of the vote under a first-past-the-post system. The Conservatives perhaps should be worried about that, not least one suspects in the context of next year's European elections with the Liberal Democrat, Labour and nationalist parties to worry about.

Madam Speaker: Order. This is a wide-ranging debate, but I am not aware that Canada is part of the EC.

Mr. Kennedy: Even under the welter of documents, I have not seen an accession application. I make the point to stress that there is a clear difference, not just within the House, but between the Government and other Governments in Europe as to what federalism means. It is important, as the debate rages during the coming months, for those of us who argue for federalism as a decentralising force away from the political centre to get across that case.

The second point is not one of constitutional theory, but one of direct practice as the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said earlier. The political leaders of the various countries and both sides of the House also were arguing during the debates on the Maastricht treaty about details which the electorates had difficulty in following. The arguments did not seem to be in touch with what the real priorities were.

There is no doubt that the burning political priority for the European institutions on a social level must be to tackle unemployment. It is quite clear that the President of the Commission has that firmly in his sights. The credibility of individual European leaders, as much as the credibility of the European Union, is at stake to the extent that unemployment can be effectively tackled.

Although I share the priority which the right hon. Gentleman gives to the matter, I do not share his profound scepticism about the ability of EC member states to tackle it in an effective way. It is significant that one of the more perceptive critiques of the Budget last week was that the Chancellor of the Exchequer clearly hopes to be in a position where he can still meet most of the convergence criteria of the Maastricht treaty in 1996 or thereabouts, despite the fact that he has been somewhat negative about what President Delors says in that respect. That may depend on whether we make all the assumptions about the Budget—there is a lot in the Budget—and if we give every "if" the benefit of the doubt.

If one looks at the graphs of various European countries, the one which is way out of step and which is rising inexorably is that which relates to unemployment, and that must be given emphasis. Equally, the Foreign Secretary said, so must trade and not least GATT. I would enter a specific plea here. The subject has been mentioned in the debate in relation to the aircraft industry, and equally I mention it in relation to the oil sector. We want free trade internationally, but we want the single market to operate fairly without hidden subsidies or unfair competition within Europe. The Economic Secretary will be aware of the continuing anxiety within the United Kingdom about aspects of alleged—I can put it no stronger—unfair competition from other member states. The Commission must be rigorous in its efforts to police such matters. I hope that the British Government will take that message to the Council discussions this weekend.

[Mr. Kennedy]

Mentioned in the welter of documentation is the issue of enlargement and of the forthcoming accessions. There is still suspicion that part of the Government's thinking, and the reason for the emphasis that they put on widening the Community during the British presidency and beyond, is that that is a way of slowing down the pace of integration and the development of the Community.

The argument must be in contrast to what Baroness Thatcher would argue. She points at the former Yugoslavia and says, "There you are—Europe cannot work. Look at the tragedy." Surely the former Yugoslavia is proof that Europe must work in a more integrated way to prevent that kind of absolute tragedy taking place within Europe's sphere of influence and its perimeter of political activity. That means enlarging the Community and taking on more countries in as realistic a time scale as is possible, while allowing for the huge economic dislocation which some countries are experiencing in the transfer from former Communist dictatorships to what they now enjoy.

I hope that we will see during the coming period the building of a Europe which is not just about politicians or Parliaments, which have tended to be the dominant influences so far, but more about the peoples of Europe. That means a more decentralised and more open Europe. It looks for some of the written guarantees for individual citizens, which are absent from this country, to be achieved and applied from a European level downwards.

6.56 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) rightly said that this is a difficult debate because it compresses so many subjects. In fact, we are dealing with the whole question of our interests within the EC and the European Union because virtually every subject in the British political debate has a European dimension. We do in a sense rather confine the subject to an occasional debate, when we should broaden all our discussions to look at the European dimension. In that way, the House could look closely at what is happening, rather than trying to compartmentalise the EC and the European Union. That is simply no longer realistic.

Mr. Jenkin: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Taylor: I am flattered that I have provoked an intervention already.

Mr. Jenkin: I challenge my hon. Friend to try to raise Europe in every debate about every subject. He would quickly find that he incurs the disinterest of a great number of his colleagues. Is not that part of the problem with the debate?

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend has his own views. However, if he reflects carefully and quietly later this evening, he will be quite embarrassed by that intervention. The point I made was that, in the interests of our constituents, there are many aspects which cannot be simply resolved by debates which are confined to narrow British politics. We cannot resolve our economic or environmental problems if we look only at the United Kingdom. I will not take up the time of the House. I am sure that my hon. Friend now better understands the point that I was making.

I welcome the Commission's report, and it is an extremely timely move. Perhaps it would have been more timely had it come out a week earlier, which would have given the House more time in which to read it. That does not change the fact that the Commission is doing the job that it was asked to do by the European Council Heads of State in the summer. It has tried to do a job that focuses on some of the real problems to which many colleagues have referred.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor). He and I may not always agree on some conclusions, but there is no doubt that he has been a great champion of the examination of the European Community.

In the Community White Paper, some of the great difficulties that face us are examined. I repeat that those problems cannot be solved by any one nation alone. We cannot solve the problem of unemployment if the way of creating jobs depends on exporting to other members of the Community, let alone the world. I will leave the GATT talks aside as they are up in the air at the moment and colleagues may want to refer to them.

If one looks at two of the charts which follow page 42 in the White Paper, one may see the size of the problem of rising unemployment. The charts show rising unemployment in Europe in relation to unemployment in the United States and in Japan, and also the problems that the European Community is having in creating jobs. During the past 10 years, more jobs have been created in the public sector in the EC than in the private sector. That compares worryingly with the rate of job creation in the United States and Japan in the private sector. The problem of the EC pricing itself out of jobs is also dealt with, and that is an issue which simply cannot be ignored.

That is clearly shown in the charts contained in the Government's presentation to the Commission regarding the growth, competitiveness and employment in the EC. The document was prepared and dated from 30 July, and some of its charts are extremely worrying. For example, the table showing the rise in unit labour costs in manufacturing for the period 1980-92 illustrates the Community's difficult problems in relation to our main competitor blocs, the United States and Japan. Those are warning statistics. The question is not whether Community institutions have caused the problems but how we can influence debate in the EC so that those institutions can help us to find some solutions. Too often in the House we appear to blame the Commission, as was apparent during the debates on the Maastricht treaty. We all know our institutional structures and are aware that the Commission should not alone be blamed, because it is answerable to the Council and can be questioned by the European Parliament.

First, we must determine the Commission's remit and, secondly, we must discover how effective our Conservative Government are in arguing their corner in the Community. In recent years, one of the Government's great victories was the internal market. There is no question but that many of the other countries found our concept of an internal market, with its unrestricted movement of capital, goods and services, very difficult. They were instinctively more protectionist, but, remarkably, we won the intellectual argument and the Commission carried it through. I pay tribute to the

Commission and to Jacques Delors, interestingly, for carrying through the process of the internal market in which, as good Conservatives, we strongly believe.

Until quite recently, the Government failed to understand some of the implications of the single market and to realise that we had to enter debate in some of the other areas as well. To an extent, we were confused by the nomenclature that was current in the Community about the social dimension and the social chapter. Labour Front-Bench spokesmen have also been confused about that. In that sense, it is not social, because employment, labour costs and structures are the real focus of many of the measures under that heading. For some months, we have been engaged in that debate and once again we are beginning to win the argument.

It was clear from his reply to my intervention that the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who speaks on foreign affairs for the Labour party, had not understood how the Community had changed in terms of Labour's arguments. I shall shortly come to the Commission paper. In my intervention, I quoted the German Federal Government whose submission is full of headings and items which clearly show the worries in Germany about the rise in non-wage costs and the lack of competitiveness of German industry vis-a-vis not only those countries closest to it, such as the Czech Republic where labour costs are between a sixth and a tenth of those in Germany, but with other countries including America where several German car manufacturers are now putting plants. That means a net export of jobs from the Community.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): In reply to the hon. Gentleman's intervention, my right hon. Friend drew his attention to the fact that the potential increase in employment costs about which the Germans complain has already come to pass in this country. The Government are increasing national insurance contributions and other charges next week, and the hon. Gentleman voted for that. Employment costs in this country are going up: the hon. Gentleman cannot have his cake and eat it. He said that he wanted to separate social costs and employment costs. The Government are putting up employment costs by more than any other European Government. The hon. Gentleman speaks about the social chapter or contract. He should remember that eight out of 12 countries in Europe have Conservative or Conservative coalition-led Governments.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman's intervention suffered from length, as did mine. In this country, the trend for statutory labour charges is downwards. Pages 166 and 167 of the Commission report contain tables, but, as the document is on the record, I need not read them out. The hon. Gentleman misses the point about Budget measures. There has been no increase in industry's labour costs because various Budget adjustments have compensated industry for movements in basic costs. National insurance contributions for employees may well go up, but that touches taxation policy.

I was referring, as were the German Government, to the non-wage costs to industry of employing labour. By way of a quote, I shall give another example of the way that other countries are looking, in the way that the Budget has done, at the social security burdens:

> "The social security mechanisms, especially retirement schemes must be adjusted to such trends in good times so as to avoid undue burdens on enterprises, the workforce and beneficiaries."

That could have been taken from last week's Budget, but it is taken from the German Federal Government's presentation to the Commission.

Those arguments are now being understood. Not long ago, it was believed that, somehow, international competition could be ignored and non-wage costs could be loaded on employment. That is no longer true, and that has certainly been realised by the French Government, although their process of change is slower than one might have anticipated since the centre right took over.

Those features are succinctly pulled together in a document entitled "Beating the Crisis: the Message in brief" issued by the European Round Table of Industrialists. That document was quoted earlier, and it states:

> "Labour costs are the single major cause of falling competitiveness and rising unemployment. Work is there, but not at these prices."

I urge hon. Members to read that document because it shows industrialists' concern about the social and economic effects of unemployment and proposes ways to bring about change.

It is significant that not only the German Government but our Government and others have come together to influence the Commission in its report. Of course, some items in the report cause concern, and we as Conservatives may feel less comfortable about them than Labour Members. However, the Commission is right to present its proposals about how Europe as a whole can get out of the terrible mess of unemployment of about 17 million to 20 million when there is unlikely to be a take-up of the unemployed as the Community begins to expand again, however slowly. That is simply because of changing work practices and technology. Therefore, we have to concentrate encouragement on wealth creation and smaller businesses.

If we had a longer debate we could evaluate many ideas. The industry charter presented by industrialists is extremely good for concentrating attention on what can enable industry in the EC to expand again and be competitive. We should concentrate closely, as does the Commission, on cost per unit of output. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has said, every measure advanced by the Commission should have a competitiveness audit. That would be reinforced by the business men's call for a competitiveness council.

All those topics coming together show that at last the debate is spreading across the Community to find grounds on which we can create jobs by creating wealth and, once again, industrial competitiveness. That is a welcome sign. My message to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister as he goes to the Council this weekend is, "Let us support collective action within the Community because it is important for our people to see the European Community as part of the solution of the problems that afflict us, and not solely as part of the cause."

If we can do that, we can reinspire people about the importance of the Community and about the way in which it can contribute to the well-being and protection of the interests of British people. It will also give people a much wider vision of how a strong economic Community can help those further to the east who are experiencing difficult days after their freedom from communism. We cannot do

[Mr. Taylor]

that if we are introverted; nor can we do it if we are uncompetitive, thus failing to create wealth and jobs in the Community itself.

7.9 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I will not follow the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor), because he was merely an apologist for the EC's failures. When I made up my mind to try to catch your eye in this debate, Madam Deputy Speaker, I collected the relevant documentation from the Vote Office. I was handed a stack of documents a foot high, and thought to myself that whatever other merits the EC might have, it is certainly good at paperwork. I cannot claim to have read all those documents from cover to cover, but I readily gleaned that the EC's principal issue and overriding factor is its terrible unemployment.

Unemployment in the EC is well over 17 million and hovering close to 20 million, and it seems that the bubble of expansion has well and truly burst. The introduction to the report, "Growth, Competitiveness and Employment in the European Community", published by the Department of Employment on 30 July and submitted to the EC, states:

> "There has been an upward trend in EC unemployment from cycle to cycle since the late 1960s and an increasing proportion of long-term unemployed people."

In 1991, long-term unemployment accounted for 45 per cent. of total unemployment and that upward trend is continuing. The EC's alarming figure of 45 per cent. compares with 18 per cent. for Japan and only 6 per cent. for the United States, and it points down the road of no hope for many unemployed—particularly youngsters, so many of whom have no stake in society. Is it any wonder that they turn to crime when they should be paying taxes and meeting their social obligations?

Yesterday's *Financial Times* reported that Mr. Delors is calling for infrastructure investment. The Commission's paper on growth, competitiveness and employment talks of creating 15 million new jobs by the year 2000. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), whose expertise I hold in the highest possible regard, says that that plan is wholly incompatible with the deflationary criteria enshrined in the Maastricht treaty, and I tend to go along with that argument.

The need for infrastructure investment goes without saying. In the years that I have lived in London, I have witnessed the steady deterioration of London Underground, exemplified by power failures and the general grubbiness of its facilities. Failure to invest in British Rail has brought the neglect of rolling stock, track and even safety. The same applies to other forms of public transport. Investment in years gone by would have helped to ease congestion on our overcrowded roads.

The finance to do that was available to the Government, who enjoyed vast revenues from North sea oil. No Government in the history of this country have ever received such largesse. They also enjoyed the receipts from the sale of public enterprises. A large part of that money should have been invested in our infrastructure instead of being given away in tax concessions to the better-off in our society.

Wales, which has long experience of unemployment, could certainly do with some of the infrastructure investment suggested by Mr. Delors. The construction industry could play a major part in reducing unemployment. Housing and all manner of public works are needed throughout the country. In recent years, the Welsh coal industry has been almost wiped out, bringing hardship to families and communities. Likewise, a decade ago there were thousands of redundancies in the Welsh steel industry—although we managed to retain the two main strip mills in south Wales, at Port Talbot and at Llanwern, which is the cornerstone of Newport's economy.

Fortunately, new industries and enterprises have been attracted to Wales, but many of the new jobs that they create go to women. I am not criticising women who work, for that is a matter of individual choice and circumstances. However, it cannot be denied that male unemployment far exceeds that of women. I was vividly reminded of that fact the other evening, when I was driven home by a friend after attending a function in my constituency. We passed a large biscuit factory and saw dozens of cars turning and revving up outside. My colleague explained that we were seeing men picking up their wives at the end of the shift. That experience was a sign of the times.

Wales still has a lean and efficient steel industry which can compete in world markets—provided that there is a level playing field. There is unease among steel workers at present because Germany, Spain and particularly Italy are failing fully to participate in the planned reduction of EC steel capacity and in the abolition of subsidies.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the anxiety felt by steel workers. He is, of course, deeply concerned about the perceived threat to south Wales, but is he aware that in my own area a superior works is now out of production because of unfair practices in Spain and Germany, supported by those countries' Administrations?

Mr. Hughes: It is a national problem, and I used the example of south Wales because I am, of course, familiar with it.

The latest cause for concern is an incident involving an Italian company, Arc-Sipra, which manufactures corrugated steel products used in road building and infrastructure projects. Mr. Keith Brookman, the general secretary of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, and the Welsh officer of that union, Mr. Brian Connelly, have been in touch with me alleging that that Italian company is applying to be placed on the Department of Transport's approved list of suppliers. I tabled a question to the Secretary of State for Transport about that issue a few days ago and all I have received today is a holding answer.

That firm is 50 per cent. owned by the Italian state steel company, Ilva and the other 50 per cent. is owned by a private company called Abate. The Italian state steel company has current debts approaching £8 billion which the Italian Government are seeking to write off. Our steel trade union has experience of the company Arc-Sipra selling in France at absurdly low prices. That can be done only through the firm obtaining feedstock from Ilva at prices which reflect its huge losses.

If Arc-Sipra is allowed to go on the approved list, it could seriously affect British firms producing corrugated steel, particularly one in my constituency known as Asset International. Also, primary steel works such as Llanwern and Port Talbot, which supply the raw material, could also see their orders cut. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) said, the same problem applies throughout the British steel industry.

That anxiety hangs over our steel industry. On 29 October, the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) tabled a parliamentary question. He asked for a statement on the future of the iron and steel readaptation benefit. The Minister for Industry replied:

> "The scheme was set up in 1974 since when many improvements have been made to the arrangements for helping unemployed people. ISERBS is not very effective in assisting redundant steel workers to re-enter the labour market and has not proved good value for money. Further large-scale restructuring in the United Kingdom steel industry is no longer anticipated. Redundant steel workers should henceforth be treated in the same way as most other redundant workers. ISERBS will therefore be terminated."—[*Official Report*, 29 October 1993; Vol. 230, c. *804*.]

I hope, in the interests of steel workers, that that decision is not premature.

It is one thing to talk about a single market, but the rules and provisions relating to it must be implemented and enforced consistently throughout the Community. There is certainly a need for some rigid enforcement in respect of the steel industry.

On page 40, paragraph 9.11 of the document on emphasis and development in the EC from January to June 1993, the Government point out the need to put pressure on Italy, Germany and Spain to bring them into line. If that is not done, our domestic steel industry will once again be in jeopardy.

7.24 pm

Mr. Barry Legg (Milton Keynes, South-West): This afternoon we heard an eloquent speech from my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. Once again, he put the case that we are winning the argument and winning friends in Europe. I know that my right hon. Friend is an eloquent statesman, but I doubt the power of persuasion and oratory. Very few people, no matter how open-minded they are, are swayed by speeches, rhetoric or even a well-argued case. In the lead up to the second world war, Churchill argued eloquently the case against German aggrandisement, but it was events rather than the eloquence of his case which won the day.

Europe is currently an economic black spot. For a Conservative Member, the most encouraging thing is that events and markets are moving against the Delors concept of economics. Global markets are making considerable changes in the balance of economic power. Britain has traditionally believed in free and open markets and the developments in the world economy are reinforcing the wisdom of that view.

In the United Kingdom, there was a great deal of debate and argument about our membership of the exchange rate mechanism. I believe that, during our membership, very few people were swayed by arguments or were converted either way. In the end, markets intervened. Once that happened, many converts appeared. They suddenly realised that the exchange rate mechanism was not workable. Suddenly, it was obvious that it was full of fault lines and we united behind a new economic policy, at the centre of which was a floating currency.

The effect of that on the United Kingdom economy and on confidence has been quite dramatic. Earlier this week during the debate on the Budget, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade highlighted the changes. He said:

> "Productivity in the third quarter of 1993 was almost 5 per cent. higher than a year earlier. Industrial production is rising in the United Kingdom but falling in Germany, Japan, France and Italy.
>
> Unemployment has fallen by 137,200 since January. Exports are 3·5 per cent. higher than a year earlier. We have reduced our spending plans by £10 billion compared with those of the March Budget. Public expenditure is expected to fall as a share of national income, with the Budget returning to balance in the second half of the decade."—[*Official Report*, 7 December 1993; Vol. 234, c. 146.]

That is quite a transformation in our economic fortunes from a year earlier.

Some argue that recovery started before we left the ERM. There may have been some bumping along the bottom, but one of the best indicators of recovery is the performance of the stock market. Its performance is part of the Government's statistics in identifying lead indicators. Since we left the ERM, the London equity market has risen by 50 per cent. That must be a reflection by the markets of what the current economic prospects are for British companies. It is quite a marked change. We now have low interest rates, low inflation, public expenditure coming under control, growing exports, and a floating currency; and we should, over the coming years, achieve above-trend growth.

The countries that remained wedded to the mechanism and the concept of convergence—about which we hear so much—are mired in recession. I am pleased that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor has rejected much of the Delors spending package. I have not had a chance to analyse the costs involved, but I read in this morning's papers that the cost of the proposals, over a timescale, will be some £95 billion.

Mr. Duncan Smith: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the more invidious points in Delors' recommendation is the off balance sheet funding that has crept in? Does he recall that at the height of the boom in 1986-87, a large number of companies indulged in that type of funding, which made the consequences of financial collapse much greater?

Mr. Legg: My hon. Friend anticipated my next point. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor is setting out a programme to, in his words, deal with the problem of public borrowing once and for all. If he had signed up to the Delors' package, it would have been like some private sector finance director telling his shareholders at the annual general meeting that he had a plan to reduce gearing over five years, and then going straight round to the bank to arrange some off balance sheet finance. It would have been totally irresponsible to sign up to the package, and I welcome his decision not to do so.

I believe that the free-market philosophy of Britain will yield substantial benefits in the coming years. That success will strengthen our negotiating position and our ability to argue Britain's economic case in Europe.

The German economic miracle is over. High social costs cannot for ever be piled on top of each other, irrespective of developments in global markets. Many German business men are realising that and relocating their industries outside the European Community, either to

[Mr. Legg]

eastern Europe or to the United States. The markets are working in favour of our argument about how a free market should develop.

Regrettably, on page 6 of the White Paper, we find that economic and monetary union is still the direction in which the Commission wishes to drive the nation states of Europe. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, in an article in *The Economist*, on 25 September, dealt with the issue very effectively. All Conservative Members should be able to embrace his words:

> "I hope my fellow heads of Government will resist the temptation to recite the mantra of full economic and monetary union as if nothing had changed."

Eminently sensible words, but, regrettably, his fellow Heads of Government did just the opposite and recited the mantra of full economic and monetary union when they met some six weeks later. That is set out in the presidency conclusions of the meeting of 29 October.

Mr. Gill: I understand my hon. Friend's frustration. He is a successful business man who has come into politics. In business, he would expect to be proactive; now he is frustrated because we only react in politics when the chips are down and there is nowhere else to go.

I share his frustration that the arguments still do not win. When we came off the gold standard in September 1931, interest rates were 6 per cent. and within a few weeks were reduced to 2 per cent. Exactly the same thing happened when we were kicked out of the exchange rate mechanism in September 1992. Interest rates on the afternoon of that day had been 15 per cent.; within three months they were 6 per cent. Why is it that politicians and Governments cannot learn from those clearly demonstrated lessons of history?

Mr. Legg: My hon. Friend makes a very sound point. One of the problems that politicians have in learning those lessons is that all too often it involves some eating of words. Churchill said that there were many times when he had to eat his words and that he always found them most nourishing. That attitude should be adopted by many politicians; they would be much more successful if they did.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) pointed out the benefits that we gained immediately we left the exchange rate mechanism. Regrettably, our partners in France have not taken the same opportunity and are still wedded to the mantra of economic and monetary union. Stage one of economic and monetary union has been an economic disaster. It resulted in attempts to defy the markets and to set interest rates that are inappropriate to domestic conditions. The consequences have been recession and unemployment, about which Opposition Members are so concerned.

Those are the lessons of stage one, and we are now headed towards stage two. Stage one ends on 31 December and on 1 January we commence stage two. The principle of pegging the currencies of medium-sized powers does not work. It does not create economic stability and does not get rid of inflation.

That lesson has not yet been learnt, and far too many hon. Members—despite the realities of the outside world—will say, "Oh well, we went in at the wrong time and at the wrong rate. If only we could have got those things right, the system would have worked." From my experience as a business man, politicians will never find the right time and rate for currencies. That role is performed by the interchange and interaction of markets. I urge politicians to set aside their desire to find the right times and rates for currencies.

Currency flexibility is helpful to economies and provides a safety valve against economic shocks. It is surprising that the Government decided to enter the exchange rate mechanism following German reunification and the rate of conversion between the ostmark and the deutschmark had been settled. Retrospectively, many politicians now say that the problems of our membership resulted from the shock of inappropriate conversion rates between the ostmark and the deutschmark—that it was the wrong rate and that it harmed the system.

Mr. Cash: Looking back to the days when we went into the ERM, we must recognise that intolerable pressures were being brought to bear on the Government to drive us into it. Some of us did go along with it, but issued the direst warning that we would eventually end up getting on to the devil's bandwagon, which is exactly what happened.

Mr. Legg: I thank my hon. Friend for his valuable comments. The point is that politicians are not able to recognise significant economic shocks even after they have happened, so how can they hope to get timing and rates right.

Mr. Ian Taylor: May I redress the balance, as one who was—and still is—a believer in stable exchange rates within the Community? Our entry into the ERM was intended as an extra plank in our anti-inflation policy. Once we had joined, the downward convergence of United Kingdom interest rates towards the German rate, in relation to the premium required for sterling as opposed to the deutschmark in the interest-rate market, represented a very satisfactory beginning.

Mr. Legg: Again, we hear a politician trying to change the evidence or the facts. Joining the ERM at that stage did not help our anti-inflation policy. We had suffered as a result of our attempts to shadow the deutschmark in the lead-up to the decision; we had suffered as a result of lowering our interest rates to try to keep down our exchange rate against the deutschmark. That helped to stoke up inflation. When we finally decided to enter the ERM, we did so at a time when the Bundesbank—quite rightly, for domestic economic reasons—was operating a policy of bearing down on inflation to deal with the excess issue of money that had taken place at the time of unification. We then adopted the interest rates of a country that was trying to stop inflation, having already dealt with it here by raising our rates to 15 per cent. That mistiming damaged both businesses and employment.

Mr. Jenkin: I hope that I shall be forgiven if I take the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) in vain. Were we not told, however, that if we left the ERM our interest rates could never become lower than the deutschmark-based rate? Is it not a key fact that, the minute we left, we were able to introduce substantially lower rates, and have continued to operate them since then? Does that not prove that we can run our own monetary policy independently?

Mr. Legg: My hon. Friend has made a very good point. I believe that my right hon. Friend the Member for

Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) advanced that argument in July 1992, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer—although he has told us subsequently that he did not believe what he was saying at the time. That is probably another argument in favour of relying on the markets rather than the words of politicians.

We have heard much about the so-called merits of convergence today. We need to consider what convergence is really about. It is not about a group of statesmen sitting down to decide what are the most prudent economic policies for individual nation states to pursue in Europe; anyone seeking prudent financial policies would come up with many differences from the convergence criteria.

Mr. Gill: My hon. Friend may wish to consider how successful this country has been in achieving convergence within the United Kingdom over the many years for which it has existed—and, indeed, the large sums that have been transferred from the richer region to the poorer.

Mr. Legg: I shall deal with that point later in my speech.

As I was saying, convergence is not about a group of politicians trying to come up with abstract, prudent financial criteria. The aim of the convergence criteria is to achieve economic and monetary union. My hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) nods. I respect his views, knowing that he understands the Maastricht treaty and supports those objectives; unfortunately, some hon. Members are not as clear on the matter as he is.

The objective, then, is economic and monetary union. Behind that objective must lie political union; a political authority must be there to decide the interest rate for the whole of Europe—perhaps from Greece to the Arctic circle, in the event of enlargement—and to decide budgetary policy for the whole of Europe. The impetus behind economic and monetary union is clearly political.

I think that it is unlikely that the ERM will be resurrected, despite the best efforts of politicians. Markets have expelled currencies from the system and I do not think that the politicians will succeed in putting it all back together. However, the concept of economic and monetary union has not been abandoned: many people, both in the House of Commons and across continental Europe, still seem to be wedded to that concept.

What, then, is the likely scenario, given that some hon. Members believe that economic and monetary union is such a good thing? It is possible that, at some future stage, if politicians feel that the European economies have moved closer together, they may decide that an overnight move to a single currency would be beneficial to Europe as a whole. No doubt they will argue that trading relationships are very close, and that the time has therefore come for a single currency. Some of us believe that that would mean the end of the nation state as we in the United Kingdom have understood it, because the ability to make basic economic decisions would be removed. Other hon. Members, however, may say that, although a single currency would represent a profound constitutional change, it is economically necessary and will produce benefits.

I believe that, even if that argument is advanced, a single currency and economic and monetary union should be rejected. I do not believe that the ultimate economic union, with a single currency, is compatible with the basic philosophies espoused by Conservative Members. It would remove the safety valve of the currency; there would not be the opportunities for mass migration that have enabled the United States to cope with economic developments; there would not even be the opportunities for the population movements that have taken place in the United Kingdom. Instead, economic disparities across Europe would increase. Prosperity would not develop evenly; massive transfer payments would have to be made across the regions. Even in a nation as united and economically coherent as the United Kingdom, with a single currency it has never been possible to abolish regional transfer payments. I am sure that Opposition Members would argue long and hard for such payments.

The pressures would be irresistible. We would have high subsidies—and, as all Conservative Members know, high subsidies lead to high taxes. We would not have a successful European economy. The importance of Europe, as an investment destination for the rest of the world, would decline; and I believe that it would continue to lose its share of world trade. I cannot envisage a successful economic scenario following economic and monetary union.

Conservative Members must continue to argue the case for free markets, liberal economic policies and the vital importance of competition between nation states. We shall never create a completely level playing field across Europe. That is impossible. There must be a role for nation states competing among themselves. That is the strategy and philosophy that we must enunciate here, and also when we come to the European elections.

I consider that the time has come to reject the whole mantra of economic and monetary union.

7.49 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): For the past 25 minutes I have been wondering whether I have been listening to the main debate or a debate within a debate, almost as though I were listening to a cameo of a Shakespeare play. We have seen the Euro-sceptic wing of the Conservative party playing a game among themselves —the hon. Member for Milton Keynes, South-West (Mr. Legg) having a particular point of view, and his friends intervening to egg him on.

The trouble is that the arguments that were made by that wing of the Conservative party have passed them by. They lost that argument. They lost the votes. The hon. Gentleman believes that he has won the argument, but I can tell him that he has lost it. We are moving on in a totally different way.

In coming to the debate, I am afraid that many of us felt that we might be resurrecting the Maastricht trenches and that we would be going backwards, not forwards. Conservative Members have the same difficulty as many people in the countries of Britain have: that all the arguments about European integration and progress in the European Union are negative.

The arguments are negative because we fail through institutions in this place to have positive arguments and to understand what has been happening in Europe. Why was there the need to create the European Union? After the second world war, why was there the need for the peoples of Europe to come together? It is by working together that we solve the great problems of our age.

I did some research for the debate. I found that one of the most interesting speeches leading up to the creation of the European Community was made by Winston Churchill

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in Zurich in 1946. He foresaw the kind of debate that we are having today. Lady Thatcher called him in aid in some of her arguments in this place. The reality, however, was that, in 1946, albeit in opposition, Winston Churchill saw the need for Europe to come together and described it as a United States of Europe. The trouble was that the Conservative party could never buy that in government. He could say that in opposition, but when he led the Conservative Government in 1950, the establishment would not have it. He could not go that far. It took another 20 years for the House to accept accession to the European Community in 1972.

Mr. Jenkin: Can the hon. Gentleman point to the part of the text in Winston Churchill's speech in which he says that Britain should be part of a federal Europe?

Mr. Jones: I do not have the text of the speech with me, but I can tell the hon. Gentleman that, on three occasions —the hon. Gentleman can go to the Library and look for himself—in that short text, Winston Churchill referred to a kind of United States of Europe. The European Community had not been created in 1946. Nobody had mentioned the word "federalism" in 1946, but Winston Churchill understood the need for Europe to come together.

Some Labour Members hold the same views as Conservative Euro-sceptics. The problem in Britain is that the divide on Europe is so deep that the people of Britain cannot be allowed to understand the positive arguments in favour of closer integration.

Mr. Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: No. I am sorry. There is little time and many hon. Members wish to speak.

Having taken some time to tell the House that we must become more positive in our attitude to Europe, I shall concentrate on my next point. It is time for us to have openness and honesty about what European integration means. We must be clear about that. Although I disagree fundamentally with the analysis of the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), he was absolutely right when he said that we must be clear, open and honest.

Mr. Gill: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: No. I am sorry.

European integration means that if decisions are removed from the House of Commons and go to the European stage, sovereignty in Parliament will be diminished. We should not despair about that, because if one understands the nature of sovereignty in modern Europe, one will know that decisions are taken at different levels. That is what subsidiarity is trying to tell us about.

Subsidiarity means that there is a European level where decisions are made and the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) mentioned a number of matters that have to be taken on the European stage. How can we hope to understand the problems in our environment unless we understand the need for European and worldwide co-operation on environmental matters? How can we begin to understand the need for a proper energy policy if we do not understand the need to have a European approach to that?

There are levels at which we can take decisions in other places. The problem with subsidiarity so far as the British system of politics is concerned is that it cannot accept that decisions can sometimes take place below the level of member states. If one reads the document on subsidiarity contained in the foot-high pile that the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) mentioned one sees that it mentions the need for the Community to accept that there are levels, below the levels of member states, at which decisions can be taken. There is the European level, the member state level, the regional level and the local authority level.

The problem within the British system is that no regional level is available. Therefore, the Birmingham declaration was clearly designed to save the British embarrassment about not having a regional level. It said that subsidiarity means that certain matters are decided at a European level and on other matters it is up to the member state to decide.

Another problem is that all the modern European democracies have a regional level. We shall see the problems that that causes to Britain's representatives when they attend the Committee of the Regions in Brussels in January. On the one hand, there will be the president of Catalonia, the president of the Basque region and the presidents of the German Lander, and on the other there will be local authority representatives of the United Kingdom.

The danger is that because we do not have a regional level, and because there is such a massive democratic deficit in the United Kingdom, the regional representatives in the Committee will have much more influence and power than the local authority representatives from the United Kingdom. I urge the Government to accept the need for the regional dimension in politics in Britain. We have heard that from the Liberal Democrats and I am sure that we shall hear it from the Labour Benches.

It is crucial that we meet the issue head on, because if the people of Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and other parts of England are to play a full part in the Europe of tomorrow, we must have representation at regional level with Parliaments in Wales and Scotland and assemblies in England and Northern Ireland so that we can have a direct input in Europe.

Mr. Gill: The whole House will not be unaware of the support that the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) was able to give to the Conservative Government during the passage of the Maastricht treaty. Is not there a great irony in a situation in which he, with his avowedly nationalistic intentions and ambitions, is siding with the party of the union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland?

Mr. Jones: Let me make it perfectly clear to the hon. Gentleman that I supported the Maastricht treaty because I believed that that was the way in which we could move towards European integration. It happened to be that the Conservative party and many colleagues in the Labour party and Liberal Democrat party agreed with us. That was why we went through the Lobby together, to support the ideas and the principle. It is by supporting that that our kind of nationalism can best be described. We do not favour separatism and the building of borders. I do not want to see frontier posts on the A55 near Shotton or on the M4 near the Severn crossing. I accept the principle enshrined in the Single European Act of breaking down trade barriers. That is the kind of Europe that I want to see—a free Europe, but one which accepts the diversity of different languages, cultures and perspectives. That is why I supported the Maastricht treaty and I ask the hon. Gentleman to accept that.

Another vital part of the debate that has been touched on by many hon. Members is the European White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment. I share the view that many hon. Members have expressed that because we had the document late in the day it has been difficult to make a proper analysis of the needs of economies in Britain.

But we share some aspects of the vision in the White Paper on jobs because we in Wales have suffered historically high rates of unemployment, far higher than many other parts of the United Kingdom. There are aspects of the report that we would accept. First, we need proper investment in a pan-European transport network.

When I argued that point during the Maastricht debates, many Conservative Members said that it was nonsense to invest in infrastructure projects. But if we in Wales, on the periphery of Britain and on the periphery of the European Community, are to compete in the single market, which I support, it is essential that we have the same opportunity to compete as other parts of Britain and other parts of the Community.

I concede that the great danger is that the core of the European Community will become extremely wealthy at the expense of the periphery. If we are to compete, we need proper road, rail and air links. I fully subscribe to the view contained in the White Paper that we should have transport infrastructure projects. That will do two things. In the short term, it will create jobs because people will be employed building roads, improving rail links and so on. It will also make our economy on the periphery much more competitive.

Some of the documents prepared by the Government show that about 10 per cent. of structural funds will be spent on Community initiatives. That is a good thing. Some Community initiatives aimed at improving, for example, transport infrastructure between regions such as Wales and Ireland are crucial if we are to succeed economically. We in west Wales have a fragile economic base. Links between the western seaboard of Wales and the east coast of Ireland could be improved, not only transport links but telecommunications, tourism and energy conservation—all of which are valuable. That is why the Government would be wrong to argue against some of the interventionist principles in the White Paper.

Every time I meet Conservative party members in Wales they point out to me the success of Lord Walker and the current Secretary of State for Employment as Secretary of State for Wales as a result of their interventionist policies. They came to Wales to establish a partnership between the public and private sectors. I did not agree with all the policies that they pursued. There were ideological differences between us. They did not come from the same political tradition as I did, but at least they subscribed to the view that there needs to be a proper partnership between the public and private sectors.

All that I would say to the Government is that they cannot have it both ways. They cannot point to the success of the Secretary of State for Wales in using public money to stimulate the Welsh economy and at the same time go to Europe and say that there should be no public investment. The Government should ensure that the public and private sectors, coming together in partnership, have a vital role to play in stimulating economic recovery in Wales. That is the message that I hope the Government will take to the European Council at the end of the week.

8.4 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): The problem that we face in the aftermath of the Maastricht debates is simply that the Government and the country now have to justify the signing of a document, the provisions of which have given rise to the White Paper that the Government are now rejecting.

One of the problems that we are up against is that article 103, which gives rise to the economic strategy guidelines —I shall come to defence and policy guidelines in a moment—gives Mr. Delors and others the opportunity to come forward with their socialist programme, which Opposition Members are only too delighted should be brought forward, but which we, unfortunately, have to reject. But for the fact that we had allowed the treaty to go through in the first place, we would not be placed in this dilemma.

The same applies to the article written by the Prime Minister which appeared in *The Economist* on 25 September 1993. I agreed with much of what he said in that article, but the problem is that a few weeks later we had the summit and the presidency conclusions which are extremely difficulty to relate to that article.

We now have another summit coming up tomorrow and I am bound to ask whether, when pressures are brought to bear in discussions over the next few days, we shall move yet further down this apparently inexorable route which has been prescribed under the treaty that we signed so recently.

I voted for the European economic area and for the single market in 1986. In 1975 I voted that we should stay in the Community. But, most emphatically, I do not believe in the kind of policies that are now permeating the Community. As my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) said, we must consider whether our domestic policies have been sufficiently permeated by the European dimension for us to require, as I am sure all permanent secretaries do now as a first priority when devising legislation, the question to be asked: are we allowed to do this?

If a sense of defeatism has permeated our political environment during the past year or so, is that not partly because we have relinquished control over our affairs to far too great an extent? That is why I agree so much with the sentiments, but not the conclusions, of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor).

I am an optimist. I believe that we shall manage to pull this back and I sincerely hope that the Government will find the will to say the right things at the summit and, if necessary, to issue a separate communiqué. There is nothing negative in setting out the territory that has already been set out with respect, for example, to our professed opt-outs for economic and monetary union and the social chapter. There are, as we know, problems in implementation. We shall have difficulty in remaining at the heart of Europe if, as suggested by the summit that took place a few weeks ago, those objectives are re-endorsed and we sign up to the presidency conclusions. When the conclusions of the summit are produced, I suggest that we issue a separate

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communiqué—I hope that we do not need to do so—because there is a point at which it is essential that we learn to say no at the right time and mean it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes, South-West (Mr. Legg) summed up the exchange rate mechanism and gave us a superb analysis of the position. He dealt with the question of whether the recovery was running before we came out of the ERM. I have no doubt whatever that the arguments suggesting that we had are at best technical and at worst bogus. As my hon. Friend pointed out, the stock market has risen by some 50 per cent. since then and, in addition, on an entire range of criteria, it is perfectly clear that the recovery had not begun before we left the ERM. For example, the improvement in gross domestic product in the second and third quarters of 1992 was due to a temporary boost in consumer spending immediately after the general election and the end of de-stocking. It was not until the fourth quarter of 1992 that non-oil GDP at factor cost ceased to show a decline on the previous year. Manufacturing industrial output registered increases only from September 1992 and unemployment began to fall four months after our departure from the mechanism. In September 1993 we saw the first year-on-year increase in house prices since mid-1991, interest rates fell from 12 per cent.—the inescapable fact, as my hon. Friend mentioned—on black Wednesday, or white Wednesday, to 5·5 per cent. and inflation fell from 3·5 to 1·4 per cent. All those facts are entirely contrary to the Treasury warnings that without the ERM inflation would soar. We had to come out of the ERM because there was a marketplace which we had to recognise.

That message has now gone across the whole of Europe. There are Euro realists not only in this country, but in Germany—Mr. Stoibei in Bavaria—in France—Philippe Seguin, Phillipe de Villiers, Marie-France Garand and others—and in Spain and Denmark there are similar movements. Throughout Europe, in line with public opinion, there is a recognition of Euro realism which is even borne out in the White Paper prepared by the European Commission, "Growth, Competitiveness and Employment", which the Government have rejected. I do not agree with all its conclusions by any means, but there is a recognition of the need to ensure that if wage costs are too high, we shall not be as competitive in the real world.

We have to live in a highly competitive global village. Today, I have been up to my constituency in Stafford and back again because GEC Alsthom has been awarded the Queen's award for exports. It won that award because, in the aftermath of the recovery and because it is highly competitive in world markets, it has managed to produce superb, world-beating products.

We must stay out of the ERM. We must stay out of the control on economic guidelines of the kind that are prescribed by that White Paper and by article 134 of the Maastricht treaty if we are to survive as a free-trading nation across the globe. If we do not compete in real terms, we will collapse. Our economy will not be sustained and the dire warnings that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East gave earlier, combined with the inexorable growth of public expenditure, which is complementary to the decline of our industrial competitiveness, will drive us into the sand.

The public sector borrowing requirement rose to £50 billion because social security costs—housing benefit and mortgage repayments—and all the things that followed in the wake of the high interest rates regime that was imposed on us by ERM, not only forced public expenditure through the ceiling, but guaranteed that our base for future wealth creation went with it. Therefore, I was delighted that the Budget laid emphasis on enterprise and small businesses because we must generate the wealth creation to pay for public expenditure and at the same time ensure that we do not have unnecessary direct tax increases. We have come close to national bankruptcy, but, thank Heavens, as a result of the arguments of Euro realists throughout Europe—and also, some may think, arguments in the United Kingdom—we have now embarked on a policy that looks more realistic than it has looked for several years.

When I look at the question of further increases in public expenditure, the framework of growth initiative that emerged from the Edinburgh summit in the past year, the papers that the Select Committee on European Legislation considered a few days ago and the explanatory memorandum published on 2 December in the name of my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General, I have to ask whether it is such a good idea for us to borrow the kind of money that is set out in the White Paper. Is it such a good idea to be providing cohesion funds up to the amount that is set out? Believe it or not, the structural funds allocated between 1994 and 1999 will be no less than £108 billion. Where is that money coming from? If it is coming from the taxpayers of Germany, one can understand why they are beginning to jib at the whole concept of the European Community. If one considers Italy, a country that is virtually bankrupt, one can understand why people have fears about the direction in which the European Community is being taken. If one thinks of the taxpayers in Britain, one can understand why public opinion polls are registering so strongly in favour of the view of the Euro realists, who have been vilified for so long for nothing worse than getting it right. It is necessary for us to be realistic, but not because we want to stand on our dignity or pride. That would be absurd. We do not particularly want to be right. We want to be right only because it produces the right result, not because it makes us feel self-satisfied.

As a country, we are trapped by arrangements which we have entered into by going along with things all at the time and afterwards saying that we did not like them. That is no way to run a policy. For example, a tremendous amount has been said this evening about subsidiarity, as if, somehow, a magic wand is waved over the subject by which all will be resolved. The right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) said that around 25 per cent. of the legislation would be wafted away. I hope that he is not in the Chamber and I hope that I am quoting his words correctly.

A paper that was deposited with the European legislation committee only two days ago sets out the basis on which the Government have reported on the European Commission's document on subsidiarity. It does not look as though it will produce the results described by the right hon. Member for Watford. For example, according to the Commission, challenging the principle of the acquis communautaire must be avoided. That does not sound radical. It also says that priority in any review of the legislation is to be given to older, rather than more recent, legislation. We all know why—because so much of it has been overtaken by court cases. The review has been carried out simply to emphasise the most recent stuff, most of which we dislike.

The paper also says that re-examination should be limited to rules and regultions of a legislative nature. There is not much suggestion of a revision of policy, which is what we were looking for. I strongly suggest that hon. Members take the opportunity to study the explanatory memorandum to satisfy themselves. Furthermore, I hope that they will look at the declaration on the entry into force of the treaty on European Union, produced by the European Council on 29 October 1993. It sets out the guidelines with respect to common foreign and security policy. The hon. Member for Watford spoke optimistically about common foreign and security policy. Those guidelines say:

> "A common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence, must"—

I stress the word "must"—

> "eventually be framed by the Union on the basis of its security interests."

That document sets out the basis on which title 5 of the Maastricht treaty is being—not will be—implemented. I have not time to go through it all in detail but I assure hon. Members that it is well worth reading because it does not suggest that we shall act unilaterally.

Mr. Jenkin: It does not mention NATO.

Mr. Cash: As my hon. Friend says, and as I was about to mention, nowhere does it mention NATO. That is extraordinary in the light of all the assurances that we were given. We must therefore watch carefully to see how the legislation that we have just ratified works in practice.

On the voting arrangements in the Council of Ministers, a serious problem exists in how the European Community budget has been increasing. In so far as we can retain control over that through the voting arrangements, I draw hon. Members' attention to the fact that the total EC budget has increased from £30·9 billion in 1990 to £52·3 billion in 1993. It has increased by 69 per cent., while the United Kingdom is trying to cut public expenditure in its domestic politics. Administration costs in the European Community have risen by 18 per cent. between 1990 and 1993 and now stand at £2·7 billion, whereas emphasis in the United Kingdom is on deregulation.

Spending on agriculture in the Community has increased between 1990 and 1993 from £19·4 billion to £30·3 billion—I am giving the figures in pounds, not ecu—despite the MacSharry reforms and set aside. Those figures come from the statement on the 1993 Community budget.

Our contribution is said to fall and it will do so from 1994-95 to £1,350 million. But it then increases again to £2,890 million, and again in 1996-97 to £2,930 million—a total of £7,170 million. That total will not even be covered by the amount raised by putting VAT on domestic fuel and power over the next three years. The 1996-97 contribution of £2·93 billion will be greater than the combined budgets of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department of Trade and Industry, which are £1·24 billion and £1·39 billion respectively.

The cumulative net contribution to Brussels from 1991-92 to 1996-97 will be £12·14 billion. If one estimates the cost of defending sterling on white Wednesday at £4 billion, the total cost for that period will be in excess of £16 billion.

Against that background, we must ensure that we are not further out-voted in the Council of Ministers. So my final plea is that, at all costs, we ensure that we do not end up with a further increase in majority voting at our expense. The treaty has given rise to so much of the pain and suffering which I have described and which the British people have experienced. It has caused the difficulties and contradictions with which the Conservative party has had to deal, and the absurdity of the doctrines that emanate from the European Peoples party, which we shall have to sort out in the manifesto. Those all add up to one thing: let us look calmly and rationally, and support the Government in their determination to get those matters right. However, we must not allow the matter to continue rolling inexorably forwards. Like the other countries in the European Community, we must put down a marker and do something about it. We must renegotiate the Maastricht treaty.

8.26 pm

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): In the short time available to me, I wish to discuss two issues not covered by the Secretary of State's contribution—subsidiarity and support for the middle east peace process.

Last Friday, my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), who made such a powerful impact on our debates on the Maastricht treaty, spoke in his new capacity as shadow Secretary of State for Scotland at a meeting of the Scottish Constitutional Convention in the Signet library in Edinburgh. He said:

> "there are many in Scotland who believe that the endeavour to create the right constitutional arrangement for our country is not only a noble purpose, but a practical and sensible one as well, and it is in line with all the tides of power decentralisation alive throughout our continent today."

My hon. Friend then asked the convention to look at what our continental neighbours are already doing by way of decentralising power and devolving decision making. In Spain, Belgium, Germany, and now in Italy, the regions are on the move and the new Committee of the Regions will underline that fact in the months ahead. However, as I said, the Secretary of State did not mention subsidiarity, although he did mention the constitutional court in Germany.

As the House will know, during the ratification process of the Maastricht treaty in Germany, the Bundestag and the Bundesrat demanded and obtained changes to the German constitution—the Basic Law—to grant both Chambers a greater say in the decision-making process. Paragraph 1 of the new article 23 of the Basic Law states:

> "With a view to establishing a united Europe the Federal Republic of Germany shall participate in the development of the European Union, which is committed to democratic rule-of-law, social and federal principles as well as the principle of subsidiarity".

Paragraph 6 of article 23 states:

> "Where essentially the exclusive legislative jurisdiction of the Lander is affected by the exercise of the rights of the Federal Republic of Germany as a Member State of the European Union shall be transferred by the Federation to a representative of the Lander designated by the Bundesrat."

The House will know that the presidents of the German Lander form the second Chamber in the German Parliament—the Bundesrat—and they or their representatives have for a long time exerted a greater influence in Brussels than any other regional authority leader among the EC member states. They have well established offices in Brussels from where they lobby German Ministers on

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the Council of Ministers, and they will no doubt play an even more significant role on the new Committee of the Regions established under the Maastricht treaty.

In Spain, new laws passed in September 1993 aim to give all the autonomous communities the same powers —with one or two exceptions—in two phases. The first is to be completed by the end of the year and the second by next summer. It will be achieved by changes to the autonomy statutes and will involve 33 areas of competence. The Government there have also agreed to give all the autonomous regions the power to spend 15 per cent. of the income tax collected in those regions. The Government of Felipe Gonzales has had to make further concessions in return for regional support in approving the rather controversial budget proposals earlier this year.

We now know that Jordi Pujol, Catalonian President since 1980 and president of the Assembly of European Regions, is to be the president of the European Union's Committee of the Regions. He has been a controversial figure in Spanish politics because of his efforts to secure more autonomy for Catalonia, and he will no doubt want to promote one of the union's concepts—that we are a Europe of regions.

In Belgium, shortly before his death at the end of July, King Baudouin signed constitutional amendments, finally approved by the Belgian Parliament on 14 July, making Belgium a federal state in which French-speaking Wallonia, Flemish-speaking Flanders and the mainly French-speaking capital Brussels would have greater autonomy. Amongst other things, responsibilities for agriculture, scientific research, external trade and social security have been given to the regions.

On 14 July, the Belgian Chamber of Deputies approved by 143 votes to 61 legislation to implement constitutional changes to create a federal state. The Bill was supported not only by the four ruling parties—the Flemish and Walloon Christian Social Democrats and the Flemish and Wallon socialist parties—but by the Flemish nationalists and the Walloon and Flemish green parties. That vote completed a long-running constitutional reform process which had begun back in 1970 and devolved further powers to the regions in three stages.

There we have it: Governments to the right and Governments to the left are applying the principle of subsidiarity as widely and as quickly as possible whereas, in the United Kingdom, we have not heard a word today from the Secretary of State about this most serious of matters. What we have had, not only today but in the debates on the Queen's Speech and at the Tory party conference, is a series of policy statements, decisions and commitments which, taken together, add up to an assault on elected, accountable government, locally and nationally, and its creeping replacement by an unelected, un-nominated and unaccountable patronage state.

I support my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) by referring briefly to the middle east peace process and the support for it contained in the documentation that we are considering. The House will be aware that Yasser Arafat, the chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, will visit Britain next week as a guest of the Government. The House will also know that he will address Members of both Houses in the Grand Committee Room immediately after Prime Minister's questions next Tuesday afternoon. During the recent debate on the Queen's Speech, the Foreign Secretary said:

> "The Government are looking at ways in which to help the Palestinians to set up the institution of self-government."—[*Official Report*, 1 November 1993; Vol. 233, c. 115.]

My right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland supported that role. He has today been more specific in calling for not only European assistance but direct Government assistance to an organisation called PECDAR—the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction.

PECDAR is the critical institution for initiating the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction in Palestine. It is the institution for which all multilateral and bilateral arrangements of aid have called and which the Palestine National Authority has established. At its last meeting in Tunis on 4 and 5 December, PECDAR's board of governors resolved to establish the new institution on modern management lines to ensure efficient and quality performance. To do so, the board will need the expert assistance of professional consultant firms and expert advice on an emergency basis.

Being a new institution with limited resources, PECDAR is in need of all possible assistance to accomplish its objectives. The Government could make a significant contribution to the development of PECDAR through a financial offer to utilise the services of British firms and academic staff wherever they were needed.

When the Secretary of State has had time to reflect on the comments made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland and myself, and perhaps when he meets the chairman of the PLO next Tuesday and Wednesday, I hope that he will be able to have further discussions on how that aid might be channelled to help the Palestinians.

There is one other European experience that we could usefully deploy to support the middle east peace process. One of the vital tasks is that of confidence building among the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. It is urgently needed to assure the Israelis and Palestinians of the benefits that will flow from pursuing the peace protocols as quickly as possible. I refer, of course, to a system that first saw the light of day in Europe—town twinning. It originated in Europe and it is in Europe that it has expanded most dramatically over the past 40 years.

There are at present more than 8,000 municipalities in western Europe involved in schemes ranging from villages to major cities. Of those, 88 per cent. are located in European Community member countries. The European Parliament considered the subject and in February 1988 adopted a twinning report which is now funded directly by the EC and used to pursue various objectives, one of which I am sure all hon. Members will accept. One of the cornerstones of democracy is precisely the freedom of citizens to participate in the management of affairs which most directly concern them at the grassroots level, within the individual municipalities wherever possible.

The town twinning arrangements have paid off in France. The task of reconciling France and Germany after 1945 was made much easier by the large number of twinning schemes between towns on either side of the Rhine. I suggest that we use our influence not only with local authorities in the United Kingdom but with other countries in Europe to convince European towns and cities to twin with Palestinian and Israeli towns and cities, if only to give them the experience which we have had and which the Palestinians will need as they start to run their own country for the first time in 27 years. Such a step would also give confidence to the Palestinian community, which has been living under occupation for the past 26 years.

Many in the Palestinian community believe that the peace protocols will not amount to much more than Jericho and Gaza. If we can start to establish twinning links between cities, towns and villages in Europe and towns in Palestine—towns that are identified as Palestinian—we shall be giving support and confidence to the Arab Palestinians living there by showing that the people of Europe understand that there will be a Palestinian state and that Palestinian towns are entitled to enjoy the same democratic freedoms as we do.

My suggestion would not break new ground. The first twinning of a British—or a United Kingdom—city took place in November 1980 when my town of Dundee was twinned with the Palestinian town of Nablus. There was no follow up to that until last year, when Glasgow twinned with Bethlehem. Even during those difficult periods, the contact between Dundee and Nablus gave support and confidence to the Palestinians in that region. I am sure that if we could encourage more of that, it would help the Palestinians to participate much more actively in the peace protocols that we hope for and that we are supporting in the documents today.

8.40 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): This is an extraordinarily wide-ranging debate. We opened with the statesmanlike and comprehensive comments of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, and then moved on to the subject of the European People's party with the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). Monetary union was mentioned. A Welsh Nationalist, the hon. Member for Ynys Mon (Mr. Jones), said that he supported the Maastricht treaty because it would lead to European integration. That flies in the face of what my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) believes, which is that it will lead to a different type of integration—no doubt he supported the treaty for completely different reasons. We finished with the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) speaking about Palestinian town-twinning. That raises a question about the nature of the debate and the nature of the accountability of the European Union.

Right hon. and hon. Members have already referred to the extraordinary pile of papers with which we were presented for the debate. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how the Ministers who are answerable to the House will be able to read the debate before they sit down with their European partners at the European Council tomorrow and on Saturday. There is a disconnection; a growing problem of accountability.

In that respect, I shall refer to the speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), a thoughtful statement about the future of the European Community, in which he offered some solutions and some thoughts about how the Community was going to develop. The most interesting thing that he said was that the European Council should perhaps meet more often and more regularly.

Where does that leave the House and the role of the national Parliaments? My right hon. Friend the Member for Watford referred, it is true, to the declaration at the end of the Maastricht treaty, affirming a strengthened role for the national Parliaments, but how can the national Parliaments scrutinise the volume of legislation that emanates from the European Community, a vast quantity of which is never read in this place before it becomes law, when we are presented with it, fait accompli?

Where does that leave us as individual constituency Members? There is a growing despair throughout the country. Constituents write to Members of Parliament, who pass the letters to the Minister. With all respect to my right hon. and hon. Friends sitting on the Treasury Bench and those who serve elsewhere in the Government, the reply that we receive from the Minister somehow slightly fails to engage with the comments that were made in the initial letter. The letter goes back to the constituent and the constituent is left wondering where he should go. The Community is blamed; there is a lack of accountability. We have created a regulatory monster, which is destroying jobs up and down the country, and it is something what we need to consider. In that respect I shall address my comments to the issue of subsidiarity.

We have, of course, a Conservative agenda in the European Community and one which is gathering support on all sides of the Maastricht debate on the Conservative Benches. I am reminded of the comments that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister set out in his article of 25 September 1993 in *The Economist*. He wrote:

> "The vision of the founders of the Community was a fine one. What we have seen in the last two years is not so much a swing against Europe as a demand for a different kind of Europe."

That is certainly where I stand and I believe that that is the position where others of my colleagues who opposed the Maastricht treaty stand, who have hitherto supported every piece of key legislation to do with the European Community—the referendum, entry and of course the Single European Act. To be opposed to Maastricht was not to be opposed to Europe as a place.

The Conservative agenda is gaining ground among our European partners. The emphasis on the general agreement on tariffs and trade round is welcome. I was a little tempted, at this stage in my speech, to congratulate the Prime Minister, President Clinton and the French Prime Minister, M. Balladur, on the success achieved in the GATT talks. We are witnessing the last stages of a ballet —a pas de deux between the two partners standing off, who will inevitably be able to come together at the last moment. Perhaps that is slightly premature, but that is an advance of the Conservative agenda in Europe.

The problem about advancing the arguments about competitiveness and growth is that the document that the European Community has tabled at such incredibly short notice—we should not let the lateness of that document's arrival pass without some acerbic comments—contains nothing about comprehensive deregulation and, indeed, recites the need for monetary union, for a unified Europe, not taking on board the logic of the argument so ably set out, for example, by my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes, South-West (Mr. Legg).

There are gains. They are printing the graphs, for example, that demonstrate the loss of employment, the lack of competitiveness, the declining share of world trade. We are gaining ground and we should not begrudge that.

There are gains from subsidiarity. My problem with it has always been that before I came to the House subsidiarity was proclaimed as a great victory and soon after I came to the House, on 20 May 1992, the Prime Minister described the inclusion of subsidiarity as one of

[Mr. Bernard Jenkin]

the great victories of the Maastricht negotiation that demonstrated that we were achieving a new turning point, away from centralisation in the European Community.

As we got more and more involved with that subject, however—never can so many trees have been felled in vain on such an obscure topic as subsidiarity—the more and more obscure became the concept of subsidiarity. By the time that the debate in Committee took place, subsidiarity had become rather a mouse. In an intervention, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made a comment on the speech that I was making and said that it was taking place

"outside the debate that has been taking place inside the Community for the past two years."

He said:

> "What is happening now however—I ask my hon. Friend to take my word for it—is that the different institutions are changing. That is reflected in article 3b, the Edinburgh declaration, the activities of the Commission and the sharp reduction in the number of legislative proposals coming forward. That is political fact before it is a legal obligation."—[*Official Report,* 8 March 1993; Vol. 220, c. 746.]

What we have in subsidiarity is not a narrow legal concept. We have a potent political force, but it is incumbent upon the Government to make subsidiarity worth much more than its technical, legal value.

In a report entitled "Commission Report on Subsidiarity" that was produced by the Commission to the European Communities in November 1993—in French, I may say; the Library provided a translation—the key phrase is that subsidiarity

"is not a matter of challenging the acquis communautaire: the basic principles of present policies will not be submitted to a new debate."

The key legal weakness of subsidiarity, as far as we are concerned, is that it does not provide for a net retrieval of self-government to the United Kingdom. It does not return power to the House. All we can beg for is that the Council of Ministers and the Commission should allow us to have some power back, to have it delegated back to us.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) describes subsidiarity as a state of mind. It is not a limit on Community action because it limits that action only so far as Community institutions are prepared to allow it to limit themselves. If we are serious about exploiting the force that we have unleashed—the political potency of subsidiarity—we need to apply it more comprehensively. We need to implement what my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) referred to as the "Brixton manifesto". That would mean a Europe of nation states, with self-government. That is not merely the Europe to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary referred—a Europe of nation states that respects those nations, "history, identity, culture and pride"—but a Europe of nation states that reflects our power, our status, our influence and our importance as self-governing democracies. I am afraid that I must tell my right hon. and learned Friend that pride is not something by which I set much constitutional store.

At the intergovernmental conference in 1996 we must insist to our European partners that the objective of moving decisions closer to the citizen is to apply subsidiarity to the objectives of the treaties themselves. We shall consider the principles of economic and monetary union, having found by then, as the Prime Minister said in his article in *The Economist,* that

"the troubles in the ERM are just a foretaste of the difficulties in moving to a full monetary union"

and having discovered that so much of the power moved to the centre has been misused to over-regulate, to destroy jobs, to remove the pride of the independent nation states and to create a sense of crisis between the elected representatives and the despair of the people. We shall move the powers back to the nation states. Ultimately, the European Community can govern only through the consent of the nation states. We need to remember that.

8.51 pm

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): The motion asks the House to take note of many things, two of which are the preliminary draft budget for the European Community for 1994, and the letter of amendment No. 1 to that draft budget. I agree entirely with the hon. Members, especially my hon. Friends, who have said that one of the greatest challenges facing the EC is unemployment. However, another corrosive problem keeps eating away at the base of the Community—the common agricultural policy. That has hardly been mentioned in the debate, yet 34 billion ecu is to be spent on it out of a total original budget of about 69 billion ecu.

A previous Minister of Agriculture, who is now the Secretary of State for the Environment, told the House when he reported on his endeavours to reform the CAP that the deal was good for the country, good for farmers, good for consumers and good for taxpayers. However, although the right hon. Gentleman may have convinced the House to change the track, the train is still out of control.

The ink was not dry on the preliminary draft budget for 1994, which was presumably agreed by the Government, when letter of amendment No. 1 was written. I do not believe that that document is in the pile of papers that hon. Members have been given, but, as a result of it, the Government agreed to increase the draft budget for next year by no less than 700 million ecu. I am not a great mathematician, but that sum must knock a hole in £500 million.

At the same time that the Government were agreeing those horrendous increases, most of which go to the agriculture budget, they were cutting unemployment pay and the money for public services, and saying that we must have strong control of public expenditure. When the Chancellor of the Exchequer winds up the debate, he should explain why public expenditure has to be so tightly controlled in this country, whereas £500 million here or there for the CAP, which is clearly out of control, is okay.

I ask hon. Members, before they vote for the motion to take note of the preliminary draft budget and the letter of amendment, to consider a few examples of what we are to take note of. As I have already said, there is an increase in agriculture expenditure of about £500 billion for next year—and let us not forget that that comes on top of what is already a record agriculture budget.

Here are some examples of what the letter of amendment asks hon. Members to take note of. We are told that cereal storage should be reduced, yet it is to have an increase of about £6 million. Premiums for tobacco—I am sure that the House is concerned about those—are to increase by £4·8 million. Export refunds for cheese are to increase by £13 million, and skimmed milk powder export refunds by £34 million. Depreciation allowances for dairy produce are to increase by £39 million, and export refunds for beef by £3·5 million. The list goes on and on.

The result of all that is that we shall be asked to take note of about half a billion pounds being added to an already record common agricultural policy budget. How that will benefit taxpayers escapes me. Perhaps when the Chancellor sums up he will tell us how further spending of half a billion pounds on agricultural policy will benefit the taxpayers of the United Kingdom—but of course, benefiting the taxpayers of the United Kingdom is not exactly the Chancellor's forte at the moment; I fully understand that.

I cannot understand how the settlement equates to the assurances given to farmers, either. Perhaps we will be told that, too. The truth is that the so-called CAP reforms have turned what was a crisis into a potential disaster, certainly in financial terms.

The amendment tabled by the Leader of the Opposition says that the Government have

"failed to advance British intersts."

I finish by saying that if we simply take note of the motion, it will be another example of how the Government are failing to advance the interests of the British people. Those interests are totally overwhelmed by Government dogma, which firmly places the United Kingdom within the margins of the European Community and keeps us enmeshed in the morass of the common agricultural policy waste.

Let me make it clear that there can be no progress unless the waste is tackled. We simply cannot have a Government saying that they are firmly in control of measures when £500 million is given willy-nilly to the common agricultural policy, which we all know is a massive waste. There must be fundamental change.

When we consider the issues in front of us today, we see that perhaps the Government's greatest failure is that they reject investment that will attack unemployment but seem to be enthusiastic and willing to pour hundreds of millions of pounds down the black hole that is the common agricultural policy.

8.58 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): In this wide-ranging debate, which is taking place on the eve of the European summit, at which a paper on competitiveness, growth and jobs will be discussed, our argument is that Europe has failed to succeed in its aspirations in the past year. As my right hon. Friend the shadow Foreign Secretary said, Europe has failed to succeed in its aspirations for Yugoslavia and the protection of minority rights there, and in its aspirations for Russia and eastern Europe where the problems still remain intractable. Domestically, it has failed on recovery and the issue of unemployment.

The Government have failed not because co-operation has been too great and too extensive, but because co-operation on investment, industry and employment measures has been too little and too unambitious. Instead of promoting the co-operation that is necessary for job and growth measures, the Government should follow the examples set by Japan and the United States of expanding both demand and capacity in their economies.

The Government are engaged in their age-old trick of frustrating European initiatives, even when it is clear that greater co-operation is needed to solve the problem of long-term growth in Europe. We need co-ordinated measures on investment and jobs, as I shall explain. We need measures to build for the long term, as well as expediting the completion of a GATT agreement, not least by dealing with the problem of agricultural protectionism that is costing British families so much. My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) referred to that agricultural protectionism.

We need a proposal for a European recovery fund and measures for starting infrastructure projects that would improve Britain's rail and communications links. A co-ordinated cut in interest rates in Europe is desirable and, indeed, necessary. We need measures to cut waste and fraud, not least in the administration of the common agricultural fund. Practical measures rather than rhetoric would be to the benefit of not only Britain but all the countries in Europe.

We should ensure—the Chancellor should realise this—that Britain takes full advantage of social, regional and other funds in Europe which are available and which could and should be taken up by the end of the year to create jobs and opportunities, especially in some of the most depressed communities in the United Kingdom.

Our argument is that the Government's ambivalence, and even the Chancellor's hostility, towards co-operation in Europe is such that even the public investment initiatives that Britain sponsored last year at the December summit—and which the Government boasted about selling to the rest of Europe—are being thwarted with cuts in public investment in the United Kingdom.

It is our contention that Britain is not only attempting to export a deregulation dogma which has not worked here and which will not work in Europe but that the whole purpose of the deregulation debate inside the Conservative party is a squalid and futile attempt—eventually it will be unsuccessful—to paper over the cracks among Tory Members to appease the Conservative right, rather than to do anything practical to achieve the sustained recovery and growth that we need.

Tomorrow, in Europe, the Government will propose measures not only because they believe that such measures will help to advance Britain or Europe. They think that simply by having something European to blame, it will help to unite what is a divided Conservative party on Europe. Our analysis of what is wrong and what needs to be done is different from that of the Government. We cannot deregulate 17 million men and women back to work in a European version of the crude market dogma that has failed in Britain. But deregulation without the implementation of the skills revolution will take us backwards rather than forwards.

In a world of global markets and the global sourcing of companies—the Pacific rim is growing at a much faster rate than the United Kingdom or any other European country; China has a growth rate of nearly 10 per cent.; and even low-wage Singapore is shifting production to low-wage China—the idea that our future lies in a low-wage, low-skill and low-investment economy is laughable. The idea that we should become the Singapore of Europe is farcical, absurd and, indeed, retrograde.

We should recognise that in a world of high technology and premium custom-built goods, where what matters is the skill and investment in the work force, we should not be taking the road of low growth, low investment and low wages. We should be looking for the road of high employment, high investment, high skills and eventually a high-wage economy.

The British problem of low competitiveness cannot be solved purely by cuts in wage costs in the vain hope of

[Mr. Gordon Brown]

raising productivity. It must be solved by ensuring, through the sure prospect of investment, that we have the capacity and the skills to make investment work and to secure long-term growth. However, as the benefits of co-operation arise through the solution to the problem of skills in Europe, we need a programme to modernise and to expand both the capacity and the demand in the European economy.

I believe that it is possible in Europe today to expand demand by interest rate cuts and investment measures without the balance of payments constraints that we have had elsewhere. As on other issues with which the European Community must deal, we should recognise the benefits of co-operation and of doing together what we cannot do separately or on our own.

The Chancellor was suggesting on the radio today that Britain does not need to participate in such a programme for long-term, investment-led growth, and he confuses Britain's position in the economic cycle with the intrinsic strength of our economy. Let me tell him what everyone in the country knows. Britain has not done the best in the EC during the 1990s. Britain has been doing almost the worst of all our European competitors in employment, output and investment. It is precisely for those reasons that we must address the problems, not just in Britain, but together with our competitors in Europe.

Britain has suffered more permanent structural damage than almost all of our competitors in the EC. This country has, in particular, a huge investment deficit and that is why we, as much as anybody else, need many of the initiatives which will be proposed in Europe tomorrow.

Let us be clear about what has happened during the 1990s to the British economy. Our national income has fallen faster than that of almost every other country in Europe. While it has risen in Germany, France, Belgium, Denmark and most of the other countries in Europe, Britain has seen a fall in national income since the beginning of the decade. Employment has fallen by 7 per cent. in Britain, while it has risen by 7 per cent. in Luxembourg, 4 per cent. in Portugal, 7 per cent. in Spain and 2 per cent. in Denmark. *[Laughter]* Ministers may laugh, but Britain has had the biggest fall in employment during the 1990s.

Ministers should be ashamed that they went into the previous election with promises that the recovery would begin the day after the election. For months afterwards, unemployment rose as a result of their policies. *[Interruption.]* The Minister with responsibility for deregulation will be aware that unemployment in this country has risen since the beginning of the 1990s by 76 per cent., and that is unrivalled by any of the other countries in the EC.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: With respect, the hon. Gentleman is trying to ride over perfectly well-judged interventions from my hon. and right hon. Friends. The hon. Gentleman chooses a selective period and he knows that, at the moment, this country is the only one which is enjoying growth among the major economies of western Europe. Industrial production in the latest three months is up by 3 per cent., whereas the year-on-year figures are 5 per cent. down for Germany, 3·5 per cent. down for France and 1·25 per cent. down for Italy. Britain's is the only major European economy for which anybody is forecasting significant growth next year. The hon. Gentleman makes extremely careful use of figures by choosing a rather unlikely starting date.

Mr. Brown: The latest figures show that investment, employment and manufacturing employment are still falling. *[Interruption.]* I will give way to the Chancellor, who can give us the figures.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Our position is substantially better than that of western Europe. The hon. Gentleman knows that unemployment in this country has gone down in seven of the last nine months, while it continues to rise in other western European countries. Unemployment is much worse in France than it is here, it is getting steadily worse in Germany and it is disastrously bad in Spain.

Britain is leading the way in the European Union towards recovery. We lead our partners in Europe who will begin to show the same signs of recovery in due course. The hon. Gentleman does not help his case by giving the rather extraordinary picture of Britain being in crisis while the rest of Europe is doing better. The reverse is the case.

Mr. Brown: Once again, I notice that the Chancellor, with his grasp of the facts, fails to answer my question. The latest figures show that employment in Britain is still falling and manufacturing employment is still falling.

Perhaps the Chancellor should explain why the President of the Board of Trade had to go to the Institute of Directors and explain why British competitiveness was still 25 per cent. below the standards of our main European competitors. That is after 14 years during which, the Government claim, they presided over an economic miracle.

I shall be fair to the Chancellor and look at what has happened over the 14 years of Conservative government. We have one of the lowest growth rates and manufacturing investment has fallen in real terms. Employment has risen by 0·4 per cent. in Britain, which the Chancellor claims to be the deregulated paradise of Europe, but it has risen by six times that amount in France. The Chancellor should look at the record of the Government of which he boasts he has been a member over those 14 years. I shall give way to the Chancellor to allow him to supply figures to show that manufacturing and other employment is rising.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is choosing curious periods and curious selective figures. I have given him the figures for employment. He is wrong to deny that unemployment has been falling in Britain at a time when it is not falling in the rest of western Europe. He has gone back to the late 1970s, to the recession that we inherited. In the decade from 1980, economic growth was faster in the United Kingdom than in France or Germany. In the 1980s, we created well over 1 million new jobs, more than either France or Germany. Of course the hon. Gentleman will not face up to today's figures, which show that the United Kingdom is growing and is expected to grow faster next year when other economies are still in recession.

Mr. Brown: The Chancellor never read the Maastricht treaty and he clearly does not read the economic statistics supplied to him by his Treasury colleagues. He has failed to answer my direct question about employment levels or manufacturing employment. As for the record of growth, he could not give exact figures since 1979. Manufacturing growth in Britain has been 5 per cent., which means that the great economic miracle country has grown at one fifth the rate of Germany where growth was 25 per cent. America has grown by 36 per cent. and Japan has grown by 51 per cent. I shall give way once more to the Chancellor if he can deny those figures.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Economic growth in the United Kingdom in the 1980s was faster than in Germany or France. We created more jobs than Germany or France, but the record over the two previous decades was worse than that of our rivals. The hon. Gentleman is trying to make selective use of historical figures and that is nonsense. He is trying to claim that, at the moment, we are not recovering when we are plainly doing so faster than anywhere else in western Europe.

Mr. Brown: The Chancellor has simply proved that he will try to bluster his way through any intervention. He has not given one fact to substantiate his claims. He claims that growth during the period of Conservative government was faster than that of any other country in Europe. Since 1979, growth in Britain has been lower than that in western Germany, France or Italy, and lower than the European average. Therefore, his claims about growth, like his claims about manufacturing output and general and manufacturing employment, are wrong. He has been unable to justify his position at any point in this exchange.

The Chancellor claims to be interested in European convergence, but neither in his interventions nor in his Budget has he produced one policy measure that will achieve that. What has happened since the Government went to the Edinburgh summit and announced a new policy for which the Prime Minister claimed praise? At that December summit in 1992, the then Chancellor was not only pleading with Europe to cut interest rates all round but was taking credit for British proposals that the Community should invest out of recession, as he said Britain was doing. The Government said that Europe should follow Britain's lead of public investment.

The European communique that the Prime Minister had played a part in writing said that, as far as possible, we should switch public expenditure priorities to infrastructure, capital investment and growth that would earn a worthwhile return. It was said that that was an urgent priority throughout Europe. The Prime Minister reported to the House that

> "member states agreed, following the pattern of our own autumn statement, to give priority to capital spending and encourage private investment".—[*Official Report*, 14 December 1992; Vol. 216, c. 23.]

After the December summit, private investment in Britain continued to fall in 1993, and business investment has continued to fall. That package was hailed by *The Times* as "John Major pulls it off". The Prime Minister was reported as saying that the heads of Government had praised the outcome of the summit, which was a boost to investment worth £24 billion. It was claimed that Europe's 17 million unemployed had reason to be grateful to the Prime Minister.

Since then, the European investment fund, with which Britain was supposed to be leading the way, came before the House only a few days ago and it is not even up and running.

Most important of all, we discovered in last week's Budget that Britain had dropped the very public investment initiatives for which the Government claim credit in the rest of Europe. There will be a 3 per cent. cut in public investment this coming year; a 3 per cent. cut the year after that; cuts in transport investment, despite the Conservative manifesto commitment that the Government would improve transport over three years; cuts in London Underground; cuts in infrastructure; cuts in the environment; and public investment cuts all round of 25 per cent. effectively as a result of Government proposals.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Brown: The Chancellor shakes his head, but I suppose that, once again, he will be unable to give any figures to justify his position. General Government capital expenditure will fall from £13 billion in 1993-94 to £10·7 billion in 1994-95—a drop of 18 per cent. Even the new measure that the Chancellor chose to use—public sector asset creation—will fall in real terms over the next few years. What was meant to be an anti-recessionary package is being abandoned with public expenditure cuts, and something hailed throughout Europe has led to some of the biggest public investment cuts in this country's history.

Britain has failed to support not only the European Commission's proposals but even its own proposals. I can think of nothing more reprehensible than for the Government to claim all the credit from the December summit and now to cut public investment—in the same way that they broke their promises on VAT, national insurance and everything else.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I will give way to the Chancellor one last time if he will give the House information, not the bluster that we have heard in the past few minutes.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for being generous with his time. His description of the follow-up to the Edinburgh facility was quite extraordinary. The new facility was set up through the European Investment Bank.

Mr. Brown: The fund.

Mr. Clarke: No. The first facility was the bank, then the fund. We were among the early ones to ratify as a result of the parliamentary vote. Under the Edinburgh facility, the United Kingdom has already borrowed 852 mecu, which is approximately £640 million, for infrastructure investment in this country. The United Kingdom is the largest borrower under the Edinburgh facility, taking advantage of the announcement that the hon. Gentleman correctly quoted.

The difficulty—I will be fair to the hon. Gentleman—is that the Commission produced the European Union bond proposal only three days ago. The hon. Gentleman totally misunderstands the point that we are arguing. We launched the Edinburgh facility, and the United Kingdom is the major user and beneficiary of that initiative, which was launched by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Mr. Brown: The Chancellor fails to say that the European Investment Bank facility has not been used up in its entirety over the year. The European investment fund was actually the new project created at Edinburgh, not the European Investment Bank—which has been going for years. The European investment fund created at Edinburgh is not yet up and running, more than 12 months after it was created. The Chancellor should apologise to the House because the initiative of the previous Chancellor is not yet

[Mr. Brown]

up and running. It may help in the next recession, but, because of the delays, it will not be of much help in this recession.

Let us consider the other investment projects that should be sponsored by Europe and where the Chancellor has once again failed. What about the water initiative? Only a few days ago, the Chancellor went to Europe to say that we could not afford to go ahead with the water directives. He told us that we have to cut water quality standards.

What does the Delors European document say? What is it that the Chancellor is ready to reject when he goes to Europe tomorrow? It talks about the projects that could gain European finance under the proposals. It says that the projects concern water control, urban waste water treatment and renovation of water supply distribution systems. The Community could help finance some 25 billion ecus of action in this area of environmental concern over the period 1994 to 1999.

Under the new proposals from Delors, Commission help is available to boost our water quality. So why is the Chancellor saying that we have to cut water standards when he should be supporting the investment facility that could improve water standards in Britain?

The Chancellor knows very well that the cut in water quality standards is a cut in the facilities for the treatment of sewage. One in five of our beaches does not meet the European Community environmental standards and we are second bottom in the European league for meeting the higher guidance requirements for our beaches.

We know that water standards for urban waste are the second worst in Europe. We have agreed, over a period of years, by sponsoring the directive that we should do something about those standards. We have signed up to the directive and the Conservative party boasted in its manifesto that its commitment to the environment was beyond doubt. The National Consumer Council has made it clear that there is a variety of ways in which water companies could be involved in meeting the targets and we now have the means by which the Government could seek support in Europe to pay for raising the quality of our water. Given all that, why does the Chancellor want to pursue a deregulation course in Europe? I suggest that the reason is that the Chancellor wants to appease the Tory European right in a vain attempt to hold together a divided Conservative party.

The next initiative in the Delors proposals tomorrow is the channel tunnel rail link. At the Edinburgh summit the one thing that the Government boasted about as the investment project that would be going ahead was the channel tunnel. They said that the channel tunnel rail link would proceed as a "joint venture". They said that it would be an increase in infrastructure investment of £2·3 billion. Presumably, that is not to help us out of this recession, but to help us out of the next recession because the starting date has been moved backwards and backwards and is now 2003. Conservative Members should be ashamed because there is national humiliation in the fact that trains will be able to travel at 185 mph from Paris to Calais, 85 mph through the tunnel and then, at best, at 47 mph from Dover to London. *[Interruption.]* The Financial Secretary asks if we have heard about the French planning system, as if the French rail links from Paris to Calais have not been completed or may not even have been started. In fact, the first link was completed in the summer and the second part was completed in September. The French planning system has managed to bring about a completion while we have another 10 years to wait as a result of the Government's neglect. It is no wonder President Mitterrand is looking forward to opening the channel tunnel. As he said, two worlds will be opened up as a result of the opening of the tunnel. There will be high-speed travel at 185 mph from Paris to Calais and then there will be time for leisurely journeys from Dover to appreciate the English countryside.

Even by the year 2000, French trains will have been able to travel at 185 mph for seven years. When Britain enters the millennium, people travelling from Dover to London will be looking at building sites where the work has not been completed, and they will see quantity surveyors travelling around in their vans to plot the route. That disgraceful state of affairs has been reached as a result of the Government's failure to understand the public interest in the completion of the project. It would be the stuff of an Ealing comedy if it were not fast becoming more like an Ealing tragedy every day.

What did the Chancellor say on "The World at One" today? He said that the channel link is not being held up particularly. The original starting date for its being in use was 1997, it was then pushed back to 1998, then 2000, more recently 2002, and now people fear it will be 2003—and the Chancellor, with his gift for accuracy, tells us that it has not been particularly held up.

What does the European Commission say about the channel tunnel rail link? It says that it should be a major priority project of Community interest; that it should be selected for a feasibility study; that it would be prepared to provide loan guarantees, and support the closing of missing links in the framework of projects of common interest. It is listed as one of the priority projects with which the Commission is prepared to go ahead, so why do the Government put up implacable resistance to projects of investment from which Britain is likely to benefit? The Foreign Secretary could not answer that question this afternoon. Britain would be a beneficiary of the investment funds made available by the Delors plan to enable projects to go ahead.

Why is that project not going ahead? Is it because there is no benefit for Britain?

Sir Teddy Taylor: Yes.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman should explain to the whole of Britain why he thinks that the absence of a channel tunnel rail link from Dover to London will be of benefit to this country. People are increasingly seeing it as a national humiliation. They blame the Government for failing to invest in our infrastructure.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: No, I am not giving way, I have only four minutes left.

If the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) is not trying to work his passage back—he was the hon. Member who led the Conservative opposition to the Maastricht Bill—perhaps he might intervene on the Chancellor and ask him why the Government have failed so miserably in relation to winning in Europe.

The Government oppose these projects, not because the private sector is more efficient, but because they oppose the public sector in its entirety. It is becoming very sad that to win his reputation with the Conservative right the Chancellor is prepared to sacrifice what is clearly a public-interest project which we should be supporting in Europe.

The "Budget for jobs" that the Chancellor introduced last week has become a Budget for his next job. It was simply an investment in his own future. It was a Budget for doing business with the members of the 1922 Committee, who wanted huge public expenditure cuts. Now, with his ambition to take over from the Prime Minister, he goes to Europe, bangs his fists on the table and shouts, "It is our money." It is the old no, no, no approach of Lady Thatcher; it has been dusted down and is now being used by the Chancellor to promote his candidature for his party's leadership.

There has been a complete shift in the Chancellor's behaviour in relation to Europe. His visits are characterised by confrontation and clashes. Wherever he goes to negotiate—often before the starting whistle—the Chancellor provokes confrontation. He is more interested in displays of pre-match aggro—wrapped in the Union Jack and spoiling for a fight—than in the real agenda and a positive result. It is a pity that our contributions to European discussions now have all the hallmarks of the most publicised feature of English football supporters abroad. That is what has happened under the Chancellor.

The reason is that the Chancellor is looking forward to three elections next year; not just the local elections and the European elections—in which he expects the Conservative party to do badly—but the third election that will follow them, the one for the Tory leadership. Let me give the Chancellor a warning: he should not forget that, after the third election, a fourth will be necessary—an election among the British people, which the Conservative party will lose.

Finally, let us examine the Conservative party's proposals on jobs. The Conservatives admit that unemployment is a structural problem; they admit that it has been rising recession by recession; they admit that training is inadequate in Britain. The document, however, contains little more than a continuation of the crede deregulation strategy that has done nothing for Britain over the past 14 years.

If deregulation works, why did Britain have a higher unemployment rate throughout the 1980s than France, Germany and Italy—the countries that, according to the Government, are over-regulated and sclerotic? If deregulation is the answer, why has British employment growth been only 0·4 per cent. over the past 14 years, while in France it has been 3 per cent? If deregulation works, why, in the 1980s, did both the United Kingdom and the United States have a lower proportion of prime-age men in work than France, West Germany and Italy? If deregulation works, why did the President of the Board of Trade have to admit that Britain's competitiveness is 25 per cent. below that of our major European competitors?

I warn the Chancellor that there is no evidence that cutting unemployment benefit will increase employment. There is no evidence that cutting health and safety protection will mean more long-term jobs. There is no evidence that Britain's abandonment of the social chapter provisions—which were not abandoned by the rest of Europe—will mean more employment in Britain than elsewhere.

Does not the Chancellor understand that the real alternative to the deregulation policy that he pursues is investment in the skills of the people of this country, and the creation of a framework of personal security through the social chapter? To the unemployed, the Conservatives' deregulation strategy means the same as the supermarket slogan: pile 'em high and sell 'em cheap. We want no part of that strategy—in Britain, or on the Opposition Benches.

In the past few years, there has been a deliberate attempt to hold the Conservative party together for purely partisan purposes, at the expense of the national interest. The Conservative Government have opposed employment measures in Europe; they have opposed protection for school children working long hours; they have opposed protection for maternity rights and for jobs. Above all, they have opposed the social chapter. In all the negotiations that have taken place in Europe over the past three years, they have won no support for their position, not even from the political parties of the right.

The Conservatives have experienced 14 years of failure on growth, investment, employment and making Britain fair—14 years in which they have tried to blame everyone else, when the blame should be imposed on them. Because of that failure, they will lose the local elections, the European elections and the general election.

9.31 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I have seen the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) in autodrive before, but I have never seen him unable to stop. He went past the buffers and his argument reached a state of chaos. *[Interruption.]* I agree that the hon. Gentleman was generous with his time in conceding to me; unfortunately, he did not accept my correction of some of his assertions.

We should agree on the most important issues facing Europe at present: employment, growth and competitiveness. Those are the issues that we shall discuss at this weekend's summit. Britain will be at the heart of discussion of those issues in Europe and I believe that we have an extremely positive contribution to make.

The irony of the situation—which no doubt baffles anyone who listened from the Galleries to the hon. Gentleman's diatribe—is that many of my views on the European Union are not so very different from his. The same applied to the previous shadow spokesman whom I faced at the Dispatch Box. I certainly agree that Europe needs to tackle the problems involved in employment, growth and competitiveness. *[Interruption.]* After hearing one or two of today's speeches, I am not sure that others understand M. Delors' proposals any better than the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East; but I would forgive them all. The proposals that the hon. Gentleman defends with such passion were produced on Monday and he had not understood them by Thursday.

The hon. Gentleman is talking gobbledegook. The proposals should never have been produced at such a late stage, for he has been sadly misled. I think that I have the only proper copy of the document in the House. If the hon. Gentleman has had time to read it—I forgive him if he has not—he certainly has not understood it, as was plain from the beginning of his speech to the end. I believe that, when he has digested it and when we begin proper discussion of it on Saturday, he will begin to understand that all this stuff about our being against transport investment and not taking advantage of European facilities is nonsense.

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

What is wrong with Europe? As should be seen both by those who favour our present arrangements for the European Union and those who are more sceptical, we need to pursue together the goals of greater competitiveness, tackling structural unemployment and improving the position of industries. We will achieve that not through ranting speeches and press releases issued on Monday in order to secure a good headline on Saturday, but through the purposeful creation of conditions that will give rise to more competitiveness, growth and jobs.

Mr. Gordon Brown: The Chancellor mentioned transport infrastructure. I would like him to answer one question: when will the channel tunnel rail link be completed?

Mr. Clarke: When the design is completed, the route settled and the private investment is introduced. It is not being held up—*[Interruption.]* The French built their system because they did not have the dispute that we had all over Kent and east London about where it should go. The channel tunnel rail link is not devoid of people investing in it. It will raise private finance quite straightforwardly and it does not need the new facility—the union bonds—which the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East appears to believe are the answer to a maiden's prayer, with the Commission suddenly coming in and taking it over. He has been totally misled by an out-of-a-back-pocket proposal, produced only two or three days ago.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: No. Let us try to have a sensible debate. *[Interruption.]* Just steady on a moment. Let us discuss the situation on public infrastructure.

The British Government are a strong supporter of the construction of what are known in Euro jargon as trans-European networks. I strongly believe that if we are to take full advantage of the single market, we must develop the networks of the kind described. It was a provision of the Maastricht treaty—I was in favour of the treaty—that such networks should be put in place.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way when I have explained what we should be talking about.

The way in which those networks are being financed at the moment, and, in our opinion, the way in which they should be financed, is by a combination of private finance plus the facilities from the European Investment Bank, plus the European investment fund, which the House has just agreed that we should rectify, taking advantage of the Edinburgh growth initiative in which the British Government were a major participant.

Mr. Enright: Give us the dates.

Mr. Clarke: With the assistance of the European Investment Bank we are already building the Jubilee line extension—*[Interruption.]*—the Severn bridge project and the Manchester light railway, all of which were financed by borrowings from the European Investment Bank. *[Interruption.]* If Opposition Members think that all that is needed to start the high speed tunnel link tomorrow is a loan from President Delors, and if they solemnly imagine that that is remotely the difficulty, I would not put them in charge of building a garden path. I advise them to visit Kent to inquire into the background of the project and see what is being done at the moment to design it. Opposition Members have only to see one headline in the newspaper, "Money from Europe to build the channel tunnel link", and they have their Front Bench spokesman wild with excitement and believing that it can be built tomorrow.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East rattled through the Edinburgh initiative. That initiative built on the European Investment Bank. The Edinburgh facility was an enlargement of the borrowing from that bank.

Over the years, we have been the third-largest borrower from the European Investment Bank. In 1992, United Kingdom undertakings borrowed a total of £1,795 million from it. Ironically, given the hon. Gentleman's case, water companies are among the major beneficiaries in this country from those European facilities. The hon. Gentleman says that he wants facts, but there was not an accurate fact in his speech from beginning to end. The large amount borrowed by the water companies is £496 million and that is continuing in 1993.

At the Edinburgh summit we announced the Edinburgh facility, an enlargement of European investment funds. I have already said that the United Kingdom has taken more advantage of that than any other member country. So far, we have borrowed approximately £640 million.

There are still outstanding moneys under the Edinburgh facility. We should be prepared to consider an extension of the European facility if anyone at the summit can demonstrate that there is a need for such an extension by citing any projects of the kinds listed which are held up anywhere for lack of funds.

The hon. Gentleman is inadvertently and passionately defending an idea that the Commission should suddenly start borrowing on its own account and issuing so-called union bonds as an additional facility for which there is no demonstrable need.

That is not even a new idea, although it is to the hon. Gentleman. The Labour party has no policy on the economy or on Europe. Therefore, last Monday it borrowed what seemed to be the Commission's latest bright idea, but I remember that in the 1970s, under a Commissioner called Ortoli, it was suggested that the European Commission should be allowed to issue bonds on its own account and start to acquire a public sector debt as if it were a Government.

Is it the Opposition's position that, at a time when all over Europe tough budgetary decisions are being taken to reduce Government borrowing, the Labour party is, overnight, in favour of allowing the Commission to increase its borrowings and start issuing bonds as if it were a Government for no demonstrable purpose?

Mr. Stevenson: Will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Clarke: No. If I have time I might come to the hon. Gentleman's points, with which I have considerable sympathy. I have had to spend this long explaining to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East that he is talking about fool's gold, which has fooled him completely into believing that we are resisting some lightning method of moving forward into great infrastructure projects.

If the hon. Gentleman is seriously interested in growth, employment and competitiveness, what common-sense propositions do we have to put forward, which we are putting forward and on which we are winning friends inside the European Community?

The first proposition that we are advancing is the need for economic convergence, following the Maastricht criteria, low inflation, a subject never mentioned by the Labour party, and low public borrowing, which Britain is likely to achieve at a faster rate than others. That is a key to European policy.

The Labour party in Britain would not achieve either. It is not in favour of low inflation. Its policies, announced last week, of not raising taxation, increasing public spending and borrowing more money would take them away from the convergence criteria on which every other member state is agreed.

The second proposition, never mentioned by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, includes open markets and free trading. It is astonishing that someone who claims to be a serious shadow Chancellor does not mention the GATT round or the trading position of the European Community——

Mr. Gordon Brown: Will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman to see whether he understands the GATT round any more than he understands European capital financing.

Mr. Brown: The Chancellor said that I had failed to mention the GATT round. He is absolutely wrong. Will he now apologise?

Mr. Clarke: If the hon. Gentleman is in favour of the GATT round, I apologise for missing his one good point in the stream of consciousness gabble that he gave to us when he completely misunderstood the purpose of the Delors White Paper. If the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East wishes to extend his knowledge of open, free-trading policies, he might agree that the Government are right to insist in Europe on completion of the single market, run on the basis of proper competition policy and a single market that steadily gets rid of state aids, which distort competition in the economy. They are right to insist on opening the markets of the European Union—following the GATT round, which I hope will be concluded successfully in the next few days—especially for the countries of eastern and central Europe. That is the second item of the positive agenda that we are pressing ahead in Europe. The first item is economic convergence, the second is open markets and free trade.

The third part of our agenda, the true European agenda, is encouraging enterprise in the EC. *[Interruption.]* Yes. If Opposition Members had copies of the White Paper or had read it, they would find that that idea is slowly entering the arguments of our partners.

Mr. Stevenson: Will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Clarke: As the hon. Gentleman made one of the few speeches that contained parts with which I agreed, although I would be reckless to agree with some parts of it, I shall give way to him.

Mr. Stevenson: Will the Chancellor explain to the House how the Government are promoting enterprise when, on 15 November, the Budget Council, on which the Government are represented, unanimously agreed to another 700 million ecu of wasteful agricultural expenditure? How is that promoting enterprise?

Mr. Clarke: That was the part of the hon. Gentleman's speech with which I had some sympathy—he should join the Treasury. We have tackled that. I had considerable sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's strictures on the common agricultural policy. He was putting forward a point of view with which the Government had considerable sympathy. We tackled it at the Edinburgh summit, during the British presidency. We are quite clear, as my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said when he opened the debate, that the own resources ceiling and the agricultural guideline which we set at Edinburgh must be adhered to. We have capped that agricultural spending. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is important to do so, because it leaves us freer to pursue the agenda, which includes encouraging enterprise.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Clarke: In a moment. We believe in reducing burdens on business. If Opposition Members do not believe that we are winning that argument in Europe, they should study the documents before us.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Clarke: I will in a second.

We are also encouraging small and medium-sized enterprises. I remember in Europe six years ago the Government were almost alone in advocating the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises. The White Paper and guidelines contain copious references to them—British policy—because we see those enterprises as the major source of new jobs in Europe in the 1990s and we are getting that into the European agenda. We would like to go further in lifting burdens and we believe that the White Paper is going in the right direction but does not go far enough. We should like to advocate an audit of existing legislation, whether it be under the social chapter or any other heading, to get rid of those useless burdens on German, French and British employers which are inhibiting the creation of new jobs. I willingly give way to my hon. Friend.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is not it intensely gratifying for my right hon. and learned Friend and indeed the Prime Minister that they now have German converts on the matter of competition? The German document states:

> "Increasing regulation and the growing complexity of provisions must not be allowed to restrict unduly the creative forces and initiative of citizens of business enterprises and burden them with the costs."

That is exactly what my right hon. and learned Friend has been saying and other Governments have now taken notice.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend is right. She has been a Member of the European Parliament. The Labour party would be in a minority of one in the Council of Europe in advocating the nonsense that it still turns out as its policy. Time was when the economic approach of the European Commission and many of our partners came straight out of Harold Wilson's Government of the 1960s. We have now changed the climate in the rest of Europe, but the British Labour movement remains rooted in its historical past.

We go on to advocate flexible labour markets, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) said, a policy that is now incorporated in

[Mr. Clarke]

the White Paper. Also contained in the White Paper is our belief in modernising social protection to give affordable, well-targeted social protection schemes that increase incentives to work.

All that is in the programme of work before the House and it has all been resisted by the Opposition, who sit there fondly imagining that they are supporting the growth initiative of European Governments this weekend. As I have already described when I went over the whole question of infrastructure investment, the Opposition simply do not understand and their approach to Europe is to defend an approach to job creation that is no longer advocated by our European partners.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) passionately defended the White Paper. Apparently, it is now the British Labour movement's policy. This second version came out on Monday. There was an earlier version—[HON. MEMBERS: "It is the third version."] It may be the third version, but it is the second one that I have seen. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who opened the debate, had not read a single one of the pile of documents. The explanatory memorandum of the last White Paper is in the pile. It is the only one that reached the Finance Committee. If there was a previous one, it never emerged from the Commission. If the hon. Gentleman had read it, he would know that it was quite different and, together with other Finance Ministers, I challenged it only a month or six weeks ago. Then, work sharing was the great new idea being put forward by the Commission in that White Paper.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East says that I go to Europe to create controversy. Yes, I challenge the fallacy that there is one lump of labour and the approach should be to ration it and share it out. I also challenge the fallacy that Europe can compete better with the Japanese and the rest of the world by working shorter hours. Hon. Members ask me to prove that we are winning the argument. The proof is here. Where is the work sharing which the Labour party would have advocated and bought a month ago? *[Interruption.]* They bought this one quickly enough; I am surprised that they hesitated before buying the previous one.

We now have a document that bears the stamp of this Government's policies. The work sharing has gone and the idea of union bonds has been inserted at the last moment. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East is one of the few people in Europe who swallowed that idea hook, line and sinker on the day that it appeared. I do not think that that will go much further, either.

I do not know how the hon. Gentleman will explain to British constituents—any more than a German could explain to German constituents or a Frenchman to French constituents—when we all agree to the economic guidelines and agree that Governments should reduce the public sector deficit, as we are, and get our budgets under control, that the Commission should be allowed to borrow billions of ecu, which he would merrily spend, creating a borrowing requirement all of its own.

We are having such an influence because we are leading the way into economic recovery.

Mr. Shore: I am glad that the Chancellor has, at last, mentioned the paper on economic guidelines under the Maastricht treaty. The purport of those guidelines is precisely to bully member states—not necessarily the United Kingdom, but the other member states—into accepting the reduction of their public sector borrowing requirements as quickly as possible to 3 per cent. and, in general, into adopting the deflationary policies of economic and monetary union. Is not it a contradiction for the Commission, which still supports precisely that policy and those commitments, now to come forward in the guise of expansion in the form of Delors proposals mark 2? Is not Mr. Delors suffering from schizophrenia?

Mr. Clarke: With respect, it is no good the right hon. Gentleman telling me that—it is the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East who is showing that. I do not accept that the economic guidelines are a classic, traditional deflationary policy. It is certainly true that the Commission suggested as one of the essential macro-economic preconditions for growth and recovery that we get inflation down throughout Europe to the levels that Britain is now achieving and that we get the public sector deficits of the member states down to the levels for which we are aiming —to 3 per cent. of GDP by 1996-97. That is an objective being pursued by every other member state and, as a result of last week's Budget, we are more on course to achieve those criteria than most other member states. The British labour movement is quite alone in opposing those criteria.

The guidelines contain many additional positive suggestions for economic policy going way beyond deflationary policy, but one must begin by tightening the budgetary position, and fiscal policy where there are huge and unsustainable deficits, some of which in western Europe are much worse than ours. One must also get inflation down to a low and sustainable level. Then one must pursue the policy that I set our earlier, that of lifting the impediments from industry, getting social security spending down to affordable levels and building into the social security systems the incentives to encourage people back to work, as we are doing in this country. All those policies are commended in the better parts of the document because the Government have had a substantial input. We are resisting those parts of the old theology, of the old Europe and of the old Wilsonian recipe which keep coming back to joyous approval from the Labour party.

As I said, listening to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, Eat, if one knew nothing of the outside world, it would be impossible to imagine that we were the only major European country experiencing significant growth in 1993. It is not only I who predict that growth in Britain will improve in 1994—so do the International Monetary Fund, the European Commission and the Organisation for European Co-operation and Development. Apart from the hon. Gentleman, there is no one in Britain who does not believe that the British economy will be the fastest growing in the European Community next year. *[Interruption.]* There are at least 15 million unemployed people in the European Community and the number is rising. The unemployed in the rest of western Europe hope that they will experience the fall in unemployment—the growth in employment—which has already begun in this country and which needs to be strengthened and sustained.

Mr. Enright: Will the Chancellor answer one question —when will the channel link be completed?

Mr. Clarke: The channel tunnel link has to be designed —*[Laughter.]* We need the legislation. The routes of the high-speed trains in France are normally constructed by drawing a line on a map after no public inquiry; the lines are just built. I am sure that the finance will be readily available for the channel tunnel link. It is the height of folly for the Opposition to imagine that somehow the channel tunnel link is being held up for lack of provision suggested in the Commission's White Paper.

The Opposition know nothing at all about the design and forwarding of major construction projects; they know nothing whatever about the policies of the European Union. They have only to see the glint of money—however unreal—to believe that there must be a new source of spending one's way to growth and recovery.

As a result of the successful policies that we have pursued, which gave us higher levels of growth in the 1980s than our major European rivals, and which led to more job creation in the 1980s than in Germany or France and which are now giving us the growth and recovery that we are beginning to experience, people in Europe are listening to the British and the Conservative experience.

They are privatising, they are deregulating, they are going for competitive open markets and they will be glad that my right hon. Friends and I are going to the Council this weekend when they read of the Labour party still living in the past and believing that borrowing and spending is a solution to their problems. They could profit from reading some of those documents. They could profit more from following the Government's example on economic policy.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House proceeded to a Division——

Mr. David Willetts (Havant) *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I understand that there are three Labour Members in the No Lobby who are refusing to vote. I should be grateful if you could ask the Serjeant at Arms to ensure that they vote against the amendment.

Madam Speaker: If there is a delay, of course I shall ask the Serjeant at Arms to see what is happening in the No Lobby.

The House having divided: Ayes 236, Noes 297.

Division No. 23] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David

Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. Eric Illsley, and
Mr. John Spellar.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry

Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Quesiton put:—

The House divided: Ayes 293, Noes 232.

Division No. 24] **[10.16 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David

Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Derek Conway.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. John Spellar.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the White Paper on developments in the European Community, July to December 1992 (Cm. 2168), the White Paper on developments in the European Community, January to June 1993 (Cm. 2369), the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by HM Treasury on 6th December 1993 on the Commission's recommendation for the broad guidelines for economic policies under Article 103(2) of the Treaty establishing the European Community, European Community Documents Nos. COM (93) 700, the Commission's White Book on growth, competitiveness and employment, COM (93) 545, the Commission's report to the European Council on subsidiarity, 7194/93, on reinforcing the effectiveness of the internal market, 7665/93, the Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1994, 9303/93, the letter of amendment No. 1 to the Preliminary Draft Budget for 1994, 8012/93, the Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1994, and 9922/93, the European Parliament's proposed amendments and modifications to the Draft Budget for 1994, the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by HM Treasury on 22nd November 1993, relating to the Council's decisions on the European Parliament's proposed amendments and modifications to the Draft Budget for 1994, the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by HM Treasury on 2nd November 1993, relating to the revision of the Financial Perspective for 1994, and OJ C309, the Annual Report of the European Court of Auditors concerning the financial year 1992, together with the replies of the Institutions.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I should like to seek your guidance. Is it within the voting procedures of the House for an hon. Member to be in both Lobbies during a Division? The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) was in both Lobbies during the first Division, not to rectify a vote but so that he could be first out on the subsequent vote. Is not that a gross misuse of our voting procedures? If nothing else, is not it a gross discourtesy to you as the Speaker and to us as the House of Commons?

Madam Speaker: I would prefer it if hon. Members were not over-keen, but I understand their anxiety to get through early. I understand that the Member or Members involved had already voted and were ready to vote in the second Division, on the main Question.

PETITION

Salmon Farming

10.32 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I am grateful for the opportunity to present a petition to the House from the Orkney and Shetland salmon farmers. The petition was presented yesterday to me as Opposition fisheries spokesman, to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), who represents many of the salmon farmers, and to the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson).

The petition expresses concern about the dire consequences for the Scottish salmon farming industry of the dumping of salmon from Norway within the European Community. It is clearly being dumped on to the European and United Kingdom market at way below its production price. There is no doubt that the Scottish salmon industry feels that the Government have not fought its case strongly enough in the European Commission to ensure fair and legal trading opportunities for our salmon farming industry.

The petition makes it clear that more than 6,000 jobs in the industry are at risk. Those jobs are in rural areas where there are few job opportunities. There will be little chance of replacing the jobs if they are lost. The petition says:

> The Honourable, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled; the humble petition of the residents of Scotland, Shetland and Orkney sheweth the Scottish, Orkney and Shetland Salmon Farming industry requires urgent safeguard action measures that will achieve stability in our industry by a combination of a substantially increased minimum import price and a restriction on imports of salmon to the EC set at 2,000 tonnes per week.
>
> Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will request swift safeguard action from the EC Commission that will effectively introduce fair and legal market conditions for our industry's 6,000 employees and to protect our £200 million total contribution to the UK's balance of payments.

I very much hope that the Government will take note of this petition and will act upon it urgently.

To lie upon the Table.

Kashmir (Human Rights)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

10.35 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity of initiating this Adjournment debate. May I also thank the Under-Secretary of State for having the courtesy to be present to reply to this debate and his officials for being so helpful in supplying statistics.

I welcome to the debate my hon. Friends the Members for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) and for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan), together with my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope), who has a constituency interest in this problem. I also welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt). It is nice to see him here this evening.

With my hon. Friends the Members for Ealing, North, for Rutland and Melton and for Stroud, I recently had the opportunity of going to Pakistan to visit the refugee camps in the northern state of Azad Kashmir and to have direct discussions with the Pakistani Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto.

There are few Kashmiris, Indians or Pakistanis in my constituency and I therefore believe that I will be able to take an impartial view on the subject. It is important that we maintain good relations with both India and Pakistan. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have detailed knowledge of both countries and we should not be partial to one country or another. The problem just needs to be resolved.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the hon. Members he mentioned would be just as keen to visit India and Indian Kashmir as we were to visit Pakistan and Azad Kashmir, and to talk to the Indian Prime Minister about the problem? Does he also agree that the matter must, in the end, be resolved by the Indian and Pakistan Governments, in co-operation with the people of Kashmir, and that that must be what we press for?

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. I shall develop that subject later as it is extremely pertinent.

Kashmir is strategically placed in a valley below the roof of the world, in the Himalayan mountains. It adjoins China, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan, and its border is only 20 miles from the southern part of the former Soviet Union. Due to its geographical position, Kashmir is one of the scenic gems of the world. The Kashmiri people are peaceful and merely want to be allowed to live their lives unmolested.

For the record, I shall briefly sketch the history of the problem. In 1947, the British Government partitioned the Indian sub-continent into India, West and East Pakistan—the latter is now Bangladesh. United Nations resolutions were tabled in 1947, 1949, 1950, 1951 and 1957. They are still current and should be acted upon. It is probable that in those early days the problem might have been resolved were it not for the fact that the first Indian Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru, and his family came from Kashmir and he was determined that the status should not be altered. The Pakistan Army intervened in 1947 and eventually there was a United Nations-brokered ceasefire, following which the then Maharajah of Kashmir, Hari Singh, was obliged to sign an instrument of accession of Kashmir to India, with Jammu and the Vale remaining with India and Azad Kashmir forming part of an independent state, though for practical purposes it is now administered by Pakistan.

Twelve million people in Jammu and the Vale strongly identify with their kith and kin in Azad Kashmir. In addition, about 75 per cent. are Muslims, as are the people of Pakistan, which is why Pakistan was partitioned in the first place.

In the 1950s, under Nehru, India courted the former USSR while Pakistan allied with the United States of America. In the second Indo-Pakistani war in 1965, America imposed an arms embargo on both sides, whereupon Pakistan started to ally with China. That, basically, remains the position today, although Pakistan now has good relations with the west, and with the United Kingdom in particular. Since the break-up of the former Soviet Union, India has improved relations with the United Kingdom and the USA.

An important development in the history of the problem was the Simla agreement signed by both parties in 1972, under which they

"resolved to settle their differences through bilateral negotiations or by any other peaceful means mutually agreed between them."

The agreement looked forward to

"a final settlement of Jammu and Kashmir."

As I understand it, our Government's position is that progress on the problem should be made on the basis of that agreement. Not much has been achieved, however, in the intervening 40 years. I therefore call on the international community to demand that the bilateral talks between the two foreign Ministers, due to take place in January, achieve progress.

The nub of the problem is that Kashmir is a divided state whose people have been denied the right of self-determination, which has led some independent observers to declare that Kashmir is still a disputed territory. I emphasise "some observers" because the phrase "disputed territory" is somewhat controversial.

India may be worried that, if the status of Jammu and the Vale were altered, the other 120 million Muslims in the remaining part of India might start to demand the right of self-determination, but their constitutional position is entirely different. Historically, they have always been part of India, so that cannot be the case.

For the past two years, mainly since the end of the Afghan war, a large number of arms and freedom fighters have been floating about and they have gravitated into the state of Kashmir. This is particularly sad because it has encouraged the more militant elements in the indigenous population of Jammu and the Vale to take up arms and fight the Indian army. The unfortunate reaction of the Indian army to that insurrection has been over-reaction. It has begun to round up civilians, shooting, torturing and raping them.

India has many troops in the Vale and Jammu and it admits that at least 2,000 people have been killed in the past two years. Some elements in Pakistan believe that the figure could be up to 10 times as high.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clifton-Brown: May I make a little more progress? I should like to give way to the hon. Gentleman shortly.

Some elements in Pakistan think that the figure might be as high as 20,000, but I stress that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North said, it is not possible for international observers to observe what is going on, so it is difficult to obtain objective figures.

There is no doubt that many people have been gaoled but are still awaiting trial, which is quite unacceptable to the international community.

My hon. Friends and I were able to visit the refugee camps high up in the state of Azad Kashmir. There are 10,000 people living in primitive tented conditions in a harsh climate. I was able to see some of the human misery in those camps. There were many atrocities—people who had had their legs cut off, people who had had acid poured over them, and others who had had a knife stuck in their hip joints so that they could never walk again. We have no means of verifying how the atrocities had taken place, but we do know that international observers are not allowed into Kashmir and that the border has been mined to stop the flow of refugees.

The camp numbers are swelling all the time. When some of my hon. Friends were there only a year ago, some of the camps did not exist. People are fleeing over the border from Jammu and the Vale into Pakistan and the numbers in the camps are increasing. That is extremely sad. Azad Kashmir and India are very poor states, and one of the poorest states in the world is having to find money to look after the people in the refugee camps. The refugees now flowing into the camps are in addition to the 1·5 million refugees who fled into Pakistan over the Afghan border.

The most important question that arises is why India will not allow international observers into the occupied part of Kashmir.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): They have too much to hide.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I have had some good news today from Jane Cooper of Amnesty International. She said that Amnesty International is having talks with the Indian Government about a possible visit. I welcome that. I hope that there will be no strings attached to the visit and that the visitors will be able to go where they like and talk to the Indian Government on a meaningful basis.

As I have already said, three of my hon. Friends and myself were given the privilege of visiting Azad Kashmir to see for ourselves what is going on in the refugee camps. I understand that repeated requests have been made to the Indian High Commissioner to allow Members of Parliament to visit the occupied part of Kashmir so that they can see for themselves and make an impartial judgment. I shall be sending a copy of this speech to the Indian High Commissioner.

Mr. Vaz: The hon. Gentleman was obviously moved by what he saw on his brief visit to the area. I am surprised that he has not taken this opportunity to condemn the terrorism in that part of the sub-continent. The hon. Gentleman mentioned only one side. Terrorism has sought to undermine the basis of democracy in India. Why does not he take the advice of his hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) and leave the sub-continent issues to be decided between India and Pakistan? I wonder what role the House of Commons has in this matter.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me, I shall move on to the subjects that he has mentioned.

I condemn all terrorism wherever it takes place in the world. It is totally unacceptable, whether it is in Northern Ireland or anywhere else.

My hon. Friends and I were privileged to be able to discuss the matter with the Pakistani Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto. There can be no doubt that she wishes to make progress on this issue. I welcome the fact that bilateral talks are to take place between the two Foreign Ministers at the beginning of January and I urge that progress be made.

Ultimately, the two countries must sort out the problem for themselves. But, as I have said, there are huge armed forces in India and Pakistan. They are highly trained. Both countries are spending a large part of their budgets on defence. India is spending about 8 per cent. of its budget on defence, and Pakistan about 25 per cent. The United Nations recognises that this is one of the flashpoints of the world because India has nuclear weapons and Pakistan will soon have the capability to build such weapons.

It is vital that the rest of the world calls for the two countries to make real and meaningful progress on this issue. India is supposed to be one of the greatest democracies of the world. It seeks a seat on the Security Council. Surely, now more than at any time in history, India should demonstrate those democratic credentials. On the basis of the Simla agreement, let us ask India and Pakistan to sit down together and negotiate a real and meaningful settlement.

It is time that the world woke up to this problem. Both countries are members of the Commonwealth; there are United Nations resolutions on the table; Britain has good relations with both countries. Surely, wherever atrocities are perpetrated—whether they are perpetrated by the Indian Government, the Pakistani Government or by freedom fighters—the united world community has the right to ask both countries to sit down and end this human tragedy, which could be a tragedy of immense proportions.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to speak in this debate. I very much look forward to hearing what my hon. Friend the Minister has to say. As I have said, I am grateful to him for being present.

10.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): I listened with interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown). I congratulate him on bringing the subject of Kashmir before the House again. Tonight's attendance demonstrates that the subject elicits the greatest possible interest and concern in the House of Commons, and I believe that the debate will receive wide attention outside the House.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Does the Minister accept the view of the hon. Members for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) and for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) —and, I know, of my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) and all of us in the Indo-British parliamentary group—that the best job that the British Government could do now is to promote the peace talks that are under way to produce peace in that beautiful valley? Should not we, of all nations, understand the vast difficulty experienced by the Indian authorities in

[Mr. Greville Janner]

promoting peace and human rights when there is such vast terrorism there? Apparently, 6,000 people have been killed in the past four years, and 1,500 have been killed lately. Will the Minister do all that he can to convince the authorities—particularly those outside Kashmir—that terrorism must cease if peace is to prevail?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are certainly pleased that the talks are to be resumed in January. As for the other aspects of the matter, I am dealing with the whole question comprehensively; I shall say something relevant to the other matters raised by the hon. and learned Gentleman a little later.

My hon. Friend has spoken about the situation in Kashmir, and described some of its history. I endorse some, but not all, of what he has said. I gave my view of the historical background at some length during a debate in the House on 14 February 1991. I do not think that I shall have time to go over all the ground again, because it is important to deal with contemporary issues, but I know that my hon. Friend will have a chance to read that speech in depth.

It may be helpful if I begin by briefly setting out our overall policy on Kashmir. The policy has not changed. We believe that the best way forward on Kashmir involves simultaneous progress on dialogue between India and Pakistan, as provided for under the 1972 Simla agreement; an improvement in human rights in Kashmir; a genuine political progress; and a clear cessation of external support for violence in Kashmir. I believe that this continues to represent a coherent and constructive approach to the complex problem that has bedevilled relations between two countries with which we have close and friendly ties.

I note that my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) is present. Like any other Front Bencher, he cannot contribute to the debate as other hon. Members can.

It is clear that no solution on Kashmir will be possible without the active agreement of India and Pakistan. Accordingly, Foreign Office Ministers and officials have taken every opportunity to encourage the Governments of both countries to resume the bilateral dialogue of which we have had mention.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister put the issue high on the agenda when he met the Indian Prime Minister in January and the then Pakistani Prime Minister in March. He also took the earliest possible opportunity to discuss the problems with the new Pakistani Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, when they met at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Cyprus in October.

Most recently, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met the Indian Prime Minister in Delhi on 15 November, he welcomed the positive message that Mr. Narasimha Rao had passed Benazir Bhutto on her election, and expressed the hope that bilateral talks would soon begin. Equally, I encouraged Ms Bhutto to begin such talks when I met her in Islamabad on 15 November.

The above list of exchanges is far from exhaustive, but it clearly demonstrates the importance that the Government attach to an early resolution of the Kashmir problem.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I shall give way once, but I cannot give way more than that.

Mr. Madden: I am listening carefully to the Minister and, reflecting what the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) said about the importance of self-determination, is it the Government's policy to encourage the Governments of India and Pakistan to invite the widest possible representation of the Kashmiri people to the talks which I hope will start soon? If there is to be a lasting peace, surely it cannot be imposed; it must be acceptable to the majority of the Kashmiri people.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd; Clearly, the participants in talks between the Governments of India and Pakistan must be decided by the two Governments, but, as I have already said, it is part of the British Government's policy that there should be a political process.

For the reasons that I have already given, we welcomed strongly the announcement on 24 November that talks between India and Pakistan will commence early in the new year. We hope that that will mark the beginning of a constructive dialogue to resolve the differences between the two countries which are focused on the Kashmir dispute.

My hon. Friend referred to the United Nations resolutions of 1948 and 1949. Those resolutions, which both India and Pakistan agreed, and which Britain supported, set out the basis for a possible settlement on Kashmir. Regrettably, neither side fully implemented those resolutions and they have, to some extent, been overtaken by events.

The 1972 Simla agreement between India and Pakistan represents the most recent formal agreement of both sides on the handling of their dispute over Kashmir. It envisaged a "final settlement" of the dispute

> "through bilateral negotiations or by any other peaceful means mutually agreed between them".

As my hon. Friend has said, now is the time for India to enter into meaningful bilateral discussion with Pakistan.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I shall give way to my hon. Friend, but then no more.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I have heard my hon. Friend say before and I have read in his speech that events have passed by those United Nations resolutions. But does he agree that one of the vital elements in those United Nations resolutions is that Kashmir should become a demilitarised zone? Is not one of the most important things that the tension in that area should be reduced and that we should be asking India and Pakistan to move troops well away from the area?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The parties will wish to discuss many matters when they resume discussions in January. What my hon. Friend refers to is no doubt one of them.

I have noted what my hon. Friend said about human rights in Kashmir. I am aware that his concern is shared by others here and outside the House. I am also aware of the reports of the situation in Kashmir which have been published by independent human rights organisations, such as Asia Watch and Amnesty International, and reports that have been produced by Indian human rights groups and the Indian press. There can be no doubt that serious human rights abuses have taken place. We have repeatedly impressed on the Indian Government our concern about abuses by the Indian security forces in Kashmir. We have emphasised the need to respect human rights and the rule of law in confronting terrorism, and the importance of bringing those responsible for wrongdoing to justice.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am sorry, but I cannot give way again. I must make progress. I have already given way once to each side of the House.

I urge the House not to forget, however, that many abuses in Kashmir are committed by the militants who are fighting against the security forces. Abuse of human rights by terrorists is as unacceptable as by the security forces.

During his visit to India in January, the Prime Minister raised the concerns in Britain about human rights with the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Narasimha Rao. Mr. Rao assured the Prime Minister that he attached importance to respect for human rights, that allegations of abuses were fully investigated, and that those responsible for wrongdoing were punished. More recently, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs discussed the situation in Kashmir and human rights with Mr. Rao and the Indian Home Minister, Mr. Chavan, during his visit to India last month. I assure the House that we shall continue to press those concerns with the Indian authorities.

In looking at human rights in India, it is important not to lose sight of the sort of country that we are talking about. India has a long and proven democratic tradition, an independent judiciary, and a free and vociferous press. It has its own human rights groups and does not restrict their access to areas of concern. That democratic tradition is India's strength and why we expect it to address the matters of which I have spoken.

India has set standards for itself. Since the beginning of this year, the Indian Government have already taken significant steps to address the problem of human rights abuses. A Human Rights Commission was established by presidential ordinance on 29 September. It has already started its work, although the full extent of its powers and responsibilities will not be settled until it receives retrospective parliamentary approval. We have, however, welcomed that development and hope that the commission will come to play an important role in investigating allegations of abuse.

Mr. Roger Godsiff (Birmingham, Small Heath): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am sorry but I really must get on.

The commission's credibility will depend on building a reputation for thorough and genuinely independent investigation. It is encouraging that the commission has chosen, as one of its first tasks, the investigation of an important incident involving the security forces at Bijbehara in Kashmir in October. We hope that that is a sign that it will treat allegations of abuse in Kashmir as a priority among its tasks.

We have been urging the Indian Government for some time to allow access to independent human rights groups. The Indian authorities announced in July that certain international human rights organisations would be permitted to visit India. Since then, a delegation of the International Commission of Jurists visited Kashmir in August. Its report is expected to be published in January. We understand that the Indian Government has also been in discussion with Amnesty International and it has been agreed that Amnesty will visit India early next year. Those are welcome developments, which illustrate the Indian Government's intention to adopt an approach of openness in accordance with India's democratic tradition.

We were also encouraged by the peaceful ending of the siege by the Indian security forces of the Mosque at Hazratbal. I congratulate the Indian authorities on their calm handling of a most difficult situation. The Indian Government have told us that they are committed to the development of a political process in Kashmir. I hope that the peaceful resolution of the siege may pave the way to the beginning of that process.

The House can be assured that we shall continue to watch the situation in Kashmir closely and to encourage all concerned to resolve the problems there peacefully. Constructive negotiation offers the only way to bring an end to the violence.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, Mr. Deputy Speaker *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 10 December 1993

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Heathrow (Road and Rail Links)

9.34 am

Mr. Alan Keen (Feltham and Heston): It is with pride that I present a petition signed by 3,433 of my constituents in Feltham, Heston, Hanworth and people in the surrounding areas. They live adjacent to Heathrow airport and are proud to support one of Britain's major industries, but they suffer great environmental problems such as noise and regard the Department of Transport's proposals to drive a new road and rail link straight through one of the last remaining green areas south of Heathrow as completely unacceptable. They ask the Minister to completely reject the Heathrow access south-west quadrant proposals and begin consultations with local people and councillors.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House disregard this study and seek further study by working with local authorities and people concerned.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Rutland Park Mansions

9.35 am

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): I have a petition from the residents of Rutland Park Mansions and the surrounding community. Those residents face eviction in the week before Christmas by the council, which seeks to demolish the block and replace it with housing for half the number of current residents.

The petitioners, being residents of Rutland Park Mansions and their supporters, declare that the present conflict with Brent council is to be regretted. The Rutlanders urgently declare their wish to offer their plan as a working model of urban sustainable living to the good people of Willesden Green and the councillors of Brent. It is believed that the implementation of the community plan for Rutland Park Mansions would provide a valuable resource within the terms of the Agenda 21 initiative of the Rio Earth summit conference in 1992.

Wherefore your Petitioners therefore humbly request that the House of Commons appoint a person of good standing to mediate between the Rutlanders and Brent Council, so that the Rutlanders' plan may be heard and understood by the council and the local population.

To lie upon the Table.

Business and Industry

9.36 am

Sir Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): I wish to call attention to business and industry; and I beg to move,

That this House congratulates the Government on its Budget for business and industry, but reminds it that, if large and small firms are to prosper, create jobs, keep a clean environment and export, then each department of state must apply itself constantly to the needs of business and industry.

I was delighted to win the ballot for the debate. It is traditional in the Conservative party, and perhaps in the Labour party, that the Member whose name is drawn first out of the ballot should say, "No, please put it back; draw it again." I did not have that option; nor would I have wanted it. I thank the Whips for encouraging us all to sign the ballot books as frequently as possible.

I have had support from all sorts of people in the Mid-Yorkshire chamber of commerce, Kirklees council, Bradford airport support group, the CBI, the Food and Drink Federation, various schools, the Institute of Directors, all sorts of textile associations, private firms, banks and many more. It is always necessary to draw the attention of the Government to business and industry, because it is from business that all else flows. There is no doubt that our taxes—taxes on business and taxes on people's earnings and spending—should be as fairly distributed as possible and properly spent, but when there is no manufacturing and no trade, there can be no income, no inheritance and no future.

The Government are no different from other enterprise —whether a single entity, a farm, a small family business, a large business or a multinational business. All must keep control of their money; all must budget wisely. My right hon. and learned Friend's Budget has been almost universally judged by the communities interested in this debate as wise and fair.

The next sentence of my motion—at least, I imagine that it is a sentence because it starts with a capital letter —implores all Departments to bear in mind every day that trade, business and industry matter. It is obvious that Departments have to balance other needs and that is, no doubt, sometimes difficult. Health, education, social security, defence and the rest are all integrated. However, we shall have a stronger health service, more money for education, less to pay on social security, and more adaptable and better defence if our industries are strong and prospering.

It is a curious fact—this fact may not be relevant only to the United Kingdom—that the responsibilities that one would imagine rested entirely with the Department of Trade and Industry are spread out among the DTI and many other Departments. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food looks after the food and drink industry; the Department of the Environment looks after the construction industry; the Department of Health deals with pharmaceuticals; the Treasury tries to deal with the City; the Department of National Heritage has the tourism industry in its remit; the Foreign and Commonwealth Office attempts to look after much of our trade overseas.

I hope to touch on each aspect of the motion. I am glad to see here my hon. Friends the Under-Secretary of State for Technology and the Comptroller of Her Majesty's Household, who are both men of business and who have both worked. I am glad to see on the Opposition Benches the hon. Members for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and for

[Sir Donald Thompson]

Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), two colleagues from West Yorkshire who understand business and manufacturing industry, and their importance.

It is important that Members of Parliament have worked. A Tory grandee, a former Minister, visited Hebden Bridge one Friday. When he was asked what he had done besides being a Member of Parliament, he said, "I was Monty's aide-de-camp in the war. I went into advertising and then I went into Parliament." My friend said, "Oh, you have never worked then." People who have worked have a different attitude, and this debate is about work.

My own background is in three industries. I was a farmer in the 1950s, and a wholesale and retail butcher in the 1960s. From that grew a glass fibre manufacturing business, fabricating liners for the backs of vans and estate cars so that they could carry food cleanly. From that, the business moved into manufacturing bits for the building industry, for the caravan industry and for others.

My mother started work at the age of 12 in textiles in Liversedge and my father, who was a farmer, probably started work before he was 12 years old. My friends, whom I am lucky enough to see every weekend and with whom I was at school, are from every industry: textiles, dyeing, valve manufacturing, insurance, electronics, metal spinning, transport and banking.

My interests are declared in the Register of Members' Interests. As I said, I was a butcher, and I represent butchers and catering manufacturers. As I said, I made glass fibre bits for the caravan industry and I do some work for that industry. I was a farmer and I do some work for the British Agricultural and Garden Machinery Association. There are companies, large and small, in engineering in my part of the world. All of them depend on the mining industry and on the nuclear industry. From time to time, I advise a cross-party team on nuclear matters through the Nuclear Forum. Naomi Arnold is an old pal of mine and I help her in her consultancy. It is perfectly right and proper that Members of Parliament should declare their interests. I am delighted that we have a Select Committee on Members' Interests which makes it easier for Members of Parliament to take up various interests and to broaden the base of knowledge in the House.

My speech is in three parts. The first deals with Calder Valley and Calderdale, and with its business and industrial base. The second part deals with the wider national scene and, if I have time, the third will deal with the international scene.

Calder Valley lies in West Yorkshire, with its boundary hard against Lancashire. To set the scene, unemployment in my constituency is, thankfully, at 6·7 per cent.—6 per cent. too much—and in Halifax, unemployment is at 9·7 per cent. By comparison, the figure for Belgium is 9·7 per cent., for Denmark it is 10·6 per cent., for France it is 11 per cent., for Ireland it is 18 per cent., for Italy it is 11 per cent. and for Spain it is 21 per cent. The United Kingdom national average is 10·3 per cent. and the EC average is 10·6 per cent.

However, a job is a job and being a statistic is not nice if one does not have a job—the more people in work, the better. I feel distress for all who look for work and who find none. The fact that the unemployment figure is falling month by month proves to me that my constituents and others are actively looking for work and want work. The more work that can be provided, the better it will be.

The strength of Calder Valley is its historical diversity. There are textiles, wool, cotton, clothes manufacturing, engineering, foundries, metal benders, wire drawers, valve manufactures, fabricators, machine tools, clay pipes, furniture, carpets and trousers. We are fortunate to have such diversity.

Parts of South Yorkshire rely solely on mining, and the withdrawal of that industry has been devastating. It is difficult to overestimate the effect on a one-company town when that company is closed or that industry is withdrawn. No amount of aid rapidly repairs such a wrench, so I am doubly grateful for the diversity and adaptability of the people who work in my constituency and in West Yorkshire, and of its entrepreneurs.

The development agency that covers the rural part of my constituency tells me that it is amazed by the many different ideas that emerge from my part of the world. I am delighted that the development agency is to stay with my constituents. It does a remarkably good job on a very tight budget.

It is impossible to count the number of firms in my patch. They range from large multinationals to four-person firms. There are long-established family businesses, with grandfathers, sons and grandsons working in the firm; one example of that is Cinderhill Spinners in Todmorden. There are brand-new enterprises. All those firms are set in valleys that are made beautiful and kept beautiful by farmers.

The area increasingly attracts visitors who are catered for by a growing tourist industry. We are not an assisted area, although the development agency's writ runs in part. As one can imagine, in an area that was formerly highly industrialised—and still is—derelict land grants play a significant part. The EC periphery scheme is putting money back into Todmorden.

The tourism industry has benefited from improvements to the environment through various job creation schemes. When the schemes were envisaged as long as 10 years ago, they were pooh-poohed and sniffed at, but they have proved to be valuable in strengthening the environment, especially around the canals.

The use of the derelict land grant, which has just been sanctioned to be used on canals, will remove the last blockage in the Leeds-Rochdale canal at Sowerby Bridge. That will be boon to many people. With the help of Prince Charles, Business in the Community has led to amazing initiatives. A recent study called "Calderdale Inheritance Decade" celebrates those 10 successful years of activity. It is also celebrating the Calder Valley being put back on the map.

The local project has worked hard to motivate and initiative reinvestment and regeneration into our businesses. By reviving our heritage, it has provided a model of economic success for others to follow in both national and European programmes. That comes from the document "Calderdale Inheritance Decade", which was paid for by the DTI and is written by people from outside the area. In it, we are reminded of efforts combined with the Business in the Community initiative.

When the project was launched in 1984, it was a unique exmple of urban and economic regeneration. Nine years on, we are still proud to be supported by the Civic Trust, the Council of Europe and Prince Charles, all of whom have visited Calderdale and have had an active part in our environment. I am lucky enough to serve as a member of the Council of Europe and the Western European Union.

The Calderdale Inheritance started with the plan of enhancing the remarkable buildings of our towns to stimulate business interest. The approach has been unique by involving local business people and their ideas while promoting enterprise and the projects of Calderdale on a national level. We have had marvellous results and have attracted all sorts of businesses, new and old, which have chosen our valley in which to settle.

Through regeneration, large manufacturing businesses such as Hoechst, Volex, Warmans and Readicut International all feel safe to stay in our valley. They were not the only ones giving us a vote of confidence. Other businesses, ranging from the huge and significant Halifax building society to Eureka!—an experience for children which has been an immense success, and which was stimulated and financed by Vivienne Duffield—have also put Calderdale on the map, way ahead of much of its opposition.

In all, some £10 million has been raised and used to help business people and workers in our valley. Almost £3 million of that has been used in Brighouse, Ripponden, Elland and Sowerby Bridge. There is now a "Build a Better Brighouse" campaign. It is run by local people enthusiastically. It sounds amusing from here, but the people of Brighouse and the industries care. They want to live there. Whether one lives in Tower Hamlets or Brighouse, one should be able to do what one can to enhance the neighbourhood, and the Member of Parliament should occasionally—if he is lucky in the ballot—be able to crow about it. On behalf of Todmorden, in which £650,000 has gone in for improvement schemes, and Hebden Bridge with £460,000, I am doing a bit of crowing.

The initiative has been an outstanding success. It is a pity in some ways that the latest document has not been more whole-heartedly embraced by all sides of Calderdale council. I know that the DTI wanted—and still may want—to run a special seminar on the importance of the initiative in Calderdale. It has national and international significance. It can be copied in all sorts of areas—Wakefield and elsewhere—to strengthen the community.

Having said that, there are two spectres, both controversial, looming on the horizons of Calder Valley: opencast mining and wind farms. With the Clean Air Act 1956, which was one of the best bits of legislation to clean up the north of England that was ever introduced, and small-bore central heating, the whole of the industrial north was transformed. The smoke had gone from the streets and the hills, and houses of all sizes could be kept snug and warm for the first time.

There were no more cold bedrooms and no need to slide one's feet gently down the sheets at this time of the year, hoping that they would not be too cold. Small-bore central heating removed all that. The subsequent appreciation by more and more people of the industrial landscape and the reutilisation of former "dark Satanic mills" has led to a regeneration of our hills and valleys.

The friendly charm of once hard towns such as Hebden Bridge and Brighouse has lead to a growing self reliance and an increasing tourist industry. All that is now threatened by what can only be seen as no longer acceptable industrial scars. If one could have a modern anachronism, that is what an opencast mine on a moorland, or wind farms in the Pennines would be. The tearing up of moorland for opencast mining and the implementation of giant wind farms, both of which are unwanted in a fragile setting, is unjustifiable in the minds of many of my constituents.

Wind farms are not only a Yorkshire problem. I have chosen the *Western Mail*, as the Welsh are further down that windy road than we are. In it, a Welshman man called Mario Basini *[Laughter.]*—there is always a little Celtic chip—writes:

> "The Department of Trade and Industry estimates that eventually wind power could provide up to 10 per cent. of our electricity needs. To achieve that, Britain would need no less than 38,000 of these spare, space-age windmills, dotting 4,000 square kilometres of land or 1·7 per cent. of our already overcrowded land space."

He adds:

> "Since Wales and Scotland have both the wind and empty high spaces needed to exploit it, many of the turbines will have to be located about there. Once again, many will argue Britain's Celtic Fringe will have to shoulder the disproportionate burden of supplying Britain's energy needs."

The *Western Mail* might not know that Yorkshire has always supplied a great deal of Britain's energy needs and still does, and does not want to share its wind farms with it. Mr. Basini says:

> "Confronted with the prospect of these skeletal towers mushrooming all over our countryside, supporters will shrug and say, 'so what?'.
>
> After all, this is an energy free from the poisonous pollutants of fossils. Its turbines are, friends argue, comparatively noise free—although there are many living close to the farms who fiercely contest that. Some claim to find these skeletal towers as pleasing modern sculpture.
>
> Nothing better illustrates the truth of that old cliche, beauty lies in the eye of the beholder.
>
> I must admit that for me, confronting these monsters lining a hitherto unspoilt mountain ridge has much more to do with pain than pleasure.
>
> They fit as naturally into the landscape as John Wyndham's Triffids."

I agree. I look out of the window of my golf club on to an ex-opencast site which has been beautifully restored—on grazing land rather than moorland. It is no use spending 10 years regenerating Calder Valley and the north and bringing in business from all over the world with the help of Prince Charles and the rest only to reimpose industrial dereliction.

Two other industries run a similar risk of vandalism. All industrial complexes and conurbations need to be able to dispose readily of waste food. Mink farming used to provide my constituency such a system: 20 per cent. of all farmed mink came from my constituency. Now much of the industry has been driven abroad to countries where it is not only welcome but receives industrial and EC state aid.

The second industry is the manufacture of sporting clothes, which is under direct and illegal threat from an uncaring minority. Caldene clothing—an old established-firm—and Elizabeth Greenwood's more recently established company export their riding gear worldwide. In recent times, those companies and their employees' jobs have been undermined by vicious groups whose clear agenda it is to attack the country sports, country living, equestrian sports, fishing and eventually even pet keeping. That phenomenon is threatening my constituency and my constituents. Compassion and a clean environment are to be secured by green policies, but it is as well to remember that green can be a chemical or a dyestuff and that, in either case, it must be applied wisely.

This summer, I visited innumerable businesses in my constituency. Their questions to me were not about exports

[Sir Donald Thompson]

or manning levels but about crime and break-ins. The enemy of business is crime, both nationally and internationally, and we were all glad when the Home Secretary announced tht he would take tougher action against crooks. I hope that we shall do as well with City crooks and City fraudsters, because no one wants to work hard all his life for a pension and then be swindled out of it. To make working people unsure of what is happening to their pension fund and thus their future is a cruel thing to do.

Despite the downside, my manufacturing companies are ready to do battle in Europe and the rest of the world. There are a couple of sore spots in that regard, too. It seems that —as usual, some would say—we are depriving our businesses of legitimate trading opportunities. For example, a firm in my constituency that attended the November defence exhibition in Hungary found the French selling protective equipment to their hosts, which they are not allowed to do. That company would like at least to be able to open a marketing dialogue with such countries. I suppose that that is another example of things not being the DTI's problem: it is probably a problem for the Ministry of Defence. The fact remains, however, that my company's market is restricted, while its competitors can sell all over the world. There may be reasons for that, but I see very few.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that other member countries of the European Community have numerous hidden advantages? For example, British textile companies going abroad to exhibitions usually have to pay all the costs of attending and promoting their products. In Germany, on the other hand, the Lander—the regional governments—pay 100 per cent. of the costs incurred by German textile firms visiting exhibitions all over the world. The Government need to intervene positively to prevent other Common Market countries from exercising such considerable advantages.

Sir Donald Thompson: I knew that the hon. Gentleman would be here this morning, because he is interested in small business—indeed, he was once the Minister responsible for it. I also knew that he would mention textiles, although I am glad that he did not mention GATT, because I am coming to that.

I agree with much of what the hon. Gentleman said about the way in which we choose to fund the companies that go abroad to textile and high-tech exhibitions. A certain amount of rigidity has been creeeping into the selection of such companies and I have written to my hon. Friend the Minister and my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on a number of occasions about firms that have been bitterly disappointed that they have not been able to go to textile and engineering exhibitions.

There is a need, especially in the new Europe, for a constant dialogue between Whitehall——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is staying or going. He must either sit down or go out.

Sir Donald Thompson: It is not just one Department——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I beg to move, That strangers do withdraw.

Madam Deputy Speaker: May I make a point? The hon. Gentleman was standing near his place for a long time. I did not intervene until it was not at all clear whether he was coming or going. I am referring to the period before he moved That strangers do withdraw.

Notive having been taken that strangers were present, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 143 (Withdrawal of Strangers from House), put forthwith the Question,* That strangers do withdraw:—

The House divided: Ayes 0, Noes 20.

Division No. 25] **[10.06 am**

AYES

Nil

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

NOES

Arbuthnot, James
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Burns, Simon
Chapman, Sydney
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dykes, Hugh
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Hawksley, Warren
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Lightbown, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malone, Gerald
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Brown and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

It appearing from the report of the Division that 40 Members had not taken part in the Division, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *declared that the Question was not decided, and the business under consideration stood over until the next sitting of the House.*

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. In view of the abysmal failure of the Tory Administration to organise themselves properly and to keep a quorum in the House, have you had any notification that the Prime Minister or a Minister will come to the House and give an explanation of how incompetent the Government are? In view of their failure to maintain their position in Parliament, there is a question whether they continue in Government.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Tory Government have failed to mobilise and organise within the House on a Friday morning, the day after they introduced a guillotine on two important Bills to be debated next week. It is disgraceful that they have gone away for their holidays, only to come back next week to guillotine two important Bills, which will cost people outside millions of pounds. The Tory Government should now resign.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Those are not matters for the Chair. I shall explain what the position now is in the light of the voting.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I do not expect to be interrupted while I am on my feet.

As fewer than 40 Members have taken part in the Division, the matter is not decided and strangers remain.

However, the rule of the House is that the business under discussion cannot continue. We therefore move to the next motion.

Budget procedures

10.18 am

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): I beg to move:

> That this House calls on the Procedure Committee to bring forward proposals so that in future years the House would no longer vote for or against the Budget, but would instead choose between alternative budgets put forward by both the Government and the Official Opposition, with the winning Budget proposals then going forward for consideration in Committee; that the Treasury would give full cooperation to the Opposition in the preparation of its Budget, and that in the event of the Official Opposition failing to take up this opportunity, it would fall to the third largest party to present the alternative Budget.

I have not prepared a long speech. The circumstances in which I have been called to address the House are extraordinary. I am in an almost unique position. A controversial motion—which could have been debated for not only one day, but two or three days—was tabled by a member of the governing party, with which I have had many disagreements. We now find that there are not enough Members of the governing party in the House, that that motion has fallen and that we move on to the motion standing in my name. I should be quite happy if, at some time today, the Prime Minister or a senior Minister arrived to announce the dissolution of Parliament and a general election, given the Government's failure to control the procedures of the House and to deliver their policies and prepared business.

I now offer the prospect of an interesting debate. Given the similarity between my motion and that tabled by the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson), I am sure that many hon. Members with speeches prepared for the first motion will find that most of them are in order on my motion. My motion is, after all, concerned with the Budget and the confidence that it engenders in industry and commerce.

I must inform the House that my motion does not reflect official Labour party policy. I feel strongly about the issue, but it is not formal policy that the rules of the House should be changed as I have suggested. Every year when we debate the Budget we find ourselves in a ridiculous position. There is always a major confrontation between the parties about the Government's taxation proposals, but confrontation is hardly adequate. In the aftermath of this year's disgraceful Budget, in which massive public spending cuts were made, the Opposition parties were merely able to oppose such cuts.

If the parties that seek to govern Britain genuinely believe that they are ready to take command of government for five years, they should be able to put forward genuine alternative proposals to the Budget. The British people would then witness not simply a debate in which the governing party of the day had its proposals attacked as inadequate, but one in which competing sets of proposals could be judged against one another. It would be a useful discipline for the official Opposition not simply to oppose the Government of the day, but to outline what they would do from day one, if elected.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I note that under my hon. Friend's motion the Government would be required to provide assistance to enable the Opposition to prepare their alternative Budget. That would be a great help to the Labour party, because it would be able to discover the extent of the maladministration and the enormity of the debt. We should be able to look at the books before we had

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the opportunity to form the Government at the next general election. That assistance would also lead to greater openness—the Government have not achieved that, despite their many claims—and that would benefit the community.

Mr. Livingstone: I am delighted with that intervention. One of the problems that the Opposition face is that most of the detailed financial information available to the Government remains confidential to them. The advice given by senior civil servants in the Treasury is not revealed to Parliament, except in those brief exchanges at sittings of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, when it is possible to prise a few nuggets of information out of them. It would be of great benefit to the Government of the day and the Opposition if we were able to have more informed debate about the nation's finances.

If the Opposition were to have access to senior Treasury officials, we would know the true state of the nation's finances. That would mean that a Government in waiting would not make promises that could not be kept and repeat the mistakes that have sometimes been made. In 1964, for example, the incoming Labour Government knew that the financial position was bad, but, once in office, they found that it was infinitely worse than predicted.

Lord Callaghan says in his autobiography that on his first day as Chancellor of the Exchequer he was sitting at the desk in No. 11, surrounded by officials, when the outgoing Chancellor, the late Reginald Maudling, popped his head round the door and said, "Sorry to leave it in such a mess, old cock." He then sloped off. Governments have a tremendous interest in suppressing damaging facts about their stewardship of the economy. That is wrong and such practices should end.

The debate about each year's Budget and the projections for the year ahead, which lay the foundations for either recovery or recession, should be available to the alternative Government so that they can construct the details of their Budget.

Most of what is produced in the Budget passes without great public attention or even attention in this House. Most of the debate focuses on VAT, income tax and the projected total public spending. An array of subsidiary detail which is not controversial is provided, however, and there would be no problem in Treasury officials making it known to the official Opposition so that they could prepare a proper alterntative Budget.

Under my arrangements, I envisage that the Chancellor of the Exchequer would, as usual, address the House for several hours to explain the Budget. A debate would follow and then the House would adjourn. On the next day, the Leader of the Opposition or the shadow Chancellor would spend a similar amount of time putting forward the Opposition's proposals, based on the same range of detailed documents that the Government had provided to the Vote Office.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Livingstone: I am happy to give way to my hon. Friend because he helped to make it possible for me to make this speech.

Mr. Skinner: I did not realise what my hon. Friend's motion was about and there is no doubt that its content is different, unlike the motion tabled by the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson). My hon. Friend has offered some new ideas about the presentation of the Budget, but he had better be careful about what day he chooses for its presentation. If that day happened to be a Friday, the Government might not be here to carry their Budget through. He must pick his day carefully.

Mr. Livingstone: My hon. Friend has made a cruel and unkind point. I do not want to rub salt into open wounds.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): As part of the new consultative process, does my hon. Friend agree that proper soundings should be made throughout the regions of England and in Scotland and Wales? The Budget offers no benefit to Wales. If a new devolved structure of government is established, and given the new Budget procedures that my hon. Friend envisages, perhaps consultations could be held with the Welsh Parliament to ensure that the Budget genuinely reflected the views of all Britain rather than those of the narrow Whitehall clique. That clique governs the momentum and the ideas of the current Budget procedures which we are now seeking to overturn.

Mr. Livingstone: I am in complete agreement with my hon. Friend. It is absolute nonsense for secrecy to surround the whole Budget process.

My motion focuses narrowly on the presentation of the Budget before Parliament. If my motion is agreed—there may be a vote on it and it could be passed unanimously —and the Procedure Committee studies it in detail, I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) will convey his remarks to it. Instead of the great secrecy that surrounds the Budget, a consultation paper should be issued two or three months before it is formally presented. It could set out the parameters of the Budget, the broad financial position, the various options and demands on spending and the range of available tax options. We should then be able to conduct a proper national debate in regional parliaments, which I hope will be established before the century is out, local authorities, chambers of commerce and trade unions. People could then debate the Budget options and give advice to the Government. Given current sophisticated polling techniques, the Government could then gauge public opinion of certain Budget proposals.

Mr. Cryer: Would it not be far better to conduct an open debate, as my hon. Friend has suggested, rather than give private dinners at No. 10, hosted by the Prime Minister? Those dinners are attended by people who give funds to the Conservative party and they influence decisions, most importantly, about the Budget. No doubt the brewers were present at such a dinner and exercised their influence, because there was no increase in the excise duty on beer. Similar influence must have been exerted by the tobacco industry, because, although the duty on tobacco has increased, there is continuing opposition within the Government to a ban on tobacco advertising. There is no doubt that such secret interventions and influences on the processes of government under the Conservative Administration, whom many regard as political corruption, would be kept at bay if we had a completely open debate about Budget priorities, as suggested by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Livingstone: That is exactly right. Part of the British tradition of secrecy and elitism means that a handful of people at the top of the Treasury and the most senior members of the Government know what is going on. We should be honest, however, and accept that most members of the Cabinet are no more than spectators of the process. They are told on the morning of the Budget what it contains, when it is far too late to make any serious changes. I suspect that it is too late for any change simply because all the documents have already been printed and collated, ready to be handed out at the Vote Office as soon as the Chancellor has sat down. It is absolute nonsense.

This is not, therefore, a question simply of the members of a wicked Tory Cabinet carving it up among themselves. It comes down to the Chancellor, the Prime Minister, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and a handful of unelected Treasury officials, often drawn from a narrow public school, Oxford and Cambridge elite. That is utterly unacceptable at the tail end of the 20th century, when most countries in Europe have been functioning democracies for a very long time.

Mr. Cryer: While my hon. Friend is discussing the subject of secrecy of the intervention and influence of Treasury officials—who are almost entirely drawn from the Oxbridge category, public school educated and not sympathetic to the Labour party or to progressive ideas generally—will he dwell a little on the subject of the influence of the Common Market institutions on the preparation of the Budget, in which they also, not openly but clandestinely, bring pressure to bear on Governments to follow specific economic policies?

Mr. Livingstone: My hon. Friend is right that the advice and pressures applied to Government should be open. The country has been scandalised by the thought of the Prime Minister of the day sitting at a private dinner in No. 10 Downing street with foreign business men, many of whom are now known to be crooks, discussing what tax breaks they would like and then getting them into the Budget.

Mrs. Jones who lives next door to me would like to have a couple of hours with the Prime Minister over a tasty dinner and see what can be done to improve the quality of her life by bumping up her pension, but the Mrs Joneses get no say, whereas international criminals descend from Hong Kong and from Cyprus, in the run-up to the Budget, to bend the ear of the Chancellor and of the Prime Minister —and then there are nice fat cheques for Tory party coffers. That is a disgrace. I am sure that it is all perfectly legal, but I hope that an incoming Labour Government will introduce retrospective legislation so that those people can all be sent to prison, including the Ministers who are involved.

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): I am in favour of the consultation process, which was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain), with the—one hopes, elected—representatives of the regions. Does my hon. Friend agree with the process that we would institute by his new procedures, in the sense that the average person in the street could be consulted? There would be a range of proposals and, as in the case of the Sunday Trading Bill, for example, people could write in and put pressure on Conservative Members, who at the moment simply troop through the Lobbies, cut everyone's pension and increase national insurance contributions and so on and effectively increase tax rates to the highest that we have ever had. The public could plead with the Whips to abide by their voters' wishes and then go for our alternative proposals, which would reverse those decisions.

Mr. Livingstone: When listening to my hon. Friend, I was reminded of the Budget process in Grenada, when that country had a progresssive Government before it was brutally overthrown by American troops. Each year the Budget in Grenada was published in detail; there was a period of consultation; the whole community came together. It is much easier to do that in Grenada, where there are just a few tens of thousands of people—a couple of hundred thousand at most—compared with this country. It would be much more difficult in a nation of 56 million, but a party that has been able to govern for 14 years must surely have ideas about setting up structures for the consultation of the British people.

I hope that when we get a change of Government the climate of respect for community and commitment to community and community institutions will lead to a flourishing of representative organisations throughout the country: neighbourhood councils, a strengthening of trade unions, an increased attendance at the meetings of residents' associations and chambers of commerce. I see no reason why Government should not be widespread and open in their consultation.

When I was leader of the Greater London council—that brief, shining five years, the apex of human civilisation, government and wisdom—we were able to institute a procedure by which we did consult; and it was not just with the wicked old trade unions. The London Chamber of Commerce and Industry would come in to see me and the chair of finance would sit down and say, "We have a problem at the moment: could you cut the budget by another 2·5 per cent; bring the rate down?" and we were able to accommodate that. When the members of the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry were consulted by the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), who was then in his incarnation as destroyer of London democracy, he was amazed to discover that the chamber had had a better deal out of the Labour-controlled GLC, in being listened to and helped by the financial policies of the council, than they had ever had from previous administrations under Sir Horace Cutler and Lord Plummer.

Mr. Cryer: As my hon. Friend has alternative Budgets in his motion, I wonder if he would dwell a little on the alternative system of taxation, because the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he delivered his long, somewhat monotonous and boring speech recently on the Budget, expatiated at length of the virtue of value added tax as opposed to direct income tax.

If Labour Members were proposing an alternative Budget in the way in which my hon. Friend's motion suggests, we would want to emphasise the fairness of direct taxation, which is linked to people's ability to pay, and the unfairness of value added tax, which oppresses the poor because it takes a much greater proportion of their income than of that of the person who is extremely, or relatively, well off. My hon. Friend should emphasise that, to show what radically different views we have about the means of raising taxation.

Mr. Livingstone: I am coming to that argument.

I have talked about the general procedures. I want to try to sketch out what would perhaps have happened if we had

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had that situation in operation this week. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) says, there are clear ideological difficulties in the House about the approach to taxation.

Sadly, the British media—most of whom are in the pockets of the present Government and collaborate in perpetrating the big lie—have gone on, year after year, depicting the Conservative party as a party of low taxation. In fact, we experienced, immediately after the former Prime Minister Lady Thatcher came to power, several years of real increases in taxation which hurt not just working-class families but middle-class families. There was a brief period when taxes were reduced a smidgeon as the oil revenues flowed in, but now once again we are committed to substantial real increases in taxation, which will mean that under the present Government we are being more severely taxed than under the last Labour Government.

They are different taxes, however. We do not get the cries of pain from the Tory press when this Government are banging up taxes that we had when Labour Governments did that, because the basis of the taxation is different. It is called low visibility taxation because, instead of putting up people's income tax honestly and fairly, which means that people who earn the most donate the most—people who have done the best make the greatest contribution—there has been a shift to just putting taxes on consumption. The way in which that works is pernicious.

Let us consider the way in which value added tax will be applied to heating fuel. The poorest 10 per cent. of people in Britain spend nearly 10 per cent. of their income on heating. The addition of VAT will mean a substantial increase in spending for them. The richest 10 per cent., with much larger homes but who are much more careless about the way in which they heat their homes, spend only £13 of their income—a ratio of 10:13. Yet the incomes of the top 10 per cent. are in some cases hundreds of times greater than those of people in the bottom 10 per cent. It is an unfair and regressive form of taxation which penalises the poor.

The aspect of that which I find most depressing is that we are now in a position which is worse than that which prevailed in Victorian times. We have got back to Victorian values—the values that produce great inequalities of wealth. The inequalities of wealth in Britain today between the richest and the poorest have grown so dramatically that they are worse than they were more than 100 years ago. As a result of the increasing use of VAT and the increasing reductions in taxation of high earners, the situation seems set to worsen year by year.

There is a moral case to be made for saying that that is unfair, but there is also an economic case for saying that it is damaging. If we examine the works of most modern economists, we find that the greater the inequalities of wealth in a nation, the more one accentuates the business cycle—the boom and bust cycle. When one is in a turndown in the economy and people start to cut back, the people at the top of society, the richest, can make dramatic and immediate reductions in their spending, whereas the people at the bottom cannot.

The more we widen the inequalities of wealth, the more we accentuate the shift into recession. If we had narrowed differentials, people at the bottom of society would have continued to spend in a recession because they spend on the basic essentials.

Let us consider what could have happened. Let us suppose that we had increased the top rate of tax and reversed the Lawson tax proposals of 1988. Suppose we had returned to a top rate of tax of effectively 60 per cent. which is what prevailed for a decade under Mrs. Thatcher's regime as Prime Minister—that could hardly have been a socialist measure. If we had returned to the tax regime as it was prior to 1988, we would have released between £5 billion and £7 billion in extra taxes on the rich. If we had transferred all that to pensioners, they would have seen a dramatic real increase in the quality of their lives and the money at their disposal.

Pensioners would have gone out and spent that money. They would have warmed their homes a little more. They would have bought themselves better food and some new clothes. Increasingly, the poor spend their money on British-produced goods and that creates more work. However, people affected by tax increases at the top rate often spend their money on highly expensive and high-tech imported goods which we no longer produce or perhaps never produced in this country. If we were to redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor, that would help to lift the nation out or recession. There is an underlying economic argument which the Government should have taken on board if they wanted to strengthen our move out of recession.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): My hon. Friend has made a very important point about the distribution of income and the business cycle. Now that he is blessed by the presence of a Treasury Minister, he may want to reinforce that point by considering the difference between the business cycle in the United Kingdom and business cycles elsewhere in western Europe. The business cycle is much sharper in this country, which illustrates my hon. Friend's point about the wider distribution of income and the greater inequalities in the United Kingdom as opposed to other western European countries. That has a damaging impact on Britain's manufacturing industry and on the ability of our managers to manage and to plan ahead.

Mr. Livingstone: My hon. Friend has made a very valuable point. Modern European economies have done so much better than the United Kingdom in recent years because their economic cycles are managed by their Governments. Their Governments intervene to smooth the cycles to assist. However, we have the lunatic classical old economics which are regurgitated in a modern form. We stand back and let the cycle run its course.

The economic history of the past 150 years from the point of view of unemployment figures contains some striking differences. A graph depicting the level of unemployment prior to the start of the second world war would show that unemployment fluctuated up to 10 per cent. and then came down within four or five years. That was a sharp and rapid business cycle. However, that sharp cycle was smoothed out by the Keynesian economics which predominated from 1945 to the mid-1970s. Instead of violent oscillations in the business cycle, we saw the most sustained and successful period of growth in the global economy while most western nations were committed to Keynesianism.

That is the kind of debate that we could enjoy if rival Budgets were presented based on different economic priorities and different attitudes towards Government intervention in the economy and the balance between the public and the private sector. Such issues could be debated seriously and that would engage the British public.

Let me consider now what would have happened if my system had been in operation this year. The Chancellor would—as he did—have presented his Budget. His presentation last month might have been quite different if he had known that an alternative was to be produced the next day which would have been judged against the Chancellor's Budget. I am not alone in suspecting that the Chancellor's Budget was geared very much towards winning the next election—and I do not for a moment mean the general election: I mean the next Tory leadership election.

On Budget day, I arrived too late to obtain a seat on the rather crowded Labour Benches and I had to sit in the overspill Gallery. For the first time in my life, I listened to the Chancellor's Budget surrounded predominantly by Conservative Members. It is not unfair to say that they were almost sub-orgasmic with joy and ecstasy as the Chancellor rolled out those right-wing platitudes. He did it quite casually, with little of intellectual substance to sustain them. Conservative Members were bouncing up and down, and I suddenly thought that the Chancellor was attempting to pander to them. He was attempting to pander to the people who had helped to bankrupt Britain and who had led us into this disastrous economic position.

The Chancellor is supposed to be something of a liberal —if that is not a contradiction in terms for any Conservative Member these days. However, he pandered to the worst, most ignorant and backward instincts of the Conservative party. I am not sure whether the Chancellor would have attempted such a shallow performance if he had known that it would be judged the next day against the performance of the Leader of the Opposition or the shadow Chancellor.

The alternative Budget would have been presented the day after the Chancellor's Budget. That would have provided a stark contrast and would have been a benefit to the Labour party. The British people would have been able to see the alternative.

I want now to consider briefly what that alternative Budget would have contained. I have no doubt that it would have contained serious proposals to deal with the crisis facing Britain in terms of military spending. Virtually all economic commentators point out that we are spending twice the proportion of our gross domestic product on the military than the average European nation. That builds in an economic disincentive because military spending is not as dynamic in terms of its economic impact as other forms of public spending. Military spending produces only one quarter of the jobs that other forms of public spending produce.

A nation that is disproportionately spending on its military creates fewer jobs, and it is jobs which help to fuel economic recovery. A Labour party which knew that it had to present a serious Budget would have consulted the defence industry, the trade unions working in that industry, the managers in the industry and the academics who have examined the question of arms diversification and conversion. The Labour party would have produced a detailed proposal for a phased programme of arms conversion——

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am sorry to interrupt the debate, but I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) is now in order and I ask for your ruling. Having already made a phantasmagoric and hysterical speech about weird suggestions for new procedures, the hon. Gentleman is now straying from the terms of his motion.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): The debate must of course centre around procedures. I am happy to hear illustrations, but the debate must not go so far beyond illustrative purposes as to forget the main terms of the motion. I am sure that the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) will bear that in mind, as will all other hon. Members.

Mr. Livingstone: I hasten to say that I am not engaged in a filibuster. I can see the end of my speech hoving into view even as I think of my next sentence.

The procedures that I have proposed would not simply affect this House. There would have been a wide debate in the arms industry. Labour would have produced detailed proposals to protect jobs because jobs in the industry are being lost. Without a proper state-led arms conversion and diversification programme, jobs are being lost industry by industry, site by site across the country. Those jobs often involve the most skilled workers in British manufacturing in the most modern plants. They are exactly the kind of workers who should be put to work to create in Britain the high-skilled, high-tech products that we are importing and which are adding to our balance of trade deficit problems.

The alternative Budget would have contained a major element about making the arms industry in Britain much more dynamic. That would have made a much greater contribution to reducing our terrible balance of trade deficit.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): That is an interesting idea. However, the terms of the hon. Gentleman's motion call for an alternative Budget to be put forward by the official Opposition. Would the official Opposition espouse the cause which the hon. Gentleman has just argued?

Mr. Livingstone: I have no doubt whatsoever that that would be the case. The Labour party is committed, in the shadow Cabinet and at conference, to a proper arms diversification strategy for Britain. We should hear no more nonsense about the Conservative party being sound on defence. By ignoring the great historic changes that are taking place and by refusing to have a defence review, the Government are locking us into a position where we are losing jobs week by week because we do not have such a strategy. Labour is committed to that strategy.

There may well be an intense debate in the Labour party about how fast we should go or exactly what form that strategy should take, but no one in the Labour party denies that there should be a proper diversification strategy. Otherwise, people will lose their jobs. The Labour party is committed to ensuring that, if defence jobs are lost, the workers are retrained, the factories are retooled and we keep the workers producing for Britain. That would have been a major part of this debate—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying too far from his self-imposed brief.

Mr. Livingstone: I apologise. I was led astray by the Minister—I am told that it happens all the time.

The second major item would be the fundamental question of public spending. We have been told in a quite breathtaking sleight of hand that the Government will reduce public spending. There are two strands to that. First, the Government are freezing the wages of public sector workers and, secondly, they are making unspecified commitments to cuts by robbing the contingency fund. Amazingly, the markets have bought that rubbish. It is incredible that the Chancellor can say that the Government will make cuts in public spending and then get away with simply referring to the contingency fund and public sector wages. It is absolute nonsense.

There have been major pressures on the Government because people in the public sector have been losing real income. I do not believe that those who serve our nation in public sector employment—whether they are nurses, local authority workers, teachers or the people who sweep our streets—should bear the burden of lifting Britain out of the present economic morass by having their wages cut. Clearly, that would have been the central theme of an alternative Budget—being much more precise and honest. If we reduce the wages of public sector workers, it means that they will spend less. In that sense, they are being used to undermine economic recovery.

The Labour party's alternative Budget would have been precise and clear because we would have had access to Treasury officials. We would have had time to consult and work out exactly where we plan to increase public spending—what would be most urgent and most useful in lifting the nation out of the present and appalling recession. I know that technically we are out of recession, but it still feels very much like a recession to most people.

The third major item—I will not go beyond these three items because they are the core of any Budget—is the question of taxation. What was damaging for the Labour party at the general election—I disagree with some of my hon. Friends on this point—was the fact that it launched an alternative Budget at the beginning of the campaign. If we had been in the position year by year of preparing a fully detailed Budget with the support of Treasury officials, we would have had a debate about taxation as part of the normal political cycle, rather than launching it under the constraints of an election.

I do not know about other hon. Members, but I tend to find that people are more resistant to believing what I say during a general election than at any other time that I open my mouth. I suspect that the public defences go up as soon as the election "off" is given—they tend to be rather less receptive to what we say. A debate about the level of taxation for a week or more in the normal political cycle, as issues are tested and positions clarified, would leave people in a much better position to make up their minds about the truth of who would or would not increase taxes. Of course, the judgment of history will be that Labour's proposed taxes at the last election would have been much less savage than those with which we will have to live. We have been penalised for telling the truth. I want to get away from the situation in which such matters are thrown in at the last minute in an election.

I have no doubt that a Labour Government would have had to increase income taxes. The discipline of preparing an alternative Budget, the discipline of sitting down with Treasury officials and the discipline of saying where the money would come from to pay for the vital reconstruction of our industrial base and the rebuilding of those public services that have been savaged the most, and to fund a public works programme or to start to bring unemployed people back to work, would inevitably have forced the Labour party to face up to what increases in taxes would have been required and equally to work out those taxes in a way that would be the most productive for the nation as a whole rather than simply benefiting a narrow section.

I have not the slightest doubt that, after such a debate, we would have come up with an increase in the top tax rate and the tax rate for those earning over £30,000 a year. I should be quite happy to see the top tax rate back at 60 per cent., including national insurance contributions, for people earning over £30,000 a year. The argument would have been hammered out here and people would have decided whether it was fair and whether it was something that they were prepared to support.

I hope that the Government can see an advantage in that for them. Of course, there would be a major advantage for the Labour party in having access to Treasury officials. There would be major advantages in the Labour party's, being able to prepare for government with that discipline. However, there would also be major advantages for an honest Government. We would not have elections that degenerated into slanging matches of promises and accusations; we would build into the normal political cycle an annual debate about the priorities of the parties with regard to public spending and taxation. People could watch that debate away from the heat and the nonsense of an election campaign, and all the diversions and sound bites, and come to their own conclusions about which party had the long-term interests of the people and the economy at heart.

In that situation, the Labour party's alternative Budget would have been a decisive nail through the heart of the Government and would have opened the way not simply to a Labour victory but to a Labour party coming to power prepared and ready to govern from day one.

10.54 am

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): I am grateful for the fact that, by a quirk of parliamentary procedures, we are debating this extraordinary motion this morning. I offer my apologies to the House. Unfortunately, my business men's lunch club is coming to Westminster today, so sadly I cannot be here for the end of the debate. However, I guarantee that I will read *Hansard* with interest on Monday. My business men were looking forward to hearing a report of the business and industry issues discussed in the House this morning. Sadly, that is not to be, because of the premature curtailment of the debate, which I suspect is something to do with the ongoing petulance of the war of attrition that the Labour party is waging to restore some of its credibility over its monumental incompetence in failing to table an amendment to the Budget resolution on value added tax on fuel and heating.

The motion strikes me as naive if one is being charitable, and extraordinary if one is being realistic. Listening to the cogent and well-argued speech of the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), it crossed my mind what Lord Healey would think if he had an opportunity to read the motion. I suspect that, if one went down the Corridor to another place and drew his attention to the motion, one would be able to hear echoing down the Corridors his belly-aching at the preposterousness of the motion. The motion states:

> "That this House calls on the Procedure Committee to bring forward proposals so that in future years the House would no longer vote for or against the Budget".

I am sure that the hon. Member for Brent, East does not need a lesson on constitutional history or on the way in which the constitution operates. However, in case he needs such a lesson, it would be sensible simply to explain that, in a constitutional democracy, there are general elections in which different parties compete with a set of proposals that are to be implemented on successful election as the Government. Normally, although not always, the Opposition parties, by definition, have serious differences of opinion on the main thrust of the policies of the Government of the day. To think that a Budget could be produced when there is a fundamental difference between the basic philosophies of the two parties is to ask too much. If one cannot get agreement because of a difference in the fundamental philosophies of two political parties, how would one ever get a Budget? If one could not get a Budget, how would the country continue to operate?

Mr. Livingstone: The hon. Gentleman is not reading the motion as I intended. If the motion is poorly worded, I apologise; I am not suggesting for one moment that the House would choose a compromise Budget from the two parties. There would be the Government's Budget and the Opposition's Budget, and the vote would be between the two. In a sense, we would still have a vote for or against the Budget, but it would not simply be for only one Budget. In a hung Parliament, which might be on the books one day, the Opposition's Budget would perhaps be carried.

Mr. Burns: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. All I can do is discuss the proposals in the motion. I am sorry if he has not worded his motion properly; he could have tightened it up and improved it. We are meant to be debating and considering a motion under which the House would no longer vote for or against the Budget. That proposition would be a recipe for disaster. In most years, we would never get a Budget because we would not be able to reach agreement.

The proposition is that we choose instead between alternative Budgets proposed by the Government and by the Opposition. I have always understood that the duty of the Government was to govern and the duty of the Opposition was to oppose. If the country wanted the Opposition and the Government to determine our way forward during a five-year period, I suspect that they would use their votes in a general election to come up with that extraordinary mish-mash. That is what is suggested as the logical conclusion of the motion.

I would find it quite extraordinary if any Labour Government ever agreed to the contents of the motion. I look forward to reading with great interest the speech of the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), who is to respond for the Opposition. I would think that the shadow Chancellor, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), and his predecessor in that position, the Leader of the Opposition, would have no truck with such a suggestion.

The motion goes on to say that if the Opposition could not or did not want to exercise the right to take part in the little performance, it would be up to the next party to do so—the Liberal Democrat party. I see that representatives of that party are conspicuously absent from today's debate. That suggestion boggles the mind.

Mr. Dorrell: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. The hon. Gentleman's proposal is, at best, naive.

Will my hon. Friend consider the fact that there may be at least the germ of an idea in the motion? We have just had five days of parliamentary time devoted to the Budget debate, during which we discussed the Government's proposals in the conventional way. It was regarded as normal in other years that the Opposition would have at least one single proposal on how things might have been done better.

Instead, we had five days of speeches from the Opposition Front Bench which did not contain a single proposal with the authority of the Labour party. Whether the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) would agree with any such proposal is a further matter on which one may speculate. The Labour party did not have a single proposal on how it would deal with things differently from what the Government propose.

Mr. Burns: My hon. Friend has a justifiable reputation for being eminently reasonable and perspicacious. Like him, I was not in the slightest bit surprised that the Labour party could not, for whatever reason, come up with a single constructive proposal. That rather adds to my misgivings about the motion, because, as a charitable person, I should hate to have to put the Opposition on a spot in which they were forced to come up with constructive proposals to deal with the economy and with the Budget.

Mr. Livingstone *rose*——

Mr. Burns: I will give way with pleasure to the hon. Gentleman in a moment. He may say that he has many suggestions about an alternative Budget, and I have no doubt about that, because he is an interesting thinker. Without wanting to get involved in the internecine wars in the Labour party, I must say that, sadly, he is a man in the wilderness whistling in the dark when it comes to making constructive suggestions.

Mr. Livingstone: Surely the hon. Gentleman will accept that one cannot complain that the Labour party puts forward no alternative during the Budget debate, and then complain also about a motion that would institutionalise, a procedure whereby the Opposition had to make specific proposals. On the basis of this speech, I would expect him to support my proposal.

Mr. Burns: With respect, that was not what I was suggesting. I was worried that it might be unfair to institutionalise a system that brought pressure to bear on the Opposition to have the courage to make constructive proposals.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and others have commented on the alternative Budget that has been heralded so much during the past 18 months. That alternative Budget was announced, I think, on the steps of the Treasury in that arrogant photo-opportunity which showed the over-confidence of the Labour party during the general election. The hon. Member for Dagenham said that, as soon as he had read it, he realised with horror that the Labour party had totally misunderstood what was going on in the economy in the south-east of Britain.

[Mr. Burns]

To paraphrase the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), the alternative Budget was the longest suicide note in history for the Labour party in the south-east. It bore no reality to the average earnings and the tax payments that were made by people in the south-east. That has been reflected in the fact that the Labour party has a minimal number of seats outside London in the south-east. That shows how out of touch it is with what goes on in this country broadly on a line from the Wash to Birmingham.

I return to the quite extraordinary motion. I should be fascinated to know whether a future Labour Government would want to abide by its terms because, frankly, I cannot foresee that happening. The hon. Member for Brent, East clearly knows that we have just had five days of debate on the Budget, and that we have an ongoing debate, not just for five days of the year but for 365 days of the year, on general economic policy.

The Government put forward their economic policy and stick by it, and the Opposition say constantly how, in their view, the economy could and should be improved. A different emphasis should be placed on economic policy. Suggestions are made as the official policy of the Opposition, when we are lucky—at the moment, there is a dearth of such policies. There are also different interest groups within the parliamentary Labour party which are associated with the general philosophy of that party.

To say that there is no debate on an alternative economic programme or an alternative Budget clearly does not stand up to investigation. The motion would allow the Opposition, and presumably the shadow Chancellor, to have time on the Floor of the House, to make proposals.

Certainly, that spokesman would not be the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), after his comments during the past few weeks in the press and in the House. The Labour party would not want the hon. Gentleman to be official spokesman on the economy in case he gave the game away and put his foot in it, once again, and caused embarrassment. I suspect that it was because of the hon. Gentleman's alleged remarks in *The People* that the Labour party failed to table an amendment to the Budget earlier this week. That embarrassed the party and highlighted its incompetence. The hon. Member for Garscadden knows that the package produced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor to give genuine help to pensioners and to others with their VAT bills from 1 April next year has met the needs of those people.

To return to the main motion, no Labour Government would ever want to offer the Opposition in the future the facilities that the motion gives. I suspect—this will not come as any surprise to the hon. Member for Brent, East —that the shadow Cabinet does not support it either. Under this ricochet motion, if the official Opposition fail in any way to take up the opportunity offered, it passes to the third largest party which, of course, is the Liberal Democrat party. That suggestion is fraught with danger. I hope that we have some common ground on that point. I suspect that the experiences of the hon. Member for Brent, East and the hon. Member for Garscadden as parliamentary candidates do not differ from mine.

Liberal Democrat candidates can go up and down a street, meet 30 people in that street and give 30 variations on a policy in the hope of winning votes for their party. They are the experts at grubbing for votes by saying anything that they think the listener wants to hear. I suspect that the Liberal Democrats themselves would recoil in horror at the thought of presenting an alternative Budget. The last thing that any Liberal wants to do is categorically to state what his party believes in and will stick by, however tough the going gets.

Let us take the issue of VAT on fuel. We all know that in 1991 it was official Liberal Democrat policy to impose VAT on fuel. That is clear in the party's documents. Yet now, because the Liberal Democrats saw the initial reaction before the compensation scheme was announced, they have run away and tried to disown that policy. Imagine the conflicts, the arguments and the dilemmas that the Liberal Democrats would face if they had the opportunity to have an alternative Budget considered by a future House of Commons. It would not work.

The hon. Member for Brent, East has given us a useful opportunity to debate——

Mr. Livingstone: The Government gave us the opportunity.

Mr. Burns: The hon. Gentleman says that we gave him the opportunity. On this particular morning, it was the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) who gave us the opportunity by seeking prematurely to end the debate on business and industry initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson). However, I shall not argue the semantics of the matter.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Brent, East for giving us the opportunity to indulge in this intellectual exercise and this canter around the course. I fear that he is in a small minority in supporting the motion. However attractive it might be to an Opposition party now, there is a possibility—albeit a slim one—that at some point in the future we will conceivably have a Labour Government, and no Government would want to be saddled with this nightmare proposal.

11.12 am

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): We have before us a set of procedures which are wholly unworkable and highly unrealistic. The proposals enunciated by the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) are probably intellectually interesting enough, but they have wide implications for an entire area of the economy which I suppose that he has not thought about.

It is my understanding that political parties set out before elections their manifestos which contain commitments to the country on the economy, the manufacturing base, fiscal policy, monetary policy, trade policy and all other areas of economic activity. The hon. Member for Brent, East made out that the Budget is an occasion once a year when we decide how to cut or increase taxes. But the Budget has a structure based on the fiscal, monetary, trade and economic policy of the Government.

If the hon. Member for Brent, East assumes that a Budget is merely a matter of increasing or reducing taxes, I am glad that he would never be Chancellor of the Exchequer in any future Labour Government. The country has always been given choices; those choices are set out in our manifestos and policies. In the past 14 years, the Conservative Government have done many things that have widened the base of share ownership, wealth ownership and property ownership in our country. All those changes have been made as a result of successive Conservative victories. They have come through the various Budgets which have fine-tuned the economy and achieved the successes that we have seen so far.

The hon. Member for Brent, East talks about open government. Open government is, indeed, important. It can be seen as something which ought to be a part of our democratic process. The Conservative Government are wholly committed to open government. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has gone out of his way, through our citizens charter and other initiatives, to make sure that open government is a matter of great importance in our policies.

If the proposals of the hon. Member for Brent, East were accepted, many of the measures that any Government, whether Conservative or Labour, could put into effect would be cancelled and stultified at the outset, right here in the House. We would end up with a hotch-potch, a compromise, and an indistinguishable morass of policies which would have been traded and bartered across the Floor of the Chamber. There would be no politics, let alone policy, in the running of the Government.

Today, our economic performance is one of the best of any member state of the European Community. Would it have been possible, under the proposals of the hon. Member for Brent, East, to bring inflation down to 1·4 per cent.—the lowest in the EC and G7 countries and the lowest in Britain since 1959? Would it have been possible to bring industry's interest bill down by £12·5 billion since 1990 by reducing interest rates? Would it have been possible to reduce unemployment since January by 137,000? Would it have been possible for industry to increase productivity by 5 per cent. in the last quarter? Those improvements can be engendered only by the Government creating the right framework and a stable economic environment. That is done by the Government and the Chancellor of the day, unilaterally, but through consensus and discussion. It cannot be done by bartering across the Floor of the House of Commons on different aspects of policy.

Would it have been possible under the hon. Gentleman's proposals to reduce corporation tax since 1978 from 52 to 33 per cent. and yet to see our revenue from corporation tax increase from £4 billion in 1978 to £21 billion in 1990? I wonder whether it would have been possible for the United Kingdom to be the largest receiver of overseas investment in the past five years. I estimate that overseas investment totals £149 million, of which £80 million was portfolio investment. Would it have been possible to attract such investment under the hon. Gentleman's proposals for hotch-potch Budgets? Would it have been possible for Britain to attract 44 per cent. of all inward investment into the EC if we had had the mish-mash of policies, compromises and bartering that the hon. Gentleman has proposed? Would it have been possible for us to save 240,000 jobs in Britain through foreign investment, if the hon. Member for Brent, East had been allowed his proposition?

The hon. Gentleman's proposal has wide ramifications for our trade, inward investment and macro-economic policies and implications for our fiscal and monetary policies. If we had agreed to it, could Britain have been among those countries with the largest amount of foreign investment? I understand that last year we earned £26 billion from such investments. Surely the Opposition were well known for enforcing exchange controls and for their protectionist policies. Could that type of policy have been discussed alongside our policies in the House and been mitigated and alleviated by the procedures that the hon. Gentleman suggests?

Is it not a fact that our overseas investments in many parts of the world—I understand that they amount to $80 billion in the United States—including south Asia, the Pacific rim and the far east are earning money for this country, bringing in investment and protecting jobs? Could British companies have won contracts in Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia? Could they have set up joint ventures in India, under the Prime Minister's Indo-British initiative, thereby encouraging a flow of inward and outward investment? Would all that have been possible, given the hon. Gentleman's proposal? It would not.

It would have been wholly impossible to run this country in the way that it has been run for many hundreds of years, and it would have been impossible for political parties to function sensibly.

The proposal would simply create intellectual chaos. Does that not show that the Opposition have no real alternatives to the successes that Conservative Governments have engendered during the past 14 years and that the proposal has been suggested as a way of wearing some of our clothes?

11.22 am

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I am bound to say that when I was brought in to respond to this debate at relatively short notice, I found the terms of the motion somewhat surprising. The first element to attract my attention was that mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns). It seemed an odd proposition that we should approve a motion which states that, when dealing with future Budgets, the House

"would no longer vote for or against the Budget".

That proposition begs two questions. First, what would be the role of the House in the context of the Budget and, secondly, what would be the consequences of whatever action the House might take if it were not being invited to vote for or against? That seems an interesting constitutional doctrine which, as a Treasury Minister, might make my life quite comfortable. However, as a Member of Parliament and a citizen of this country, I find the idea deeply offensive.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford very properly speculated on the attitude of Lord Healey or Lord Barnett to the idea that, between 1974 and 1979, they should have presented a few ideas to the House, but that other ideas would also have been invited; they would merely have adopted the guise of advocates for their ideas, as there would have been ample opportunity for anyone else to come up with others that might directly contradict them. I doubt whether they would have embraced that proposition with warmth, or considered it an idea to be pursued.

Mr. Burns: I wonder whether my hon. Friend thinks that Lord Healey, who is renowned for his very forthright views, might think that anyone who supported such a motion was out of their "tiny Chinese minds".

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend has taken the words out of my mouth. That was a formulation which sprang to mind as a description that Lord Healey might have used of

[Mr. Dorrell]

someone suggesting alternative proposals of which he did not desperately approve. If he were still a Member of this House he might even have used that phrase about the views expressed by the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone). If my memory serves me right, Lord Healey first used it when talking about his reception at a national executive committee meeting of the Labour party, so if it was not specifically a description of the hon. Member for Brent, East, it at least described many of his friends in the Labour party. I do not remember whether the hon. Member for Brent, East was a member of the NEC at the time, but I am certain that the people at whom Lord Healey's remark was directed were people of whom the hon. Member would approve.

As I said during my intervention on my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford, the motion contains one kernel of an idea with which I have a sneaking sympathy. If accepted, it would put the onus on the official Opposition to come to a Budget debate with some ideas—even one idea would be an advance on what we heard last week—and they would have to show how they would have preferred budgetary policy to develop.

I can understand the frustration of the hon. Member for Brent, East about the fact that the Opposition Front Bench did not see fit to set out an alternative economic strategy to the House last week. Indeed, they did not see fit to set out any clear ideas on fiscal, monetary and trading policy, or on any other aspect of economic policy.

The Opposition expect the House and the country to take seriously a party that presents itself as the low-tax option. No doubt, there are plenty of arguments that the Labour party might use in a Budget debate, but the proposition which the Opposition would come to the House and go to the country on the basis that they would levy less tax and be sterner disciplinarians of the public finances than the Government defies common sense. Also, that is not a proposition which the hon. Member for Brent, East would support.

I think that I detect in the motion an attempt by the hon. Member for Brent, East to wheedle out of his hon. Friends some ideas about how they think that the economy should be run. If that is his endeavour, I wish him well. Honest debate would indeed be served if the Opposition could be persuaded to tell the country just one detail of what they would do if they had the opportunity to present economic proposals and packages to the House.

The hon. Member for Brent, East suggests that, as part of this process to encourage honest and informed debate on practical measures, the official Opposition should have access to Treasury officials when preparing their ideas to present to the House. That suggestion could create serious problems in terms of constitutional doctrine, the use of Treasury officials' time and so forth. However, I have an even more fundamental difficulty with the idea, because in the Budget debate last week we did not hear any concepts of what the Opposition think that they would do.

The implication of the motion is that the void that currently occupies the part of Labour party thinking that should be filled by economic policy would be filled by Treasury officials. Although there are good officials in the Treasury, that would not lead to good economic policy. It is not my understanding of how political choice operates or of the purpose of debate in the House or of elections. It is not the job of Treasury officials to fill the policy void of politicians who do not know, or cannot agree on, what they want to do. It is the job of Treasury officials to assist and support in the execution of policies espoused by elected politicians.

Until we have clear evidence that the Opposition have a package of proposals and ideas about how they think that the economy should be managed, there is no job for Treasury officials to do, because it is for politicians to set out the parameters within which they want officials to work. The implication of the motion is that when politicians have failed to produce even the sketchiest of parameters, somehow it is for Treasury officials miraculously to fill that void. That is an unattractive proposition.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva) put forward the most rigorous objection to the idea that the House can pick and choose between various options presented to it in the Budget. It is that although the tax expenditure balance is an important part of total economic policy, it is by no means all of it. Indeed, it is probably much less than half, if one wanted to measure it, of total economic policy.

The Government pursue an economic strategy based on a clear idea that our task is to deliver fiscal and monetary discipline and a stable background against which a free economy can work, and to provide a legal and social framework that reinforces a free market economy. We do that because we think that it is the most effective way to generate wealth and improve living standards, which is the basis on which we presented the Budget on 30 November and on which we shall continue to present Budgets and ask the House to support them.

Question put and negatived.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 14th December, the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister relating to Fisheries not later than three hours after their commencement, and those proceedings may be entered upon or continued after the expiration of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

EUROPEAN STANDING COMMITTEES

Ordered,

That European Community Document No. 9662/93 relating to guide prices for fishery products 1994 shall not stand referred to European Standing Committee A.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

Social Security (Contributions) Bill and Statutory Sick Pay Bill

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, in respect of the Social Security (Contributions) Bill and the Statutory Sick Pay Bill, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bills have been read a second time.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

11.32 am

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I did not anticipate speaking on this motion or having an opportunity to do so. However, it is worth asking the House to delay proceedings for just a few minutes. The Leader of the House, whose reputation for being a reasonable man has withstood the test of time—though it has been damaged in the past few days—will understand that this is an unusual motion. It relates directly to the equally unusual business next week and the way in which the House is to deal with significant and important measures. What the motion does in short order is not just telescope but almost reverse the normal procedure for dealing with Bills.

All hon. Members will be familiar with the fact that Bills receive a Second Reading and normally then go to Committee, occasionally on the Floor of the House but usually upstairs. Only once the House has given Bills a Second Reading are we in a position to put down various amendments.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Is there not also normally a gap between Second Reading and Committee stage so that hon. Members have an opportunity to table amendments before the Committee stage starts? The motion would wipe out that opportunity.

Mr. Dewar: The tabloid cliche is "indecent haste", which is a mark of Government procedures. We are being invited not to wait to see whether the House will give Second Reading approval to the Social Security (Contributions) Bill and the Statutory Sick Pay Bill. We are being invited to table amendments in anticipation of that approval. The reason is simple. The timetable motion to steam roller those measures through is so brutal that it will be impossible, other than by means of manuscript amendments handed in at the end of Second Reading, to table any amendments, new clauses or new schedules. Therefore, special arrangements are being made to enable that to be done before Second Reading.

I must confess that I find it extraordinary. I genuinely do not understand the necessity for such an odd procedure. I do not know why the House is being invited to push through two Bills of considerable significance in terms of their impact on ordinary people. The Government will no doubt argue that the Bills are narrow and technical in their drafting and I concede that they are, to a limited extent, but they raise considerable matters of principle about what the Government are doing and how they want to run our affairs. It is—I use the word advisedly—monstrous that we should be asked to approve this motion today and bulldoze the Bills through all their stages in two days.

We do not know the details because I have not seen a guillotine motion yet. As far as I know, until yesterday, when the position changed, there had been no consultation on the matter between myself and my opposite number and I was given no indication that the measure was being contemplated. It is an abuse of process and I find it offensive that we should be put in this position. It is all the more puzzling because there was no evidence this morning of urgency in the Government's management of our affairs; we discovered that they could not even keep a quorum for a debate that was no doubt important to the hon. Member whose name had been drawn in the ballot and who raised the subject of business and industry.

I must make it clear that I shall not advise my hon. Friends to oppose this procedural motion, because, although it is unacceptable from the point of view of public policy and parliamentary procedure, I want the limited opportunity that the timetable motion may give me and my hon. Friends to put down motions. I do not wish to put you, Madam Deputy Speaker, in a position of having to accept manuscript amendments in a flurry and scurry around the Clerk's Table after Second Reading, assuming that the House grants those measures a Second Reading. I am therefore mindful to advise my hon. Friends to nod the motion through. However, I am right to protest about it because it is central to a flawed parliamentary strategy that cannot be justified.

May I explain why we take that view? I said that the Government would argue that the measures are narrow and technical. However, they are important. I was interested to notice that Ministers referred to the 1 per cent. increase in national insurance contributions as an increase in taxation. As the Leader of the House will know, the Chancellor is taking some £2 billion from the people of this country, which is over £300 million more than he would get by putting 1p on the standard rate of income tax.

The measure is of considerable substance and represents a significant contribution to the massive hike in taxation contained in the recent Budget proposals. The measure also has a wider social significance. The motion paves the way to force through a package. I do not want to debate that subject at length, as I would be testing your patience, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I shall mention the importance of the motion.

The Government are not only taking a substantial sum in increased taxation through the Social Security (Contributions) Bill that they wish to expedite with today's motion, but are taking more money by changing the unemployment benefit provisions and cutting the entitlement period from 12 to six months with the new job-seeker's allowance. The Bill is part of an important thrust of social policy which is arguably—I am not arrogant enough to say that there is no other side to the argument—challenging and undermining the contributory principle.

The Leader of the House was a sympathetic and well-respected Secretary of State for Social Security. There is no Minister better able to appreciate the implications and importance of what is being proposed. Therefore, I deplore the fact that the motion has been tabled as part of the steam-rollering exercise to which the Leader of the House has given his name.

The Statutory Sick Pay Bill has been dealt with in the same way. It is an important technical measure as it alters a system that is important to industry. At present, if an employee is ill, the employer can reclaim 80 per cent. of the statutory sick pay from the state. Some £750 million is to be transferred to larger firms that are being asked to shoulder that burden. This morning on breakfast television —I am sure that the Leader of the House was loyally watching—the Prime Minister, in some part of Brussels,

[Mr. Dewar]

said that he could not accept the Delors package because it would make our industry less competitive. He said that we should fight unemployment by cutting industrial costs and competing effectively in the marketplace.

The measure is being railroaded through in one day —it may be less, as the Social Security (Contributions) Bill may win the lion's share of the timetable motion, which we have not seen. However, if we assume that the measure is to be railroaded through in one day, industry will face a massive £750 million additional impost created by the Government in a hole and corner way. At the very same time, the Government are breaching the primacy of cutting industrial costs in the interests of allowing us to trade successfully in the free market of the European Union. At the very least, the issues are controversial, and should be allowed substantial debate, but we are being gagged.

The motion, which is part of the gagging process, should be challenged, not just in the name of decent parliamentary scrutiny and the parliamentary process, but in the interests of the many people outside the House with an interest in the legislation who have had no opportunity to lobby, influence opinion or state their view. Those people do not belong to unrepresentative groups. I know from private conversations of the deep dismay in organisations that are normally seen as loyal to the Government's general approach, such as the Institute of Directors and the Confederation of British Industry. They will have views on suddenly having to shoulder a bill of several hundred millions of pounds.

I appreciate that there is to be a package to offset employers' contributions, but it is not clear to me and to many other people exactly how that is to work and whether it will provide an adequate trade-off. We are discussing highly technical and complex issues. If I, as a Front-Bench spokesman, am having to run hard to try to catch up with the issues involved on Second Reading, in Committee and on Report—which have been rolled into one next week —people outside will definitely find it difficult to ensure that they are not diddled by the arithmetic of such a complex change. It is nonsense to put people in that position.

We must also consider the interests of those who have lost benefit due to the changes involved in the new incapacity benefit. They may be thinking about moving into the labour market but wonder whether the measure provides them with a disincentive to work. Sadly, the provision may also provide an incentive for employers to look at employees' health records less sympathetically and to terminate employment before they face the risk of a claim for unfair dismissal.

The issues are all major, and we should have had a decent amount of time to consider them. There should also have been time for consultation, and to draw into the parliamentary process the public and vested interests—in the best sense of the phrase. That is an important factor of the democratic system, and it does us no credit if the issues are telescoped for reasons that I genuinely do not understand.

Next week, we shall debate the subjects, not at length, but for longer than today. It is not true that there is nothing that we can do but vote "Yea" or "Nay". Both Bills have a Northern Ireland dimension. The Statutory Sick Pay Bill preserves the small employers' exemption, but, as I understand it, as many as 85 per cent. of employees will not fall within the exemption category. I welcome the presence of the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, who will have a greater understanding of the subject. My understanding of the calculations carried out by the Library is that only 15 per cent. of the work force will fall within the category and 85 per cent. will not receive payment. The motion paves the way for an unsatisfactory measure.

I recognise that there is always a difference of approach between Opposition and Government—that is the law of the jungle and, certainly, of Parliament. On occasions, we clash richly about the organisation of business, and there is a certain amount of posturing. However, that is not true of our approach today—we are not posturing. We regard the measures as important and of genuine public interest. When I was a young Back Bencher a long time ago, I had something of a reputation as a menace on Committees. I enjoyed them, and it used to be said that my idea of heaven was a Scottish Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill that never ended, so perhaps I am prejudiced. Now I am older and cynical, and realise that one should not be starry-eyed about parliamentary procedures. However, I still believe that scrutiny is important and forms part of the parliamentary process that lies at the heart of our democracy. We should probe, test and look at the detail of the measures. On this occasion, we have been unnecessarily prevented from doing so. There should be a driving, self-evident and pressing reason for using such a procedure.

The argument does not even arise. At best, it seems that it has been done for the convenience of the Government. Some of my hon. Friends, with whom I have some sympathy, think that it has been done out of a sense of pique. There have been recent problems and troubles—the unified Budget procedure has not perhaps worked as smoothly as the Government had hoped. Now, the Budget is unravelling before our eyes. I am not one for trying to speculate about the Government's motives, but I am entitled to pass judgment on the results of their actions and must conclude that there has not been any real attempt to explain why the Bills have been treated in such a way.

Perhaps I am exceeding my authority, as I have not discussed it with the deputy Chief Whip, but had the Bills gone into Committee in the normal way, they would not have been artificially elongated and the Leader of the House should be reassured that the rules of order would have made any sort of filibustering in Committee difficult. There are points of importance that we wanted to discuss and specific amendments that we wanted to table. If we had had time to do that on a considered basis, we would have had time to involve others in the process. It would have been more sensible, knowing that there would not have been an abuse in Committee, to allow time for full consideration and it would have been much better to allow us to do so, rather than end up in—perhaps jiggery pokery is an offensive parliamentary term—let us say the unnatural procedures which the motions represent.

On Monday and Tuesday, I shall be scribbling out my new clauses to a Bill that has not even appeared on Second Reading. I sometimes wonder about the logicality of the parliamentary procedure—it has grown like Topsy over the years and centuries—but there is a certain logic to the Second Reading. It provides time for consideration.

The Committee stage provides further time for consideration and the Report stage is for a final look at what the Government have been doing. The Report stage also gives the Government a chance to change their mind and consider suggestions that have been made—perhaps a rarer event than the Opposition would like. It is being absolutely squashing in a way that cannot be defended.

Although I shall not advise my hon. Friends to oppose the motions—I do not want to have to rely on the goodwill of the Chair to accept manuscript amendments—and shall advise them to let the unusual procedure take place, it must not be thought that that is in any way an approval of what is happening and we shall take the opportunity next week to stress in the Lobbies our strong disapproval of what the Government are doing.

I realise that I cannot ask the Deputy Speaker for a ruling, but, under such unusual procedure, I presume that the starring arrangements do not strictly apply. It is a matter of some importance to some of my hon. Friends on the Back Benches. Normally, I would have to table the amendments on Monday. We must clarify that if they were tabled on Tuesday they would have to be starred. I recognise, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it may be a matter for Madam Speaker to consider whether amendments that are tabled on Tuesday—in the extraordinary circumstances of the procedure being followed—would be sympathetically viewed and that the normal starring arrangements would not be enforced.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I wish in no way to pre-empt the decision, which will not be for me to make, but whether starred amendments are accepted or not is always at the discretion of the Chair.

Mr. Dewar: All sorts of words such as "dignified" and "delphic" may apply to that remark. At least I have my point on the record and merely leave it there.

I gave the pledge that I would not unnaturally elongate events, especially because it is an unplanned outing caused by a nod from the Government Whips because they could not raise a quorum to keep the normal business going. I shall be debating next week whether such action is in the best interests of Parliament. I do not think that it is and I am not aware of the pressing necessity to justify the Government not allowing one or two Second Readings—not on successive days—and the normal Committee stage to be dispatched in a businesslike manner under the normal procedures.

It further undermines public confidence in the way in which Parliament conducts its work and certainly does not encourage good relations that inevitably make the place run. It is a shame, a bad day and it deprives us of the opportunity to consider matters of real importance. I recognise that the Leader of the House cannot think again because he has unwisely committed himself to this course, but I hope that over the weekend he may, at least, worry whether he was right and justified.

11.57 am

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): It is important that we should make a few points about the motion.

In the ordinary course of events, the Government use Friday mornings and afternoons to table convenient business resolutions to the effect that there should be a vote by 10 o'clock on that business, and that is understood and accepted. The motion today goes further than anything I can recall and compresses the procedure on two Bills to such an extent that it denies, as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said, proper scrutiny of the legislation.

I draw the attention of the House to what the Bills will do. I always look at the financial effects of a Bill and, as many hon. Members know, I sometimes raise questions on money resolutions that are authorised by Parliament. The Bills mentioned in the motion do not have inconsiderable effects. We have spent much more time debating Bills with much fewer and smaller financial implications. The Bill on social security contributions will increase contributions to the insurance fund by £1·9 billion in a full year, and the Government want to get it through on the nod. When local authorities treat expenditure and revenue in such a cavalier fashion, the Government say that they are irresponsible. They must bear some portion of such criticism themselves.

The Bill also authorises payments of £5·5 billion—a huge sum of money. In the past, Parliaments have fallen into disrepute because they have passed money resolutions on the nod in far too casual a way. Criticisms were made, and some of us tried to stop that procedure.

Some of us try to raise issues on money resolutions. Ministers are now prepared with defensive briefs on money resolutions in case I am in the Chamber, as I generally am. That may be inconvenient, but Parliament is here to ensure that Ministers are inconvenienced and that they have to explain the issues. People sit in the Galleries and think that this is a rowdy place. I take the view that if Parliament is rowdy, a Minister has to be up to the job and has to be able to present his case. It is true that it is easier to get legislation through a meek, quiet assembly of people. Parliament is rowdy because the clash of opinions comes out in the open.

Many other assemblies, such as the French Assembly and the United Nations Assembly, do not have clashes of opinion. The proceedings there are ordered and dull because all the clashes take place in committee rooms beforehand. In the conduct of human affairs, there are bound to be disagreements. In other organisations and institutions, matters are arranged so that everything looks neat and tidy. Parliament is not neat and tidy. It involves angry scenes and exchanges, and Ministers have to be well prepared if they are to put their case effectively.

Shortening the arrangements for the two Bills will remove even background scrutiny and will prevent us from examining them in detail, as we want to do. Our right to table amendments will be limited.

The Statutory Sick Pay Bill will reduce public expenditure by £695 million in 1994-95. The figure for the following year will be more than £700 million, and the figure for the year after will be £750 million. The abolition of the recovery of statutory sick pay, under clause 1, will cost employers about £695 million. Should we not debate such costs to employers in some detail and for a reasonable time rather than simply rushing the legislation through because it is convenient for the Government? The position is entirely unsatisfactory.

The guillotine motion will compress the timetable to such a degree that we shall have difficulty in tabling amendments. The Leader of the House knows that I take a particular interest in statutory instruments because I am the Chairman of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. Clause 4 of each Bill will remove the provision for affirmative resolutions for the statutory

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

instruments involved and will put them under the negative procedure. There may be a perfectly good reason for that, which would ordinarily be brought out on Second Reading.

Our procedures on Second Reading are often not a monologue, but a dialogue. Hon. Members frequently give way to Ministers so that they can offer explanations. In the ordinary course of events, we should have an explanation of why the Government seek to remove what I regard as an important safeguard in delegated legislation. We shall not have that chance. The motion removes the normal procedure by which amendments are tabled after Second Reading. Under the normal procedure, we could make a better judgment about whether the Minister had made a good case for an important change.

Many hon. Members do not take too much trouble over delegated legislation and the vast majority of the population do not know what it is about. In fact, everyone is affected by delegated powers and everything is covered by delegated legislation. The Under-Secretary of State for Technology, who took part in the proceedings on the Transport and Works Bill, is in the Chamber and he will remember that we discussed delegated legislation in some detail. Delegated powers cover people from birth to death.

The House has given virtually untrammelled powers to Ministers over the years to the extent that they can now individually change legislation, sometimes through instruments that do not require further parliamentary procedures. That is outrageous. I accept that delegated powers may be necessary because details of Acts sometimes need to be carried out swiftly. In this case, we shall not be given an explanation, so we shall not know whether the fairly important changes under clause 4 of each Bill are justified.

We shall have to table amendments beforehand to retain the affirmative procedure, although that may not be entirely justified; we do not know. Inevitably, many amendments will be tabled, but our discussions will be affected by the guillotine. We do not know the details of the timing because they have not yet been made available to Parliament. We may not have adequate time to discuss all the amendments. I am not talking about tabling 150 or so amendments simply to delay the issue; this is not the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. Incidentally, both Bills mentioned in the motion are longer than the Maastricht Bill. We should remember the number of amendments tabled on that Bill, and we should realise that the length of a Bill is no indication of its importance. The argument that these are two small, technical, four-clause Bills is not necessarily a justification for the compressed procedure.

Secondly, there is no question but that the Government have been in office a long time and have grown arrogant and insular. They regard Parliament as a legislative sausage machine that is used for their convenience. Maastricht gave them a shock, because the Prime Minister went off and made an arrangement, and when he came back he found dissension. By and large——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is well aware of the procedures of the House. I think that his argument is now going rather wide of the motion.

Mr. Cryer: It has always been the custom and practice for Members to be allowed to use examples in passing by way of illustration. When we are debating a motion that rips up the usual parliamentary procedures and deliberately deprives Members of the opportunity of tabling amendments, I think that it is relevant to show the arrogance of the Government who are doing that and the fact that they have had a recent shock over their arrogant attitudes. Unfortunately, the Government have been slipping back into their old pre-Maastricht ways in tabling the motion, because it is convenient for them to do that.

The Government determine the recesses and, as the Leader of the House knows, they have been asked questions about their length and time. In the week leading up to Christmas eve, the Government could have put in an extra two or three days to enable us to consider the Bills. No doubt an extra two or three days would be regarded with mixed feelings by various Members, but I tabled a genuine amendment that we should continue the Session until 23 December. If the amendment had been agreed to, I would have been here, as would several of my hon. Friends, arguing the case.

The Leader of the House cannot say that the motion is necessary because we do not have enough days for the business because the Government determine the parliamentary timetable and the agenda. They could have timetabled an extra two or three days if, as no doubt the Leader of the House will claim, there is a need to get the legislation through for various administrative reasons. If they are being discussed and proposed for administrative reasons, it suggests that the administration is not very good and that the Government are having to bypass the usual parliamentary procedures and use a short cut to get the Bill passed because they had not planned far enough ahead. That seems a pretty shoddy way of dealing with Parliament.

As the Leader of the House knows full well, the torrent of legislation that the Government have produced is an indication of the degree of contempt that the Government have for Parliament. For example, last year they produced a record number of statutory instruments—3,500. The Government must overhaul their attitude towards Parliament and undertake a review of their procedures to ensure that that does not happen again.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said, the Opposition are always in something of a dilemma, because we want the opportunity —even though it is one with which we do not agree, because it is presented in such limited and absolute terms by the Government—to table amendments. Voting against the motion would deprive us of that opportunity, which would be cutting off our nose to spite our face.

Although we are opposed to the motion, we must take what little opportunity the Government have proffered. It is like dealing with Bills. Sometimes we hate, oppose and detest legislation that the Government propose. That has been the case with most of the legislation over the past 14 years. What are the Opposition to do? Are we to maintain complete, untrammelled and unqualified opposition, or are we to say that we hate the Bill and the legislation but will try to table minor improvements where we can? By and large, that is the way in which the Opposition work.

I do not think that we shall persuade the Government —they have cloth ears when it comes to these things—so we shall just have to use the machinery provided to table amendments as best we can. I must say to the Leader of the House that the position remains extremely unsatisfactory.

What has been done is an abuse of the House. The Leader of the House will no doubt say, "The Labour Government tabled three guillotine motions in a day——

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): Five.

Mr. Cryer: Five, then. We certainly used guillotines and, at that time, I endorsed the procedure. But I have changed my mind, and that is not unreasonable because after 14 years a Government can grow too arrogant and too confident of their powers.

We should be chary of the use of guillotines. I hope that we shall also be chary of them after the next general election, when Labour is in power. I say that because, as we all know, it is possible to distinguish between amendments that are meant to improve legislation and safeguard those affected by it and amendments that are tabled simply to spin out a debate.

There are two ways in which the Opposition can deal with proceedings on a Bill. Either they can talk for so long that they force concessions from a Government who want to get their legislation through—that worked fairly satisfactorily in respect of the Transport and Works Act —or they can reach a tacit understanding with the Government about the Committee stage and the way in which amendments are dealt with. They can say, "We will allow the Bill through if we get an extra day on it on the Floor of the House." We all know that such negotiation takes place. We have to judge which approach will best serve the interests of those whom we represent. The motion before us in effect rules that out and prevents us from making such a judgment. We are to be given only very limited scope.

The Government have enjoyed enormous majorities since 1979. Their present majority of 17 is the smallest that they have had since they came to power. We would have given our right arm fo. such a majority between 1974 and 1979, when we governed with a majority of one until John Stonehouse disappeared, after which we had no majority at all and governed on a minority. Yet, despite their majority, the Government insist on imposing guillotine after guillotine. It is fair to say that the Labour Government were in a somewhat different position from the present Government, who have enjoyed an enormous advantage. *[Interruption.]* The deputy Chief Whip says, "We are in a mess." He is right: they are in a mess. The hon. Gentleman's comment, uttered sotto voce as he sits on the Treasury Bench in what should be his mute position of inner silence, is correct.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): As my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) who is part of what were the usual channels—and I hope at some stage will be so again—has been referred to and cannot reply, I should make it absolutely clear that his words were not, "We are in a mess," but, "They"—the Labour Government of which the hon. Gentleman was a member —"were in a mess." With that, I wholly concur.

Mr. Cryer: That just goes to show that Whips should not mutter under their breath: their remarks can be misinterpreted. It sounded to me as though the hon. Gentleman was saying that the Government were in a mess. By saying anything this morning, when the Government have been completely outmanoeuvred, the deputy Chief Whip is going beyond his remit.

The Government should not press the motion. The Leader of the House ought to accept the view that it should be withdrawn, although I suppose that he will press it. As I have said, I regard it as an abuse of Parliament. I have never seen a motion couched in such terms before. We are talking about two important items of legislation involving a massive chunk of expenditure. Incidentally, I hope that the Government will not start talking about accountability as regards local authority expenditure because their behaviour shows clearly that they want merely to rubber-stamp the expenditure of huge sums. It is simply not good enough.

I hope that, having listened to our brief debate, the Leader of the House will decide not to go ahead. I hope that he will give us the usual amount of time, either extending our proceedings beyond 17 December, which we should be quite happy to accept, or deferring the Committee stage until we return on 11 January, which is only a few weeks off. We can then get down to the job of examining the whole thing properly and giving the legislation the sort of scrutiny that we are used to. It is a sad day when legislation is rushed through in such a manner and when Parliament is given such short shrift.

12.14 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): What a difference a day makes. The Leader of the House was present and on time yesterday when he announced the business for next week. He wants to introduce a guillotine on a proposal that will rip off millions of people through extra taxation. That is what national insurance contributions are all about. They are a form of tax. The Government profess to be a low taxation Government, but they are not a low taxation Government at all. What they do is switch taxes; it is either value added tax going up or, as in this case, national insurance contributions going up.

Let us be fair about it—tax increases are in the Budget. The Budget can have as many as five or six days of debate on the Floor of the House and the Bill then goes to Committee. Many years ago, debates on a Finance Bill could last for five, six or seven weeks. Most of its stages had to be completed by 20 July and, before then, extensive debate took place. We might not have liked the results, but at least we used to have major debates about tax increases.

The motion has been tabled today because of what the Leader of the House announced yesterday. It is not personal, but he is being pushed by others in the Cabinet who are so full of arrogance and contempt for the British people that they have decided to push through next week, without any proper debate, a tax increase which will affect all workers and employers.

I could understand it if the House did not have sufficient time for debate. I mentioned the other week, and yesterday, that 1993 has been a non-election year. I have calculated that the House of Commons will have been in session for only seven months by 17 December, the date of finishing for Christmas. It is an outrage. Why did not the Government accept the motion tabled by myself and my hon. Friends last week, when we proposed that Parliament should sit for an extra week up to 24 December? What is wrong with that? A lot of people out there have to work until Christmas eve; they cannot pack up on 17 December.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Santa Clause does not come down their chimney until 25 December.

Mr. Skinner: I packed up believing in Santa Clause at the same time that I packed up believing in the royal family, when I was about three. He did not do me much good, being in a family of 10 just before the war.

There is plenty of time. Anybody out there who watches "Westminster Live" would ask why Parliament is not sitting the week after next week. We have done it before. It is not as though Parliament has risen every year on 17 December. There have been a few odd occasions when we rose earlier, but generally we have gone on to 21 or 22 December and, on occasions, to 23 December.

The Government do not want anybody to oppose them. They have become used to power and they are contemptuous of anybody having the guts to take them on. They say, "We will get the Leader of the House to move the motion quickly. There will not be too many people there and nobody will notice." As it happened, it was spotted by my hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench, and we said, "We are not having it; it is not playing the game to put up taxes in a day, without proper scrutiny."

Mr. Cryer: The Government say that they are short of time and that they must get the legislation through. My hon. Friend will recall that the Jopling report, which the Government back would close down Parliament even more. In that event, we would have no time at all and the Government would escape scot free from the scrutiny that they richly deserve.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has taken a strong position against the Jopling report, as I have, and one or two others, including my hon. Friend the Opposition Deputy Chief Whip—I do not know whether I can speak for him on this occasion, but I think that it is fair to say that he holds strong views on it.

It may seem all right to get rid of another day or week spent in Parliament—it is organised truancy—but let us face it, the Opposition's job is to oppose. That is why I hope that all my hon. Friends, along with my hon. Friends the Members for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), will oppose the Jopling report. I do not know whether they will, but I hope that they understand that, although we might be in the minority in the House, we have a chance to stand up and speak and to vote on important issues.

I am pleased that we had a vote this morning—I say that en passant, Mr. Deputy Speaker—because the Government lost their majority. In fact, they did not have a quorum. Those Tory Members who are in favour of next week's guillotine, which will enable the Government to increase people's taxes, were not here to vote this morning. Only 20 of them voted and I did not see any members of the Cabinet, apart from the Chief Whip. The Leader of the House was missing.

Mr. Cryer: Good God.

Mr. Skinner: He had to be brought here, as well as others, but it was too late. The big vote today was just after 10 am. Tory Members are not used to being here at this time. Parliament starts at 2.30 pm Monday to Thursday and they do not realise that one has to get here for at least 10.30 am on Fridays.

The Leader of the House may be the innocent in all this. I will give him the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps he was pushed into tabling the motion and, yesterday, he probably thought that no one would be here today. The Government's behaviour is outrageous. They tell the House that a guillotine will be imposed next week and they then say to all the Tory Members," Go on, pack up for the holidays. You are on a four-day week."

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): That is what the Leader of the Opposition has signed up to.

Mr. Skinner: I believe in a four-day week for workers. When that is offered to every worker in Britain, Parliament can have it as well, but not until then. Four million people do not have a job and it would be a great idea to have a four-day for workers because that would give young lasses and lads the chance to have a job.

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: I am on a different tack and I know that I must keep in order, because this is a narrow procedural motion. Should my hon. Friend intervene, I hope that he will do so on a straightforward procedural basis.

The Government have a cheek to flaunt their power. We gave them the opportunity last Friday to extend the debate on the Bills when we tabled our amendment, which was voted on. The Tories only managed to muster 99 votes then. That was a few more than today. I wonder where they go to. It is pretty clear that the Government told them to pack up and come back on Monday to pass the guillotine motion. The Government told them to refresh themselves and then come back to attack the working-class people. The tax increase also represents an attack on the middle class—all those Tory voters who have got pampas grass in their gardens in Surrey and everywhere else. They will be hit as well.

The Tory Government have dealt with the miners, the steelworkers and the shipyard workers. Now they are attacking their own middle class. No wonder they will get clobbered at the next election. We should have that election now. Instead of debating the motion, we should be debating a resignation motion, because I believe that 90 per cent. of the electorate, or perhaps 80 per cent.—I do not want to over-egg the pudding—want this lot out. They are fed up with all the Government's attacks. The tax increases are yet another one, right at the end of the autumn part of the Session.

I do not know whether it would have been possible to discuss the legislation in January. The Government would still have got it through in time to fit in with the appropriate resolutions. So why have all the rush? I can only assume that they had a gathering of the Cabinet, and they said, "I will tell you what; there will not be many there next week. Some of them will have gone—bobbied off. Let's slip it through in the week before Christmas." Well, some of us are not going to have it and that is why we call upon the Leader of the House. He got a bloody nose this morning and so did the Government—I am speaking metaphorically. The Government got a bloody nose this morning and the Leader of the House was not even here to carry through his business. Someone said to me that they lost a debate this morning. I said, "I did not lose a debate; all I did was move a procedural motion." All that the Government had to do was to bring 40 people in.

Mr. Dixon: Thirty-five.

Mr. Skinner Thirty-five plus the Tellers and the Speaker or Deputy Speaker. The people who lost the business this morning were the Government. They have a duty to have 40 people here. I have heard them attack the Labour Government between 1974 and 1979, but whatever attacks have been made—I have made a few myself, as a matter of fact—during that period we were never in a position of not having a quorum. We always made sure that we had people here during 1974 and 1979, when we were living on the breadline. We made sure that we had the requisite number of people here.

That is why we are debating this subject now. Why are we debating it now? We are debating it because the Government lost their business this morning. That shows that perhaps the Government, having attacked all those sections of the people, are getting weary. Perhaps it is the fag end of the Government. Perhaps they really have lost; they have run out of steam and they have lost control. It does happen.

There was a feeling like that in 1979, after those five years. I say that in a non-political fashion. It does happen.

Mr. Cryer: Of course.

Mr. Skinner: I think that the Government are running out of steam.

I do not think that Lady Thatcher would have allowed what has happened this morning to happen. She did some terrible things—she attacked working-class people left, right and centre—but I do not believe in my guts that she would have had fewer than 40 people here this morning. If they had not been here, there would have been blood on the carpet.

I do not know what will happen to the Government Whips. I see the Deputy Whip here now, the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight). He was here this morning, along with the Chief Whip, but half his staff were missing. It is really coming to summat, is it not?

Mr. Cryer: They are collapsing.

Mr. Skinner: It is coming to something when the Lords Commissioners, as they call them, are not even present. That is why we are debating the subject now. The Government are losing control of the House.

Mr. Cryer: They get paid extra money.

Mr. Skinner: There is another reason why the Government are in trouble on a Friday morning, which is worth remembering. The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), who stands at the Bar of the House, has just prompted me to say it. The reason they are in trouble on a Friday—and they would like to get rid of Friday—is that on Friday we start at half-past 9 and the courts are still open. Hon. Members who are on a City board of directors as non-executive members, such as, say, the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), who just left one that went bankrupt, Queen's Moat House—it is a real scandal, and he ran away just before the colloquial so-and-so hit the fan—cannot get here on a Friday. Those people, who come after half-past 2 on Monday to Thursday, obviously cannot get here on a Friday because they are in the courts, making money hand over fist. Guinness——

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East) will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Skinner: I shall let my hon. Friend intervene because we have to get back to the narrow procedural motion.

Mr. Livingstone: Has my hon. Friend read Suetonius's "Twelve Caesars"? That describes an identical procedural position. When Julius Caesar was having trouble getting something through the senate, which was dominated by reactionaries, he always called a special meeting of the senate on Friday because so many of the rich reactionaries had gone home to their country estates and he could always get things through. There seems to be the same problem with the Government today. After 2000 years, the rich and the corrupt still have trouble working on a Friday.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Let us now get back to the narrow motion.

Mr. Cryer: But Caesar did have a point.

Mr. Skinner: As a matter of fact, I do not want to stray, except to say, in passing, that Caesar got done by his own, did he not, just like Thatcher?

So history repeats itself. Look at them sitting on the Government Front Bench. They support this narrow procedural motion. There used to be a pair of knee pads in Mrs. Thatcher's office for when they got on their hands and knees to grovel to her. As soon as her back was turned it was—I was going to say it was, "Hail Major", but it was not really. Most of them would like to get rid of him now because he does not know whether he is on this earth or fuller's earth.

As you reminded us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are talking about why the Government should not have moved this narrow procedural motion today. It is worth remembering that if the Government had not lost their business today, we would not have debated the motion. If we had proceeded through the normal business, the motion would have been moved at 2.30 pm. We might have objected to it and that would have been the end of it. I am right, am I not?

Mr. Dixon *indicated assent.*

Mr. Skinner: We are debating the motion because of what happened earlier today. The Government have had their chance. They could have debated the measure the week after next. They could have moved an amendment to our amendment which proposed that the House rise for the Christmas recess on 24 December. The Government could have moved a compromise amendment proposing that the House rise on 22 December and we could have had more time to debate the measure.

It is outrageous for the Government to table a motion which will allow a measure to raise taxes throughout Britain to be pushed through in one day. If this had happened in the Soviet Union 10 or 15 years ago, it would have been expected. People would have said, "Well, that's par for the course. That's what they do here."

The Government are so contemptuous in the use of their power and think that they are going to be here for ever that they believe that they can do what they like. What we have done today is to shove a locker in the tub wheel, as we say in the pit, to stop the train from moving further. At some point, the Government must understand that they are out of step with people outside.

The Government are out of step on the question of tax and also in relation to the health service and housing.

[Mr. Skinner]

People are living on the streets while others live in the lap of luxury. The Government are not building houses. Those are the kind of issues that we should be debating. We should not be debating this narrow procedural motion. We should be debating a motion to allow local authorities to build houses in every town and city in Britain to put roofs over people's heads. Why did not the Leader of the House table such a motion?

Why are we not talking today about education and the fact that we need to spend £4 billion on repairs to schools? That shows the size of the problem. That spending would allow us to put people back to work. That is the kind of subject that we should be debating instead of this narrow procedural motion.

We could also be debating about the pits and arguing that all the pits should be kept open. Instead of debating this narrow procedural motion, we should be debating the reasons why we are throwing thousands of miners and others out of work. What this Government have got away with is a scandal.

More than 1 million people are on NHS waiting lists. It used to be said that we had to have nuclear weapons to stop the Russians from invading Britain. I said then that I did not believe that the Russians would want to join NHS waiting lists. It is all crazy.

At the fag end of this part of the Session we are talking about raising taxes once again, without any proper debate in Parliament. This is a debate about democracy and free speech. It is about gagging people who have the guts to stand up to this mob.

Mr. Livingstone: I wonder whether my hon. Friend is aware that it is being reported on the tapes that the Government have collapsed in Parliament today and have lost control of the agenda and that this is the first victory following the announcement by my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition of a policy of non-co-operation with the Government as a result of the way in which business is being managed. Does my hon. Friend believe that we may see further disasters for the Government, with more business lost, more incompetence and more mismanagement as signs of a Government who are beginning to lose their grip?

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) may believe that, but we are discussing a narrow motion. I have already pointed that out and I should be grateful if the hon. Member would address his remarks to the motion.

Mr. Skinner: I cannot follow my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) down that road because you have made it clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we are considering a narrow procedural motion. I was about to say—this is in order—that, instead of having this narrow procedural motion, we should be talking about the problems of the people outside this place. *[Interruption.]* We could not do that because the Government had not got a majority here in order to keep it going. Tory Members should not blame Labour Members. None of my hon. Friends voted this morning, although they could have done so. They could have defeated the Government.

I hear about the Common Market Commissioners and the way in which they do things and about the lack of democracy in the Common Market. Not only do I hear people talk about it; I know that it is true. That is why I am against the Common Market. The Government are learning the methods of those commissars or commissioners in the Common Market—perhaps I was right the first time—by conducting business in this way. It is high time they understood that there are 651 Members of Parliament and about 270 represent the Labour party. The Tory party has about 230 Members of Parliament, so the Government should not assume that they can steamroller things through. They do not have a majority of 150 or 100, as they had in the past. They should understand that Parliament is more clearly divided now and they do not have that massive majority. The Government have been taught a lesson this morning. They have been shown that they do not have a majority all the time.

The Government should allow debate to take place in a proper manner. We should not be putting taxes up in the course of one day. That is why I hope that, on reflection the Leader of the House will decide not to move the motion but accept that there should be more than one day's debate and that, if necessary, we should continue until 22, 23 or 24 December fully to debate the tax increases.

12.36 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Before I make one or two observations about what has been said in the debate, I simply acknowledge that, with his usual courtesy, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) told me that he was not able to stay very long after his speech from the Labour Front Bench because of long-standing commitments. Of course, I want to make it clear that I understand that and do not regard it as discourtesy.

If I am allowed to use rather less tempered language and fall into the vernacular, much of what the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said is completely up the creek. It was not Government business this morning which the Government had a duty to protect; it was private Members' business.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Newton: Perhaps I might just finish. There was a private Member's motion moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson) on a number of business and industry matters including the sort of issues that the hon. Gentleman said we should be discussing. As a result of the hon. Gentleman's manoeuvre, those matters have not been discussed and we are now discussing this procedural motion. There is no question of the Government's not being in control. The hon. Gentleman has wrecked private Members' business and demolished an opportunity to discuss the things that he said we should be talking about.

Mr. Skinner: Let us get this on the record. I agree that the first three items of business today were private Members' business. But the next series of items is Government business. We are now debating Government business because the Government put down their motion. Do not let the Leader of the House kid anyone outside the

House and in the media that Friday is not about Government business. Government business is on this agenda.

The truth is that the Government had a duty to protect the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson), who moved the original motion. Any decent Government would have had 40 Members here to protect him. The truth is that I did not lose any business, the hon. Gentleman did not lose any business and my hon. Friends did not lose any business. The Government shot the hon. Gentleman in the back.

Mr. Livingstone: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I entered the building this morning, I was told by a Tory Member that they had been told by their Whips to continue at sufficient length to ensure that my motion was not reached.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair, as the hon. Gentleman knows.

Mr. Newton: I repeat that what the hon. Member for Bolsover did today was effectively to wreck private Members' business, not Government business. He deprived the House of an opportunity to discuss exactly the sort of matters which he spent 10 minutes saying we should be talking about. His case simply does not stand up.

Mr. Cryer: Is the Leader of the House saying that if private Members' business had operated in the normal way, the important motion that the Government have tabled would not have been debated at all, and would have been put through on the nod?

Mr. Newton: That would have depended on the hon. Gentleman and on his hon. Friends. The hon. Member for Garscadden acknowledged that the motion is helpful in the context in which we are talking—and I emphasise "in the context"—by stating that he did not intend to oppose the motion. It allows amendments to be made in a more orderly and straightforward way than would otherwise be possible. If the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) had been here and had objected to it, the motion would not have been passed.

Mr. Dixon: Does the Leader of the House accept that the reason that the motion is down is that the Government are trying to put the Bill through in one day? Will not that allow amendments prior to Second Reading?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman is quite right on the background to the situation, which was why I emphasised that it was helpful in the context in which we are talking. We are talking about how the Bill should be dealt with next week. Such a motion would also have been required if the House had been dealing with the Bill in two days next week. There would still not have been a sufficient interval between day one and day two for the amendments to be unstarred. In those circumstances, the Government would have tabled a motion of this kind also.

Despite what was said earlier, there is nothing particularly unusual about the motion, although I accept that the situation more usually arises when there has been agreement in the usual channels to deal with such things rapidly. That is not the background in this case. Nevertheless, there is nothing unusual about the motion in the circumstances where the House is asked to deal with something in one day or a couple of days. A motion of this kind facilitates the tabling of amendments on that basis. The hon. Member for Garscadden suggested that he did not intend to oppose it, even though he did not like the background.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I am intervening only because I have never heard such utter baloney as I have heard this morning from the maverick hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and his hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer).

Had this been a Government day and had the Labour party felt as strongly as the maverick hon. Gentleman pretends that it does, would the Opposition Benches be so empty? Clearly it is not a Government day, but a private Members' day. Will not the way in which the hon. Gentleman is behaving only prejudice the type of argument that he says we ought to be having?

Mr. Newton: My hon. and learned Friend makes a good point, and it links with one that I had been tempted to make myself. I had almost decided not to make the point, but I have been tempted back again. When the hon. Member for Bolsover spoke so vigorously in favour of the House sitting almost until it was time for Christmas lunch, the number of hon. Members that he could persuade to be here to vote against my proposal for the dates of the recess was precisely five, if I remember rightly. That was out of a total number of about 650 hon. Members, excluding the Chair.

Mr. Cryer: There were seven, including the Tellers.

Mr. Newton: Well, all right. That takes the figure fractionally above 1 per cent. of the total number of Members of Parliament.

I will make two other points quickly, because I do not want to detain the House for too long. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) gave the impression that, as Leader of the House, I had been scattering guillotines about like confetti. This is only the fourth guillotine in well over 18 months during which I have been the Leader of the House. I suspect that that has been a more sparing record than most in recent times. The figure contrasts with the five in one day which were once announced by the former right hon. Member for Ebbw Vale—that is how I most clearly remember him—Michael Foot.

I will make one other factual point quickly to the hon. Gentleman. I have been advised by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People that the type of secondary procedures that are involved in such Bills—that is to say negative rather than affirmative—mirrors the existing procedures. We shall look further at the point that the hon. Gentleman raised.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey) *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: He has just got out of bed.

Mr. Hughes: I was here earlier. Things have moved on since then. I apologise that I was not here for the beginning of the debate. I wish to ask the Leader of the House a simple factual question about the motion.

Mr. Greg Knight (Treasurer of Her Majesty's Household): The hon. Gentleman has only just walked in.

Mr. Hughes: I apologised that I was not here for the beginning of the debate. I was here earlier. I have been away and come back.

If the motion is defeated, will it be possible to go through the proceedings on the Bill? The normal procedure

[Mr. Hughes]

is that hon. Members can table amendments and so on only after Second Reading. If no motion has been passed to change that procedure, would the Government be unable to complete the proceedings in a day, irrespective of amendments?

Mr. Newton: Such guidance more properly belongs to the Chair. If I may venture into this delicate field—unless the Chair wishes to venture into it—I think that under those circumstances there would be many requests for the Chair to accept manuscript amendments between Second Reading and the Committee stage. I see that you are about to be helpful to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes, all amendments would become manuscript amendments.

Mr. Newton: As I suspected, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have confirmed in your ever-helpful way what I could not say so definitely. I am grateful to you for stating that, in those circumstances, the Chair would accept manuscript amendments. So rejection of the motion would not prevent proceedings on the Bill.

I accept that people do not like what I have said that I shall propose next week. In that context, it has been acknowledged in various quarters that the motion is designed to be helpful to the House. It is designed to facilitate the drafting and tabling of amendments in a sensible way.

I do not need to make a huge number of further points, but I wish to make a few. I do not wish to stray out of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A fair number of points have been made which perhaps relate more properly to the timetable motion that we shall table than to today's motion. I accept that the motions are a little difficult to disentangle.

It has been suggested that there has been hardly any time to reflect on or discuss the proposal on national insurance contributions. The proposal was announced in the March Budget this year. That was followed by five days of Budget debate. The proposal has been referred to in a variety of other debates by Opposition spokesmen in the intervening period. The proposal was also an integral part of the judgment in the latest Budget, on which we had a six-day debate.

The proposal was also in the Queen's Speech, so one could say that that was another four or five days of opportunity for debate on national insurance contributions. There have been at least 15 days on which hon. Members had the opportunity to debate the national insurance contributions proposal announced last March.

I accept that there has not been such an extensive opportunity to debate the proposal on statutory sick pay. Nevertheless, it is a public expenditure proposal produced in the context of the first unified Budget. At the request of the Opposition, we had an extra day of Budget debate. It was increased from five to six days specifically to allow further discussion of the public expenditure proposals. Not only has there been the opportunity to debate the national insurance proposal, but many references were made to the statutory sick pay proposal.

It has been suggested that the reason for today's motion is the convenience of the Government. That is not the case. The position is this. The national insurance proposals taken broadly—not specifically the proposals for which the Bill is required but the other proposals on employers' contributions—and the SSP proposals go hand in hand. If they are to be implemented in an orderly and sensible way as part of the Budget judgment, which is designed to ensure the continued economic recovery, they must be implemented at the beginning of the next financial year, in April.

We are talking about proposals which affect every firm in Britain, including many with massive payroll systems. Implementation needs to start by March at the latest. Before implementation, extensive secondary legislation needs to be prepared and passed, with the details discussed in the House. Unless we proceed in such a way, we shall not be able to carry through important ingredients of our policy, which are essential to the economic interests of the nation, and to do so in a manner with which businesses could be expected to cope sensibly. That is the basis for our actions.

As I have said, there will be many opportunities for debate. The Bills are very short—although I accept that the Maastricht Bill was also short—and are effectively only one clause, which will have the major effect that we are discussing. One Bill will increase national insurance contributions and the other will change the reimbursement for statutory sick pay. Those are the key clauses and they are basically simple propositions. The detail will come later, in secondary legislation. The national insurance re-rating exercise will be further debated in the House when the necessary instruments are introduced.

Against that background, it is not reasonable to suggest that the Government are somehow trying to steamroller things through. They are trying to achieve a sensible basis on which to proceed with the detail, which can be the subject of further examination and discussion.

In order not to trespass further on the time of the House, I shall conclude on the following two matters that did not seem to be fully understood, judging from some of the contributions to the debate. Repeated references have been made to the changes to national insurance contributions as if they were the same as a variety of other tax increases. Hon. Members know perfectly well that the national insurance fund operates on the basis that this year's contributions pay for this year's benefits, which are overwhelmingly retirement pensions. The money is required to ensure that the fund has a sound basis from which it can continue to pay those benefits and against a background in which, in line with something that the hon. Member for Garscadden is reported to have said in the papers, the Government have announced a significant increase, over and above the normal, in retirement pensions —the increase in relation to value added tax on fuel, which has to be paid out of the fund.

The national insurance proposal is not the same as any other tax increase, but is related to the need to meet the Government's and the country's commitments to retired people and to many others who are dependent on payments out of the national insurance fund.

The hon. Member for Garscadden said that he was not sure of the effects of the changes in statutory sick pay on industry and that there had been talk of some compensation package. The effects are very clear. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the proposal will reduce public spending by about £700 million a year, but the Government are also proposing to reduce the main rates of employers' national insurance contributions by 0·2 per cent. from next April and the lower rates by one percentage point. Those reductions in employers' contributions, which are the other side of the package, will be worth about £830 million, rising to £1 billion by 1996-97.

The net effect of the package of changes to statutory sick pay and employers' national insurance contributions, even allowing for one or two other factors that it could be argued need to be taken into account, is a reduction of at least £100 million in the costs imposed on British industry, but perhaps those are matters for debate when we come to the issues in other ways next week.

I shall not trespass further on the time of the House, but I must emphasise that further opportunities for debate will be properly provided by the Government.

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Social Security (Contributions) Bill and the Statutory Sick Pay Bill, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bills have been read a Second time.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ordered,

That Dr. Kim Howells be discharged from the Committee of Public Accounts and Mr. George Mudie be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Paul Kenney

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

12.53 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I am grateful for the chance to bring to the attention of the House the awful tragedy of the death of my constituent, Paul Kenney, in Portugal, and I am happy to have the opportunity to do so in a much fuller way than would normally have been the case.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friends the Members for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), and for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), not merely because they have provided me with extra time, which was not precisely the purpose of their enterprise, but especially for having, in true parliamentary style, shown the Government that this place is not merely for Government action. It is also for the Opposition and Back Benchers, and I am pleased to have an opportunity to put this matter before the House; through the House, to the nation; and, through the nation, to the Portuguese authorities and to their ambassador, who have behaved in a way that I did not believe possible for a civilised nation that belongs to our so-called European Union.

First, I shall outline the facts. Paul Kenney, aged 23, was found on a beach in Portimao, in Portugal, on 17 July this year. His neck was broken and his skull was smashed in. His family did not discover that he had died until four weeks later, despite many visits to the police and to hospital. They still do not know whether he was alive when he was taken to hospital, nor the cause of death, and they have been unable to get adequate information from the Portuguese authorities.

As a result of all that and my bleak failure to extract information from the Portuguese, the family have decided that there is only one way that they might ever find out what happend to their son—through parliamentary action. They wish to emphasise that they hope that, by taking such action, they will spare other parents and families from the tragedy that they have suffered and are suffering.

Members of the Kenney family were not in Portugal on holiday but as a result of another disaster—they could not get jobs in this country. Mr. and Mrs. Kenney went to Portugal from my Leicester constituency because they could not get jobs and had no prospect of getting jobs, so they bought a bar in Portimao. But, because of lack of business, Paul and Mr. Kenney came back. The father worked in a hosiery factory in Leicester and, although Paul Kenney was a qualified electrician, he could not find work in Leicester and did odd jobs back in Portimao.

So the Kenneys were not just passing by. They were not itinerants nor in Portugal for a brief holiday. They have a base in Portugal and a home in Portimao. The home had a telephone number and there were numbers on the body of the deceased when he went into hospital, a fact that becomes highly relevant.

I have a copy of Mrs. Kenney's statement, and the Portuguese ambassador has had the gall impliedly to criticise her for not providing a statement and to ask whether she will now make one. She has given statements; she has had not been visited by the police to ask whether she will help; and she has no kindness, sympathy, co-operation or help from a Government who are meant to be civilised and part of our decent world.

[Mr. Greville Janner]

Mrs. Kenney tells me:

> "I last saw my son Paul Kenney at 9.15 pm on Friday 16 July 1993 before he went to Praia da Rocha for the evening."

She said that it was not unusual for her not to see Paul for a little while but that she became worried when a friend phoned six days later to say that he had not turned up to help him as promised with a job on his swimming pool. She said:

> "After two days of looking for Paul, I went to the Portimao hospital on 23 July 1993 with a Portuguese friend, taking Paul's passport, to inquire whether anyone had been admitted"—

anyone of his description—

> "suffering memory loss, or unconscious or dead. The receptionist checked the computer and also checked a list of names which went back to 16 July 1993, but there was no record of any such admittance. All the time my son was lying next door in the morgue."

On the same evening of 23 July, Mrs. Kenney and her husband went to report their son as missing to the special police. They gave them a description of Paul's tattoo and a recent photograph and passport. They went back to the police on 24 and 25 July, and they were told that there was no news, that it was not known where their son was, that he had never been heard of, that he was not in that hospital and that there was no record of him.

On Friday 13 August 1993, four weeks after the boy died, the police rang and said that the parents should go to the hospital in Portimao, the same hospital where they had been told that neither Paul, nor anyone of that description, had been admitted. It was at that hospital that they later found their son in the morgue. He had been there, they were told, for four weeks, so he must have been there on 23 July.

Paul's father told me that, when he and his wife went to the hospital, they were told that their son had drowned. When they saw him in the morgue, he was fully dressed. The hospital said that it had no identification for him and yet Paul's dry wallet—it was not wet—was lying beside him, and it contained plenty of identification.

At the time, the police told the parents that they thought that Paul had drowned. The mother said that she had not believed that, as Paul would not have gone swimming fully clothed at that time of night. They went back to the hospital the following day for Paul's belongings. Hospital staff said that there were no clothes or other belongings, and that Paul had come to the hospital with only his shorts on. The staff said that it was possible that Paul had been swimming and had drowned, and that they had none of his clothes. They said that they had in their possession a doctor's report saying that he had fallen and broken his neck and skull. Yet the hospital had told his parents that Paul had drowned.

The parents were asked to leave and they refused. Another woman came with a bit of paper and took them to another building, to which they had been once and been told that none of Paul's possessions were contained there. Eventually, Paul's parents were given their son's wallet. It contained a small amount of money, his keys and seven local telephone numbers, and his bank number. The parents asked why, if the officials had the numbers, they had not phoned the home or the bank. They asked why hospital staff had not checked and whether they did not care. They asked why the staff had not made any attempt to find out who the boy was and why they did not give the information to the police. They asked why the police did not question the hospital and when the police found Paul in the morgue.

An autopsy had been performed on Paul on 10 August; on 13 August, the officials saw fit to tell the bereaved parents that their son was lying dead in the morgue. Eventually we extracted a copy of the death certificate, of which I have a translation. It does not take the matter forward much. It gives his name and details, such as the fact that he was an electrician. It states:

> "Burial:
> After the statutory period".

The parents told me that they would have wished to bring the body to Britain for another autopsy and to be buried here, but they could not afford it, so he was cremated and his ashes returned. They gave me the name of the so-called doctor. The document states that Paul was treated in a hospital establishment. The parents wanted to know whether he was treated, whether he was alive when he got to the hospital and, if he was alive, what treatment he was given. The officials said that Paul could not have been swimming because he was in his shorts, but he was not in his shorts.

In another life, I used to present cases against people for such criminal negligence. I have found no word in the English language to describe my contempt for those people, who showed, and still show, a total lack of decency and care, and who have failed to investigate this awful tragedy. Lo and behold, on the same report it says that there was cranial and brain stem injury due to an accidental fall. There then follows a question mark. In other words, it may or may not have happened that way. The father said he went to where the incident occurred and said that there was a cliff, but who knows whether or why his son was on a cliff and fell?

As the tale unfolds and the way in which people have prevaricated becomes apparent, one can understand why the family and I believe that there is far more to the story than meets the eye and why the entire disgraceful episode stinks of a cover-up.

The Kenneys did their best to find out what had happened to their son. I wish to pay tribute to the way in which our consuls all over the world help British citizens who are in trouble. I pay tribute to the diplomatic staff. I have seen them at work and they have helped my constituents over and over again for almost a quarter of a century.

I wish that I could pay similar tribute to the consul in this case—an isolated incident. The parents said that when they visited the consul concerned he told them to get a lawyer. That was not too helpful as they had already done so. The Minister will need to do some research on why that happened. If the consul had done his job properly, I do not believe that this problem would have arisen. The top job of a consul is not to help British people who have lost their passport or who have run out of money or who are in prison, although they are important tasks. The top job of a consul is to deal with a death and to help relatives to trace the person concerned. I hope that the Minister will take action and possibly appoint a new honorary consul in that town.

On 20 August, a month after the incident occurred, His Excellency Dr. Jose Manuel T. G. Pearce de Azevedo, the British consul, received the following letter regarding the subject from the harbour captain in Portimao:

> "Regarding the subject raised in your memorandum . . . I am informing that as a matter of fact it was reported to this Office that an accident had taken place in Praia da Rocha on the 17th July . . . around 0045 hours, from which resulted the death of the person involved in the same.

It was not possible, at the time, to establish the identity of the person,"

I am not allowed to say that a Member of the House is lying, but I hope that I can say it is a blatant, appalling and disgraceful lie to say that they did not know who he was when his wallet was on the body. I am shocked that anyone in any position of authority in a country that is alleged to be civilised could behave in such a way. The letter continues by saying that identification is still not possible. Yet, by 20 August, Mr. Kenney had been identified, the police had told his parents and they had been to the hospital. For the consul to say that the body could not be identified is not inefficiency, but gross criminal negligence of the most disgusting kind.

The letter also says:

". . . Report of the incident was sent to the State Attorney in the Judicial Court of Portimao, who took over the proceedings, and to whom your Excellency should address all enquiries regarding the subject.

Best regards,"

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I hesitate to intervene, but it may be convenient to remind the hon. and learned Gentleman that it is not in order to criticise someone from a friendly country except on a substantive motion. I think that he will understand that.

Mr. Janner: I understand it, but I shall seek the best way to get round it as I do not regard a friendly nation as one that says that it cannot identify a body when identity has already been established in the morgue, and when it does not inform the parents of the death. In deference to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall read out the correspondence and the early-day motion. I hope that that will be appropriate.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): The case speaks for itself.

Mr. Janner: I thank the hon. Gentleman, it does speak for itself. If the authorities are not ashamed of themselves, they should be.

After the Kenney family had failed to get any information about the death of their son—about how and why it had happened—they came to me. I am so pleased that they did. My job is to look after people like them and at least I could share their frustration. I immediately telephoned the ambassador who was, allegedly, away. The embassy promised that the ambassador would contact me; of course he did not. I contacted the ambassador on 20 September, on 22 October, on 9 November, on 22 November and on 29 November, and I have got nowhere at all.

A fax was sent to the ambassador in which my very able assistant Jessica Bawden wrote:

"As discussed in Mr. Janner's telephone conversation this morning, please would you ask the Ambassador to look at this urgent case on his return and could you also call to confirm receipt of the fax."

The reply, I am afraid, got us absolutely nowhere. It was not from the ambassador, but from a junior official.

The first thing I got out of the ambassador was on 26 October when I had written to complain. The first reply was from the first secretary. The ambassador himself did not even bother to answer. The first secretary wrote:

"His Excellency the Ambassador"—

whom I am not allowed to criticise because he is the ambassador of a friendly nation—

"has asked me to acknowledge your letter of the 7th October concerning Mr. Paul Kenney's death in Portugal last July, and to let you know that your letters have already been conveyed to the appropriate Portuguese authorities.

I can assure you that there is no reluctance whatsoever from my authorities to help Mr. Kenney's parents finding out the circumstances that took place regarding this very sad event".

That is how Mr. Kenney's death was described; the letter was in English and was not a translation. The letter continued:

"once all the necessary procedures to establish the facts are completed, my authorities will notify us of their findings and conclusions.

I will not fail to contact you as soon as a reply is received."

That was written on 15 October.

Unfortunately, we got nowhere. On 22 October, I wrote the following letter to the ambassador personally:

"I have now been serving my constituents for 23 years and I have never been treated by any Ambassador with such discourtesy as you have seen fit to accord to me in connection with the case of the Kenney family. When I first raised this tragic and urgent matter with your Embassy, you were away and I was assured that you would contact me personally on your return. You did not. I was then promised that the matter would be dealt with in your country as a matter of urgency. It was not. And now I have received a letter from your First Secretary, again delaying.

There is a normal courtesy in this country that when a Member of Parliament writes to a Minister or to an Ambassador, he or she receives at least a personal reply. You have not even had the decency to do that, in a case involving the death of a constituent in your country.

I now propose to see my constituents next week and, if they agree, to start an open parliamentary campaign. I was under the impression that—normal kindnesses and courtesies apart—you would want to avoid the inevitable, massive and adverse publicity that your country will receive—from all sections of the Press —about this terrible tragedy.

As I have always had good relations with your predecessors"—

That is not quite accurate. There was an occasion when there were leaks from gas heaters in the Algarve, as some hon. Members may remember. One of my constituents was killed and the Portuguese were not very helpful then. However, I was trying to be as friendly as my good nature would permit, which is not very friendly. My letter continued by saying that I had

"a warm regard for Portugal—I thought I would write you this strictly personal letter, in a final attempt to evoke a response from you and action from your authorities."

The reply from the ambassador was as follows:

"I very much regret the impression you got about the way Mr. Kenney's case is being handled by this Embassy.

After your first contact with the Chargé d'Affaires, the matter was urgently referred to our authorities and the First Secretary's letter only confirmed that a subsequent request of information was made to our Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

As you will know these matters tend to take some time to be fully investigated".

That letter was written on 26 October, yet we still do not know how this young man died.

The reply continued:

"We quite understand the distress of Mr. Kenney's family".

The Portuguese authorities "quite understand" it? They do not apologise and they do not say that they are sorry for the way in which they handled the matter. They do not even offer a word of sympathy. They say:

"We quite understand the distress Mr. Kenney's family and your concern with this problem, but I can assure you that all efforts are being made by this Embassy to speed up the matter".

If that is how they make "all efforts", I wonder what happens when they do not. Matters would not get very far. My reply on 9 November, after waiting a while, said:

"Thank you for your letter of the 26th October. Please would you inform your authorities that, in my view and in that of the family, there is no excuse whatever for the massive delay in

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> responding to this tragic complaint. In view of your letter, I shall withhold parliamentary action until the start of the next session. If precise results are not available by the 16th November, then it would be wrong for me to resist any further my constituents' massive anger at the way they have been treated and I shall raise the matter in Parliament without further delay."

We go nowhere.

On 22 November, I wrote another letter:

> "Not having had even the courtesy of a reply to my letter to you, I am now raising this disgraceful matter in Parliament and with the Foreign Secretary. I am shocked that your country would see fit to behave in the way that it has done—and, if I may respectfully say so, I have never known an Embassy to treat a Member of Parliament in a matter involving a death of this sort with such total lack of concern.
>
> The only documentation that has now been received is from your Ministry of Marine—and I enclose copies for your information—just in case you are interested."

He was not.

On 29 November, I wrote another letter to the alleged ambassador:

> "I have failed to get results by any other means and I now enclose the Early Day Motion which I shall table in the House this week. I am so sorry that you have seen fit to handle this tragedy in such an unworthy fashion. I have always had deep respect for your great country and I am shocked that you and your authorities would see fit to behave in this way.
>
> I am sending copies of the Early Day Motion and of this correspondence to the Foreign Secretary".

I also informed him that I would seek a debate, which happily today I have secured.

Early-day motion 155 reads:

"That this House condemns the Portuguese Government and authorities for its failure to investigate the tragic death of Paul Kenney, whilst on holiday in Portugal in July; is outraged that the Portuguese authorities failed to take any steps to trace Paul's family, who were in Portugal at the time and were only informed of his death after his parents traced him to a local hospital, where the body had lain for four weeks after being found on a beach in Portimao, although on several visits to the hospital his parents were told that no person of his description had been admitted; expresses its dismay that even though Paul had telphone numbers on his person that would have helped identify him, neither the police nor the hospital made any effort to trace his next of kin; condemns the extraordinary discourtesy of the Portuguese Ambassador and his staff towards the honourable Member for Leicester, West, when he sought to progress this matter on behalf of his constituents".

That is what matters. It is not what they do to Members of Parliament. We are servants of our constituents. It does not matter on which side of the House we sit, we are put in this place to look after our constituents. When we get in touch with an ambassador for a constituent whose son has died, it is not our amour propre; it is our attempt to get results for our constituents.

The motion continues.

"and demands that the Portuguese Government now take immediate action to investigate Paul Kenney's death, to inform the bereaved family of its causes and circumstances, and to apologise for the disgraceful way in which it has treated them and their awful tragedy."

I am very much obliged to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for the help that it has provided. I have had letters from the Minister of State and from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, who is being good enough to reply to the debate. I know, because of the letters—I shall not read them out—and my conversations with the right hon. and hon. Gentlemen that they care about this matter and that they will do their best to help us. I know that they are as shocked as I am at the way in which this awful tragedy has been treated. I look forward to hearing from the Minister in due course what steps they will take to try to give the parents at least the knowledge of what happened to their son.

The suggestion that this matter is sub judice, which has been alleged in a letter to me and the Minister, is absolute rubbish. There is no reason whatever why the Portuguese authorities should not tell us what happened. I have here an unidentified document, which comes from Portugal, and says:

> "After consulting the Hospital registry on the arrival of the deceased persons and their property, it was verified that on 17/7/93 a corpse, of the male sex, with no identification",—

no identification?—

> "had been brought in to the Emergencies' Department by the Voluntary Fire Brigade of Portimao."

That was not true either. I shall come to that in a moment.

> "A wallet containing several papers and money in the amount of 8 thousand escudos was found with the deceased."

How can they say that he was not indentifiable when his wallet was there?

> "These were all registered in the Hospital's property registry book and later on collected by a person of English nationality who identified herself as the mother"—

as if there were some doubt about it; it is a disgusting document—

> "In accordance with the information provided by the staff involved in this case—registration and delivery of the property—the various papers found in the wallet had nothing on them to allow identification of the body."

If that is not a patent, blatant, lie, I do not know what is. After all, the same document refers to a wallet containing his identification.

> "On 19/7/93, the Hospital conveyed the situation to the Deputy State Attorney of the Judiciary Court of Portimao as is common practice in similar situations—arrival of corpses."

I shall come to that in a moment, because I do not believe that British people should go on holiday to Portugal if they treat people in this way.

> "Regarding this matter, and at our request, we were later informed by this Court that the proceedings were under investigation, at the stage of inquiry and therefore, sub judice. We would like to point out that the transfer of the corpse to the Hospital, whose death occurred outside the Hospital, was due to the fact that the existing morgue, at our premises, is jointly used by the forensic and pathology services and by the District Hospital of Portimao, in accordance with an agreement with the Ministry of Justice"—

as if any one cares. I should not have thought that the fact that organisations shared a morgue prevented them from identifying the bodies in it.

At last I received a letter from the ambassador. It is a page and a half long and helps us not at all. I shall read it, because it speaks for itself. As the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) was good enough to point out, it is important that we should allow these people to speak for themselves—degrading for them as it must be. The letter reads as follows:

> "Dear Mr. Janner,
>
> Thank you for your letter of 9th November regarding the death of Mr. Paul Kenney. Following your previous letter, dated 22nd October, I have conveyed to my authorities that it would be very helpful to have some kind of preliminary or even incomplete information on the enquiry on Mr. Kenney if it would not be possible to have, in the short term, a complete report addressing in full Mrs. Carla Kenney's concerns on the very unfortunate events related with her son's death.
>
> Although I would rather prefer to give you a comprehensive report, I am afraid that, pending the conclusion of the enquiry

> conducted by the State Attorney in the Judicial Court of Portimão I will have no more than incomplete answers to Mr. Paul Kenney's family.
>
> Besides the Court, this case is dealt with by other departments of the Portuguese Administration, mainly the Ministries of Health and Home Affairs.
>
> The conclusions of the enquiry carried out by the Ministry for Home Affairs are not yet available."

I remind the House that the letter is dated 3 December and that the accident—if it was an accident—and the death occurred on 17 July, some six months before.

> "I can inform you I have just received a report from the Health Minister's office concerning the events . . . I am sending herewith a tentative translation"—

whatever that may mean—

> "of the above-mentioned report and a copy of the annexed, untranslated, document sent by the Health Ministry."

I have not read the untranslated document. My Spanish is excellent but my Portuguese, I am pleased to say, does not exist. The document that I read to the House is clearly that document.

The ambassador then refers to the seven questions originally asked by Mrs. Kenney about how the death happened, of which I now remind the House:

> "Why was there no record of Paul ever entering the hospital? Was he alive at any time in the hospital? Why did the hospital not inform the police that they had Paul's body with his wallet containing seven Portimão phone numbers? As the police arrived on the beach after the ambulance 115 had taken Paul to the hospital, why did they not follow it? Why do the hospital insist Paul had no clothes on when he entered the hospital, when the witness found him on the beach fully clothed on 17 July 1993? Why did four weeks elapse without the hospital, the Special Police or the Maritime Police contracting me about my son's death? Why did the police interview the witness one week after finding Paul on the beach."

Those are the mother's perfectly reasonable questions. Here is the ambassador's answer:

> "I think you will agree; that some of them"

—the questions—

> "have already been answered, namely by the report from the Hospital."

I do not agree, none of them had been answered.

> "There was no record of Mr. Paul Kenney ever entering the hospital because the corpse afterwards identified by Mrs. Kenney was registered as 'unidentified'".

She had asked the staff whether they had had anyone in of that description. Paul had the tattoo on his arm; he had the wallet with him; he had his identification on him.

The answer continues:

> "the fact was forwarded to the local services of the State Attorney, as demanded by the practice in similar circumstances. The registry staff did not find elements which allowed identification of the body."

This man has not bothered to read the correspondence. He does not know anything. He has not taken the care and trouble to look.

> "The unidentified person arrived at the hospital already dead".

Did he? Who said so? One of the reports that I have just read to the House said that he was treated at the hospital. That answers another of Mrs. Carla Kenney's concerns.

> "As to the questions involving the members of Police forces, I am afraid the respective answers will not be obtained before the completion of the inquiry by the State Attorney."

Will we be alive to see that, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I hope so.

> "As I have had the occasion to tell you before, I am well aware of the distress caused to Mrs. Carla Kenney, and I sincerely hope that her concerns will be fully answered."

Once again there is no word of kindness, sympathy or understanding.

> "Your letter dated 29th November was received during the typing of the translation of the report . . . I deeply regret the impression you have about the way the Portuguese authorities are handling this case.
>
> The Embassy will continue to pursue its utmost efforts to help your constituent and yourself in this unfortunate matter."

If those are its utmost efforts, what are the rest like? I have never before seen a letter like that.

I have prepared a batch of further questions, which I will place before the House. I invite the Government to ask the Portuguese ambassador and Portuguese Government to inquire into the issues raised by my questions, as I will.

There is no mention of the previous correspondence with me or the questions that I asked. I asked a great series —a fax in late September and letters on the 22 September, 29 November and 22 November. The ambassador asked for a complete report from Mrs. Carla Kenney for the first time. Why did he not ask for it before if they needed it? Why does he not ask Mrs. Kenney herself? She has been living in Portimao since Paul's death. She has only come to this country today to listen to the debate about her son. The police have never visited Mrs. Kenney to ask for a report.

The ambassador says that he sends a "tentative" translation. What is that? Mr. and Mrs. Kenney question much of what is contained in the translated hospital report. Why has it taken almost five months to get a report from the hospital? The excuse for there being no record of a body was that the corpse was unidentified. That is obviously unacceptable. Do hospitals in Portugal not keep records of unidentified bodies that arrive at the hospitals? Mrs. Kenney specifically asked whether any bodies had been brought in and was told that none had been. Why were the police not informed that there was an unidentified corpse at the hospital? Why is a police investigation being carried out now, five months later?

Why would the typing of the translations prevent the ambassador from writing to me for a week? Why did he not use the telephone? The ambassador calls this an unfortunate matter. That is the understatement of the century. As for the hospital report that he saw fit to send, the body was not brought to the hospital by a voluntary fire brigade vehicle; witnesses saw it being taken from the beach by a 115 Portuguese ambulance.

As for the allegation that there was no identification on the body, Portuguese bank numbers and local telephone numbers cannot amount to no identification. Why were the personal belongings kept separate from the body? Why did officials not connect the unidentified personal belongings with the unidentified body? Is it not true that the papers on the body would have enabled identification? Why did the police not go down the road to the bank and check the bank numbers or telephone the Portimao numbers?

If the situation was conveyed to the judiciary court of Portimao on 19 July, why did the police not investigate? Why do we have no result? Why do the parents still not know how their son died? The ambassador blames the confusion on the fact that the morgue is used jointly by the forensic and pathology departments. Why should that be a problem?

I have handled many difficult cases for my constituents in my time, but this is certainly the worst. It could be pure, blatant negligence on the part of the authorities in Portimao, in which case I would have expected the ambassador to have said, "I have gone into this. I am

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terribly sorry, there has been a mistake." That is what decent people would do. They certainly would not try to justify the treatment that my constituents have been given.

I wish to pay tribute to the courage of the Kenney family. I saw Mr. Kenney before we went public, and I asked him again, "Are you sure that you want to raise this matter in the House of Commons and publicly? It opens up wounds and keeps them open. Would you not prefer—as many of my constituents do when hit by tragedy—to say that you have done your best, to close it and to try to live with the memory of your son without knowing what happened to him?" He said no for two reasons. First, he said that the family had to know what had happened to their lad. Secondly, they did not want the same thing to happen to anyone else's family or anyone else's son. I am proud to be of service to them. I think that they are great people and I wish that the circumstances were not such a tragedy.

I would not go to Portugal until this matter is cleared up. If that is the way the Portuguese treat people, the further we keep away from them the better. I would advise the Portuguese authorities not to spend millions of pounds on advertising their holidays, but to spend just a little time trying to clear up the tragedy that has struck a British citizen. Instead of sending anodyne letters—I do not know to whom they thought they were sending them if they thought that I would sit back and just take them—they should investigate properly. I suggest that British people should express their disgust at this awful treatment.

Although the case involves one person and one family, it has a symbolism about it. It is right that we should have the opportunity, as Back Benchers, to raise matters concerning even one citizen and one family, and I am so grateful for that opportunity.

I hope that the Minister will be kind enough to say what the Government of this country will do to try to get put right what the Government of an allegedly friendly country have deliberately, I think, failed to do. I hope that the Government will try to clear up some of the mystery, which makes the family believe that their son did not die a natural death.

1.30 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I wonder whether I may make a brief contribution. May I say, as a Conservative politician to a Labour politician, that today is the first time in my 15 years in the House that I have heard a constituency case put so well. The House can tell that I feel emotional having heard all the details.

The thing that struck me most was the lack of compassion, tenderness, understanding in any of the communiqués to the Kenney family. That is an absolute disgrace and I hope that somehow the Foreign Office can get to the bottom of it on behalf of the constituent of the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner). I give the hon. and learned Gentleman full marks, because I do not not think that a constituency case could have been presented better.

1.31 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): I think that we were all impressed by the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) and the way in which he represented his constituents, Mr. and Mrs. Kenney, and brought this important case to the attention of the House. I should like to outline the action taken by the British Government on behalf of the family since Paul Kenney's death. I will outline separately the action taken by the honorary consul in Portimao, in whose consular district the death occurred and the consul in Lisbon, who later became involved when matters were taken to a higher level.

Before I do that, I would, of course, like to express my sincere condolences to the Kenney family during what must still be a distressing and deeply traumatic time. Before I come to the history of events, I should add that I shall write to the Portuguese ambassador on Monday, as soon as *Hansard* is available, to give him a copy of the debate at the earliest possible opportunity.

On 16 August 1993, Mrs. Carla Kenney, the co-owner with her husband, Mr. John Raymond Kenney, of a bar in Portimao, contacted the British consulate in Portimao for the first time about her son's death. The honorary consul asked her to come into the consulate to speak to him about it immediately. She told him that her son's body had been in the hospital mortuary in Portimao for one month without anyone informing her.

Mrs. Kenney told the honorary consul in Portimao that her son had left home on 16 July to go to a local bar. When he did not return she made inquiries. She reported his disappearance to the local authorities on 23 and 26 July and again on 5 August. She gave a full description of her son and identifying marks. It was not until 13 August that she was telephoned by the local police and asked to go to the hospital in Portimao to identify her son's body, at the mortuary, which she did. Mrs. Kenney did not contact the consulate during this time.

From her inquiries, Mrs. Kenney found out that Paul Kenney left the bar at about 11.30 pm on 16 July. A local Portuguese lady told her that she had found the body on the beach at Praia da Rocha, called the maritime police from a local restaurant and that the body was taken to the mortuary.

At a meeting on 16 August, the honorary consul in Portimao advised the family to appoint a lawyer immediately to look into the matter. He gave Mr. and Mrs. Kenney a list of lawyers. Mrs. Kenney knew one of them and our honorary consul telephoned his office. In the lawyer's absence, he left a message, asking him to contact Mr. and Mrs. Kenney as soon as possible.

Mr. and Mrs. Kenney visited the consulate again on 20 August. They said that they had established that Portimao hospital had had their son's documents all along, but had not informed the police. His wallet had apparently contained a bank statement and other documents which could have helped to identify him.

As soon as our honorary consul in Portimao heard from Mrs. Kenney what had happened, he spoke to the port captain in Portimao on 20 August. He followed up that conversation with an official written request to the naval authorities and the local court, asking for a report of events. The port captain replied formally on 25 August, saying that he had been informed of the accident on 17 July, but, as his authorities had been unable to identify the body, they had passed the matter to the local court to deal with. The court was in recess at the time so the consul wrote again to them, ing for a report. At the request of the consul in Lisbon, the honorary consul wrote formally to the court on 16 September to request the reports.

The honorary consul in Portimao also contacted the local public prosecutor informally to try to find out what had happened. The public prosecutor said that he had received an official request for information from the Ministry of Justice acting on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The case was sub judice and he could not release the reports. The deputy public prosecutor confirmed that in a letter on 29 September. He was told that the Ministry of Health had also requested a report from the local hospital.

Our honorary consul in Portimao wrote to the court again on 4 October and was told on 8 October that the matter was still sub judice. Our consulate in Lisbon was similary told that, for the same reason, it could not have copies of the reports. The honorary consul called the deputy public prosecutor again on 3 December and was told the same thing. The consul was told that the local police were due to give the public prosecutor's office a report on the inquest soon. The report would also indicate a response from the local health authorities.

I am satisfied that the honorary consul in Portimao did everything that could reasonably be expected of him as soon as Mrs. Kenney alerted him to the problem. He was in touch throughout with Her Majesty's consul in Lisbon, to whom he is answerable. Our consulate in Lisbon in turn informed and consulted the consular department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The action taken by the consul in Lisbon was also appropriate and timely; that is, he reinforced the advice that the family consult a lawyer and, now being aware of the problem of delay in notification, took that up with the Portuguese authorities.

I shall outline what the consul did. He wrote to Mr. and Mrs. Kenney at their address in Portugal on 31 August to explain what action the consul in Portimao had taken on their behalf. He again suggested that they take the matter up through a lawyer to try to obtain further information from the court and about gaining access to some money left in a bank by Paul Kenney. The consul also told them how they could lodge an official complaint with the Portugese Ministry of Health.

On 14 September, in the absence of any satisfactory response to the inquiries made by our consul in Portimao, the British Embassy sent an official note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, asking why the consulate had not been informed of Paul Kenney's death in spite of Portugal's obligations under the Vienna convention on consular relations. That convention requires the host country to notify all deaths of foreigners without delay to the consul of the country concerned if the information is available to it. The embassy asked why the family had not been informed until a month after Paul's death. It asked for a report into the action taken by the Portuguese authorities after Paul Kenney's body was found.

In the absence of a reply to the embassy's note, our consul in Lisbon arranged a meeting with the acting head of consular matters in the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 5 November. She—the official—undertook to ensure that the consul was given the information we sought as soon as possible by the Portuguese Ministry of Justice and Procurator General.

On 6 December, the ambassador in Lisbon spoke in similar terms to the senior responsible official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and our consul again raised the matter with the acting head of the Foreign Ministry's consular department. Both undertook to ensure that the embassy received a reply to the note of 14 September as soon as possible. The following day, however, the Ministry called the consulate to say that it had received a letter from the Attorney-General's office saying that it could not provide the police and autopsy reports at that stage.

I have described in some detail the action taken so far by the consuls in Portimão and Lisbon to try to establish why Mr. and Mrs. Kenney were not told straight away of their son's death when means of identification were available. We in the Foreign Office also need to know why our consul was not similarly informed in accordance with the Vienna convention.

It will be clear to the House from my account and from that of the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West that no satisfactory explanation for these matters has so far been given. I fully appreciate and share the hon. and learned Gentleman's concern about the case. He has tried to obtain answers from the Portuguese authorities, but has been unable to do so.

All of us sympathise with the anger of Mr. and Mrs. Kenney. It is most distressing for the family not to know what happened. The time that it is taking to conclude the inquiry in Portugal is beyond our control. Although we cannot influence the legal process, we will press the Portuguese to reach a conclusion as soon as possible so that the family will know what happened.

However, it is extremely unsatisfactory that the Portuguese authorities have not answered the two main points that we have made about the delay in informing the next of kin for nearly a month and not telling our consul of the death of a British national. I am aware that Paul Kenney's family believes that there has been a cover up. I can well understand their concern, but I cannot express my final opinion on the conduct of the case at present. However, I can assure Paul Kenney's family that, beyond what I have said, we have been given no further information as to why it took the hospital nearly a month to contact the next of kin.

I can say two further things. First, I assure the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West—and he will take this point to his constituents—that we will continue to press for an explanation of why they were not told of their son's death. Secondly, we will give the record of this debate to the Portuguese authorities so that they will appreciate not just the anger, but the anguish of Paul Kenney's parents and the need for a swift answer after so much unreasonable delay.

Mr. Janner: I thank the Minister for what he has said and for giving way. Is it not a matter of grave concern that now that so much time has passed, no one will ever know what has happened, because the evidence will have become stale?

Will the Minister ask his two questions and also follow up the questions that I asked the ambassador and which I set out in my speech and will provide to him? In that way, we will try to obtain much more detailed replies and not the kind of response, which I expect will eventually be sent, of, "So sorry we did not let you or them know because something went wrong." If it is possible, we want to find out, even at this stage, what happened to this young man.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the letter that I have said that I will write to the Portuguese authorities, I will draw

[Mr. Lennox-Boyd]

attention to the particular questions that the hon. and learned Gentleman has raised. We shall, of course, keep the hon. and learned Gentleman and his constituents fully informed as we continue to press the Portuguese authorities for an explanation. They are fully aware of the hon. and learned Gentleman's efforts so far to bring this matter to the attention of the public. I hope that they will take note of all the publicity caused this week and acknowledge that cases like this have a negative impact on Portugal's image in the United Kingdom.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at sixteen minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 13 December 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Although the clock in the Chamber is correct, there are very few others in the House that tell the same time. In particular, the internal television was three minutes out at 2 o'clock, and time is of the essence in this place.

Madam Speaker: There has been difficulty with the electricity during the course of lunchtime, but the clocks in here are absolutely accurate. The others are being taken care of.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Film Industry

1. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to promote the competitiveness of the British film industry.

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): British film makers, actors and technicians are world leaders. It is important that that strength should continue. Earlier this year, I held a series of 10 consultative meetings with all sectors of the film industry, representing production, film financing, facilities and studios, film and video distribution, cinema exhibition and television. We discussed how the level of investment in film production might be raised to strengthen the infrastructure, increase activity and thus encourage competitiveness. I plan to announce my conclusions on the consultations in the new year.

Mr. Clappison: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, to be competitive, the film industry must have the studio capacity to attract film makers? Is he aware of the efforts being made by Hertsmere borough council to save the studios at Elstree—a name synonymous with excellence in British film making? Will he join me in wishing Hertsmere borough council well in its efforts to save those studios, which are so very important for the future of our film-making industry?

Mr. Brooke: Studio capacity in Britain must be maintained at an appropriate level, but it is determined by market forces. I am well aware of the situation regarding Hertsmere borough council and happily join my hon. Friend in wishing it well in its efforts. I am very much aware, as the whole House will be, of the significant part played by Elstree studios in the history of British film making and hope to see it play an equally distinguished part in the future, but I do not think that the matter is one in which I should intervene.

Mr. Maclennan: Before announcing his conclusions on the film industry, will the Secretary of State look at the adverse effect that withholding tax on foreign entertainers is having on their participation in British production? Does he recognise that if that tax were abolished—that may be a matter for the Chancellor of the Exchequer—it could substantially increase the revenue take by the Exchequer and help the British industry at the same time?

Mr. Brooke: I am aware of the point that the hon. Gentleman raised. It is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but it is, as the hon. Gentleman intimated, a matter in which I also take a keen interest.

Mr. John Marshall: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his commitment to market forces and his reluctance to spend Government money subsidising the industry.

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his congratulations. The Government provide quite significant financial support for the industry, but it was noticeable during the consultation period that the representatives of the industry who came to talk to us were looking for things other than financial subsidy.

Ms Mowlam: Given that the latest figures shows that the United States now controls more than 80 per cent. of European film distribution, why do the French Government—but not the British Government—recognise the cultural and industrial importance of our film industry and fight our corner in the GATT negotiations? What is the Secretary of State going to do to invest in and boost the film industry?

Mr. Brooke: I hesitate to rebuke the Opposition spokeswoman, but I do not think that she is up to date on what is happening in the GATT negotiations.

Broadcasters

2. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the success of British broadcasters in the international broadcasting market.

Mr. Brooke: Exports of programmes made by United Kingdom broadcasters were estimated at more than £150 million in 1992, and further opportunities are opening up world wide to provide programmes and services.

Mrs. Knight: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that BBC World Service television is increasingly popular and in some parts of Asia is now watched by more people than CNN news? Coupled with the British broadcasting industry's recent success in the Emmy awards, does not all that confirm that Britain is still making the best programmes in the world?

Mr. Brooke: I join my hon. Friend in congratulating BBC World Television on its achievements. It has expanded its operations into an increasing number of countries since it began broadcasting two years ago and, as she said, it is making a particular impact in Asia. British programmes are renowned for quality and originality throughout the world and I recognise the creative skills and craftsmanship that go into making them.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Would the Secretary of State like to amend that answer to make it clear that British programmes "have been" known for their high quality? Unless he and the Chancellor of the Exchequer are prepared to treat the industry seriously, original production will begin to suffer. We have done well out of independents, but is it not clear that the Government's laissez-faire attitude to television production is the same as their attitude to film production, and that that will destroy the brilliant work that has been done and is being done now?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) drew attention to the six Emmy awards won by the United Kingdom on 24 November. It is slightly churlish of the hon. Lady to say that, as of 25 November, the situation has changed.

Mr. Robert Banks: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the style and clarity of reporting of the BBC World Service have built an enviable reputation for Britain? Will he look at every possible way to ensure that we transform that skill into the presentation of news by television on a worldwide basis?

Mr. Brooke: When the BBC embarked on World Service Television, it was conscious of the reputation that it enjoyed throughout the world as the result of the World Service. It is particularly concerned that the eminence of the brand name of the BBC should be preserved by the quality of what it does on the television side.

Mr. Corbett: Is not it the case that while a large number of quality British television programmes are sold around the world by the front door, much more money is being spent via the back door by satellite and cable broadcasters on foreign films and television programmes? Does the right hon. Gentleman realise, for example, that a healthy trade surplus from television film sales a few years ago is set to become a deficit of £640 million by the year 2000? Will he consider the introduction of European programme quotas for satellite and cable broadcasters similar to those met by terrestrial broadcasters to help trade, to help to sustain our production base and to safeguard our popular culture?

Mr. Brooke: Again, I hesitate to cross swords with the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman. However, European broadcasting directives already set quotas for satellite television programmes in the United Kingdom. Therefore, that condition already exists.

Arts Council

3. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his policy for the future of the Arts Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Under the arm's-length principle, the Arts Council is responsible for providing a strategic policy framework for the arts, for managing grant in aid and for the monitoring and appraisal of arts organisations. It is important that it does so within a stable framework that provides clear accountability and is administratively effective, to allow the maximum funds available to go to the arts. I have recently announced proposals for improvements in both those sectors. We shall continue to monitor the council's efficiency through the annual planning process.

Sir Thomas Arnold: May I invite my right hon. Friend to give us his response to the lengthy article that appeared last week in the *Evening Standard,* written by his predecessor, our right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), who urged the abolition of the Arts Council? Is my right hon. Friend aware of the widespread public dissatisfaction with the Arts Council's behaviour in respect of London's orchestras and that that controversy is unlikely to subside until the council clarifies its policy and shows some real leadership?

Mr. Brooke: I have no intention of abolishing the Arts Council, but I am anxious to ensure that the arts funding system as a whole runs smoothly and effectively. I fully agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex that audiences and performers are the people who matter most, and that is why we want to see more of the money that the Government provide feeding directly into the arts. As to the orchestras, the situation is still evolving and the full meeting of the Arts Council has not yet come to its conclusions.

Mr. Sheldon: The right hon. Gentleman said that the purpose of the Arts Council was to provide a stable framework. That is exactly what it is not doing, particularly for the orchestras and the regional theatres. If the Arts Council is failing in one of its central duties, as explained by the Minister, surely we must ask what is its function. Surely the Minister needs to bring the Arts Council closer to his way of thinking, which might be a sensible way to proceed.

Mr. Brooke: The right hon. Gentleman has been a Member for a long time and knows the nature of the arm's-length principle between the Government and the Arts Council. We have had discussions in the House in the past year about the way in which the Arts Council might be more accountable to its public for its decisions. The Arts Council has made suggestions and recommendations on how that course might be pursued.

Mr. Channon: Whatever criticism some hon. Members may have about the Arts Council, is my right hon. Friend aware that at least one of his predecessors thinks that it would be sheer folly to abolish the Arts Council and to expose the Department of National Heritage—and himself in particular—to having to take individual decisons between artistic organisations? I do not know who will advise him on that. Does he agree that if he were to go down that road it would be what Sir Humphrey would call a very brave decision?

Mr. Brooke: My first words in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold) were that I have no intention of abolishing the Arts Council. I am grateful for the support and reassurance of my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon).

Mr. Fisher: Will the Minister now address the crisis of confidence and credibility in the Arts Council that has been mentioned by hon. Members on both sides of the House? He further damaged confidence and credibility last week by his cut of £3·2 million, which will lead to the council's having to cut £7 million from its clients. Confidence and credibility have also been damaged by the Arts Council itself in the shambles over the orchestra decision and the problems with the regional theatres this summer.

Will the Minister make a much sharper and clearer statement about the responsibilities of his Department and what he expects of the Arts Council, rather than the bland generalisations that he has given the House? Will he require the Arts Council to fulfil its responsibilities and not delegate them to High Court judges? Will he announce the successor of Lord Palumbo now and not leave the decision until next year? Will he set the Arts Council a stiff target, to reduce its staff further, in line with the devolution of more than 40 clients in April? Unless he does that, the Minister's own indecision will deepen the crisis that many members on both sides of the House agree currently faces the Arts Council.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman derived a series of questions from a series of running stories in the press, which do not all go in precisely the same direction as the central thrust of his question. The distinction between the responsibilities of my Department and those of the Arts Council have been clear throughout the almost half century that it has existed. I have reasserted those responsibilities at a time when there was concern that there might be some shading occurring within the past six months.

Press Complaints Commission

4. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the current operation of the Press Complaints Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Government are reviewing the effectiveness of press self-regulation under the Press Complaints Commission, but have not made their final assessment.

Mr. Whittingdale: Does my right hon. Friend agree that despite one or two flagrant breaches of the Press Complaints Commission's code in the past few weeks—in particular by the *Daily Mirror*—self-regulation remains infinitely preferable to any form of statutory intervention? Does he accept that self-regulation must be seen to be effective? Does he agree that, to achieve this, the Press Complaints Commission should have powers to enforce its decisions and to punish newspapers that transgress the code?

Mr. Brooke: I wholly agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of the effectiveness of the Press Complaints Commission being perceived and transparent. I also agree with him on the desirability of self-regulation being maintained, if it possibly can be. Obviously the PCC is aware of what has been said to it during the year not only by the House, but by other sources. The Government will publish their White Paper early in the new year.

Mr. Soley: As the Secretary of State conducts his review will he bear it in mind that, despite a few high-profile cases on privacy, the vast bulk of complaints and public concerns relate to actual accuracy? I believe that the right hon. Gentleman accepts, in principle, my contention that the citizen has a right to expect news to be reported accurately, but will he take some advice, perhaps from his hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Whittingdale), and give the PCC real teeth, as the Advertising Standards Authority has, so that it can enforce factual accuracy, just as the ASA enforces accuracy in advertising?

Mr. Brooke: The subject is one in which the hon. Gentleman has taken a keen and long interest. There is agreement among observers that the improvement in the work of the PCC regarding accuracy and the speed of its response to complaints has been notable in the past two years. Much of the attention centres on the privacy cases. The important thing is to ensure that we do not produce a machinery that is more cumbersome than what we are seeking to improve. I thank the hon. Gentleman for his continuing interest in the matter.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Does my hon. Friend accept that a policy of enforcing decisions is not the right way round, because it suggests some kind of prior restraint, which should be avoided? I put it to my right hon. Friend that it is desirable that the press should have roughly the same freedoms as Back Benchers, who make misstatements and who may occasionally be awkward, but who are an essential part of democracy.

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend has given an extremely good account of himself not only in that question, but on many previous occasions. I agree with him, without wishing to make absolutely precise the analogy between himself and the national press, that that role is a useful one to have played in our society.

Royal Palaces

5. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the current total of public money paid to support and maintain royal palaces.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Iain Sproat): The estimated cost in the current financial year for the occupied and historic royal palaces is £28·4 million.

Mr. Flynn: Has the Minister seen the estimate that suggests that if the royal palaces were put to full commercial use they could yield an income of £100 million a year? In these hard times of cuts in the meagre incomes of pensioners, the sick, the unemployed and the homeless, why is it necessary to loot the public purse of that huge sum of money in order to keep five palaces going to ensure that one single family can live in extravagant luxury?

Mr. Sproat: I disagree with just about everything that the hon. Gentleman has implied. I have not seen the story to which he referred, but, as for improving the contribution to the upkeep of the palaces, I can tell him that as a result of the opening of Buckingham palace earlier this year and the policy of charging for entrance to Windsor, about 70 per cent. of the money needed for Windsor will be generated.

Mr. Jessel: As £28 million works out at about 50p per head of population per year is not that extremely good value for upholding that vital part of Britain's heritage? The royal family and our traditions draw a large number of foreign visitors to our country and their spending on hotels, restaurants, internal travel and shops generates employment and a tax return to the Government. That represents very good value indeed.

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend is, as always, wise, lucid and persuasive.

Mr. Mackinlay: Is not it time in a modern democracy for one particular palace or home to be provided for the Head of State, the cost of which could be met by the public purse, while the rest of the palaces are either handed over to other public agencies to promote tourism or made the sole financial responsibility of the wider royal family, who should not be subsidised by the ordinary taxpayer?

Mr. Sproat: No, I do not agree with that.

Science Museum

6. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions he has had about the presentation of exhibits at the science museum; what will be the total expenditure on capital projects during the forthcoming financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: Under the National Heritage Act 1983, those are matters for the board of trustees of the national museum of science and industry. However, the allocations that I announced on 30 November include an additional sum of more than £2 million over the next two years to the museum for a major capital project at York.

Mr. Shersby: Will my hon. Friend assure me that the staff of the national museum of science and industry will be fully involved in discussions about the future structure of the museum, that there will be a period of stability and that the museum will continue to make all its collection available to the public?

Mr. Sproat: Yes, certainly. My hon. Friend will know that all the redundancies have now been achieved voluntarily. My hon. Friend has taken a close interest in the matter over the past few months on behalf of his constituents and I congratulate him on that assiduousness and give him the assurance that he seeks.

Radio Gloucestershire

7. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions he has had recently with representatives of the BBC to ensure the improved reception of Radio Gloucestershire in the Cotswolds.

Mr. Sproat: Officials in my Department have discussed local radio reception difficulties with the BBC. I understand that the BBC has put forward proposals to improve reception in a number of areas, including one part of Gloucestershire, and it is continuing to consider the options for the Cotswolds area.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: My hon. Friend is aware of the difficulties that my constituents in the Cotswolds have in receiving Radio Gloucestershire. Will he ensure that officials from the Radio Authority hold discussions with the BBC so that the problem can be overcome? I gather that it is a difficult, technical problem of fewer FM frequencies against the BBC providing more low-power transmitters. Whatever the eventual solution, will he encourage discussions so that my constituents do not continue to be disadvantaged by the problem?

Mr. Sproat: I am well aware of the considerable disadvantages under which some of my hon. Friend's constituents labour. I will do everything that I can that is proper for my Department to ease those problems.

Media (Violence)

8. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what measures he intends to take to restrict the exposure of children to violence in the media.

Mr. Brooke: The regulatory authorities have acted to tighten the guidelines on violence which broadcasters must follow. They have my full support and I am especially pleased that the Independent Television Commission has called for a reduction in violence and is committed to monitoring whether that reduction happens.

Mr. Bates: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. Does he agree that there can be no question but that the imagery portrayed on television affects behaviour? If that were not the case, British business would be wasting £2·5 billion in advertising on television each year. Does he agree that although the first responsibility for censorship to protect children from scenes of excessive violence must rest with the parents, there is also a role for the Government to play in tightening the existing regulation, especially in the areas of satellite, cable and video?

Mr. Brooke: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. In terms of the causal link to which he alluded when referring to the effectiveness of advertising, I have read that advertisers are confident that advertising has an effect, but never quite confident which part of that advertising has the effect, which would, on the whole, seem to endorse research done over the years that has not found a conclusive link. However, I should be the first to agree with my hon. Friend that common sense suggests that such a link must exist.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, who is responsible for the area of video, has intimated that there will be new measures to address that in the criminal justice Bill. It is an issue in which the Government continue to take a keen interest, both in my Department and the Home Office.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Secretary of State consider some of the satellite pictures of bull fighting in Spain that are now received in homes here? That would be illegal in this country under other legislation and it seems appalling that the slaughter of those creatures can be seen freely on satellite television. Will he consider the matter and propose some action?

Mr. Brooke: I was not aware of the issue that the hon. Gentleman raised, but it is something about which I shall make some inquiries.

Mr. Fabricant: Is my right hon. Friend aware that BSkyB has a responsible attitude towards the broadcasting of films on television and that it strictly applies the codes for the 16 to 18-year-olds used for the cinema? Will he agree that the causal link to which he referred in answer to an earlier question applies not only to fictional broadcasting but to the terrible images that are shown on television news? Much research has shown that television news has a greater influence on the young than violence shown in films or other fictional programmes.

Mr. Brooke: I take the point that my hon. Friend makes. As he knows, the Independent Television Commission has asked BSkyB, and BSkyB has agreed, to look carefully at the evening scheduling on its film channels. As for my hon. Friend's specific question, which has temporarily slipped my mind—will my hon. Friend give me a single clue?

Mr. Fabricant: News.

Mr. Brooke: I am most grateful; it was the switch in subject which was responsible for my forgetfulness. If my hon. Friend reads the report which the Broadcasting Standards Council published last week, he will find that, although two thirds of viewers believe that there is too much violence on television, more than half believe that the violence seen in news programmes is more justifiable than other violence on television.

Theatres (Funding)

10. **Ms Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received from regional theatres regarding the proposed cuts in funding.

Mr. Brooke: I have received a large number of representations both from and about regional theatres over the past few months.

Ms Jackson: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that several of those representations must have come from those who benefit from the performances of our regional theatres, which are expressing grave disquiet at the possibility that their theatres will disappear? If we wish to protect our children from video violence and video nasties, surely one of the strongest safeguards is to encourage children to go to live theatre. That cannot be possible if the proposed swingeing cuts are made in what is, in effect, the nursery of not only our creative artists but our audiences of the future.

Mr. Brooke: I agree with the hon. Lady about the role that regional theatre fulfils, the apprenticeship which it provides for actors and actresses, enabling them to advance, and the value that that provides. She will be encouraged by the statistics over the past six years, which show that twice as many theatres have opened as have closed; so the news is not altogether bad.

Mr. Cormack: Does my right hon. Friend accept that it is not simply a question of apprenticeship? Such theatres provide a platform for many touring companies, such as Touring Glyndebourne and the Welsh National Opera, which bring a high degree of excellence to many of our provincial centres. Does he further accept that we are talking about a very small amount of money? Will he please go back to his Treasury colleagues and try to get a little more?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend will be aware that the Arts Council's decisions about the regional theatres were taken against its budget at that time. It made certain determinations. However, I agree with my hon. Friend and with the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) about the importance of that art form.

Mr. Bryan Davies: Did not the Arts Council lose a great deal of public confidence by acting the fool over the regional theatres earlier this year? Are not the Government now acting like a knave by introducing cuts that might produce the same deleterious effect?

Mr. Brooke: The chairman of the Arts Council referred to that issue when he spoke recently about the Arts Council's annual results. As for funding for the Arts Council, I was delighted that I was able to make more money available this year than had been stated. I acknowledge that the amount had been cut in the previous year.

Sir Donald Thompson: I recognise that professional theatre is all-important, but will my right hon. Friend congratulate the Foundation for Sport and the Arts on the grant that it recently made to many theatres, including one in my constituency in Todmorden where, on Saturday night, I was pleased and delighted to see a wonderful performance of the "The Wizard of Oz"?

Mr. Brooke: I am absolutely delighted to join my hon. Friend, not only in his congratulations but in his enthusiasm.

Theatre Funding, Greater Manchester

12. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received regarding the threat of funding cuts to theatres in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Sproat: I have received a number of representations from hon. Members and others about theatres in Greater Manchester.

Ms Lynne: Does the Minister agree that, in the very year when Manchester will be designated the city of drama, it is ridiculous that the Library theatre and others in the area should be under threat? Does he agree that that is partly due to the fact that the Secretary of State did not secure the necessary funding in the public expenditure round and that local authorities have been forced to make cuts in their grants, because of the lack of money from the Government?

Mr. Sproat: No, I do not agree. The Library and the Forum theatres in Manchester are supported by the local authority, which meets this week to decide their future. I very much hope that it will decide to continue its support for those theatres.

Mr. Simon Coombs: Is not the recent fiasco of Arts Council funding for regional theatres in Manchester and elsewhere futher evidence that the council is simply losing its grip? This afternoon, the House has already addressed the funding of the London orchestras, which concerns me greatly, as my hon. Friend knows.

Since the Arts Council seems to have lost its grip on its responsibility for the artistic and cultural life of this country, will Ministers consider taking a fresh grip on the Arts Council by re-examining the arm's-length relationship?

Mr. Sproat: My right hon. Friend has a tight grip on the Arts Council and has managed to give it an extra £800,000 that it did not expect to get—*[Interruption.]* That is 1·7 per cent., which is not much in these circumstances. My hon. Friend will know that the London orchestras are being discussed by the Arts Council this week.

On provincial theatres, Lord Palumbo agreed that perhaps that matter could have been better handled by the Arts Council. Perhaps I might use this occasion to say that that is always something that the Arts Council does on the arm's-length principle, and it is not a matter for the Department of National Heritage to decide.

Tourism

13. **Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received regarding deregulation and tourism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: I have received a great many representations on this subject from the national and regional tourist boards, from trade and professional associations and from individual business men and women in the tourism and leisure sectors. I reported my initial findings to the House on 27 July and I am taking up with ministerial colleagues the issues raised.

Mr. Ward: My hon. Friend will understand the importance of tourism to the borough of Poole. Does he also understand the vital necessity of withdrawing the regulations that are impeding progress and, frankly, are unnecessary? I congratulate my hon. Friend and his colleagues on the additional support that they are giving to the tourist industry.

Mr. Sproat: I thank my hon. Friend for the kind remark at the end of his question. I am indeed aware of the importance of tourism to Poole, and he may be interested to know that last week I met a delegation from the British Resorts Association, which is forging a new and helpful relationship with the Department. Of course, we are acutely aware that tourism is one of the largest industries in this country and that it has perhaps not always been given the attention that it should have been, but it will be given it in future.

London Orchestras

16. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make additional funds available to maintain the current number of London orchestras.

Mr. Brooke: I recently announced the level of grant in aid to the Arts Council for 1994-95, which includes an increase of £800,000 in the previously planned figure for next year. Within that global total, it is for the Arts Council to determine its artistic policies and priorities and the allocation of funds to individual arts organisations. Decisions on the funding for the London orchestras are, therefore, a matter for the Arts Council.

Mr. Banks: The Secretary of State is a very urbane Pontius Pilate; none the less he is a Pontius Pilate. The selection of London orchestras has been an appallaing scandal and no other city would have handled it in such a way. It is incumbent on the Government to give the London arts scene the support that it requires to sustain five orchestras.

Mr. Brooke: The House and the audience constituency must decide whether they want the arm's-length principle to be observed. The Arts Council's decisions, which have been subject to commentary, were absolutely within its right and purview. In that respect, it was a matter for the Arts Council to decide. As I said in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold), the matter has not yet been concluded, as the Arts Council still has to make a decision.

Sir Michael Neubert: Although I understand and support the arm's-length principle governing my right hon. Friend's relationship with the Arts Council, could he make it a condition of his overall grant to the council that it does not engage in the humiliating process to which London orchestras have been subjected in recent weeks? Orchestras that have illumined London's concert-going for decades have had to go through a Eurovision song contest to get funds for next year.

Mr. Brooke: I will reiterate, as I did in answer to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), that it was a proper procedure for the Arts Council to follow in terms of its responsibilities and disposition of funds. My hon. Friend may be right if he surmises that the Arts Council has learnt some lessons from its experience.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

National Audit Office

29. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission if he will make a statement on the level of funding of the National Audit Office.

Sir Peter Hordern (Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission): The National Audit Office's estimate for 1994-95 of £36·5 million was considered and approved by the Public Accounts Commission on 7 December. That is £0·8 million less than what was proposed in the corporate plan approved in July.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. The National Audit Office is one area of Government activity that should be increasing its expenditure to keep a check on the waste which I have identified, just by reading a range of newspapers, as amounting to some £9 billion. Is he aware, for example, that it is estimated that the £15 million increase in the telephone bills in Whitehall have resulted from calls to the 0898 number, which is what people telephone when they are desperate for information on the cricket scores?

Is my right hon. Friend also aware that this year the Government have spent £154 million on leaflets, one of which was entitled "How to be a better dog owner"? It advises people to feed their pet regularly, give it its own sleeping basket, keep it warm and take it for walkies. Will the National Audit Office look into that kind of thing?

Sir Peter Hordern: The National Audit Office is already busily engaged with its programme, but I will draw my hon. Friend's comments to the attention of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Dr. Howells: Will the Chairman acknowledge the fact that the National Audit Office plays a crucial role in ensuring that there is no slippage in Government administration towards what one can only call an Italian mode of government?

Sir Peter Hordern: I do not know what instances the hon. Gentleman has in mind——

Dr. Howells: The Welsh Development Agency.

Sir Peter Hordern: That matter has been dealt with by the Public Accounts Committee, which I am sure will want to consider it again. The National Audit Office and the Comptroller and Auditor General will have a continuing interest in the matter.

30. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission what funds will be made available for the National Audit Office to investigate the work of Government agencies.

31. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission what finance will be made available for the National Audit Office to investigate the work of Government agencies.

Sir Peter Hordern: The National Audit Office budget of £36·5 billion for 1994-95 includes provisions both for financial audit of Government Departments, executive agencies and a wide range of other public sector bodies and for value-for-money investigations. The forward investigation programme of the National Audit Office is a matter for the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful for the Chairman's answer. Given the current debate on the subject, will he ask the National Audit Office urgently to look at the cost benefits of the Child Support Agency? Will he ask it quickly to evaluate whether all the money spent on the agency and its work is worth it, in terms of what is beeing recouped and from whom? He will be aware that the Government are reviewing the issue. It would be helpful if the National Audit Office produced a report to inform the Government's decision.

Sir Peter Hordern: The National Audit Office does undertake the financial audit of the Child Support Agency. That includes an examination of the accuracy of maintenance assessments. The hon. Gentleman may wish to know that, as part of the normal strategic planning and marketing process, developments at the agency are being monitored with a view to a possible value-for-money investigation.

Ms Lynne: Will the National Audit Office examine the work of the Prescription Pricing Authority in the light of allegations that dispensing general practitioners have been overpaid value added tax?

Sir Peter Hordern: The Prescription Pricing Authority is a very small body, whose accounts are audited by the district audit service on behalf of the Audit Commission. The audited accounts form part of a summarised account that is reviewed by the National Audit Office before final certification by the Comptroller and Auditor General. No value-for-money work is planned, but if the hon. Lady would care to write either to me or direct to the Comptroller and Auditor General, the matter will be considered.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Refreshment Department

33. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee what is the accumulated surplus of the House of Commons Refreshment Department; what plans there are for its use; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Paul Channon (Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee): The accumulated surplus of the House of Commons Refreshment Department trading fund was £2·7 million at 1 April 1993. As mentioned in the 15th annual report of the House of Commons Commission, it is intended to use that surplus to help to cover the cost of the Refreshment Department's modernisation programme.

Mr. Greenway: Could some of that modernisation extend to more home-made puddings in the Members' Cafeteria, instead of apple pie made by machine? Exactly what are the refurbishment plans envisaged for that £2·7 million? There have been so many press rumours that it would help the House to know what is proposed.

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend should address the first half of his question to the Director of Catering Services or to the Chairman of the Catering Committee, and I shall ensure that he knows about it.

On the second part of my hon. Friend's question, we have not yet seen the report of the Catering Committee. When we do, we shall have to take a view of it—indeed, the whole House may have to take a view on it—but at the moment we cannot do so as the report has not yet been published.

Parliament (Access)

34. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what expenditure has been authorised to improve access to Parliament for people with sensory disabilities.

37. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what facilities are currently available for disabled visitors to the Palace of Westminster and to each of the parliamentary outbuildings; and what financial provision has been made to improve them.

Mr. A. J. Beith (on behalf of the House of Commons Commission): Details of the facilities available for disabled visitors to parliament are set out in a leaflet that is available from the Serjeant at Arms and which has been incorporated into the Members' handbook. A sum of £250,000 is included in the proposed programme of works for 1994-95 to improve those facilities. The Accommodation and Works Committee is conducting a comprehensive review of the issue, and funding in future years will be determined once the Committee's conclusions are known.

Mr. Miller: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for that reply. I direct his attention to the needs of those with hearing difficulties. Within the programme to which he referred, what action is intended to take account of the six action points in the paper, which I know he has received, from the Royal National Institute for the Deaf?

Mr. Beith: That paper has gone to the Accommodation and Works Committee, which I understand is consulting following a substantial report from the specialist architect, which it is also considering and which will form the basis of a report in due course.

Mr. Gapes: What steps are being taken to make it easier for those who have difficulty walking to pass through a number of the entrances and exits in this building —for example, the Norman Shaw building and the main St. Stephen's entrance? I know just from pushing my baby daughter in a pram how difficult it is to move around this building. Those with difficulty walking must have a terrible time. What steps are being taken to deal with that?

Mr. Beith: That is the sort of work which, among other things, we hope the £250,000 will cover. Because of the period when the building was built, some of the entrances are especially difficult to adapt. However, hon. Members will notice that in the newer buildings, in particular, adequate provision has been made from the start and many adaptations are taking place or are planned.

Parliamentary Works Budget

36. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee if he will make a statement on the future of the parliamentary works budget.

Mr. Channon: Since the transfer to the House in April 1992 of the vote for works services, a 10-year rolling programme of work has been developed in consultation with the Treasury. That will provide the basis for future works budgets and takes account of the requirements of the House, such as the provision of office accommodation for Members and the need to remedy the backlog of maintenance on the Palace and outbuildings.

Mrs. Gorman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that at a time when so many of our constituents are feeling the pinch and lack the spare cash to do up their homes, Parliament must be doubly careful to set an example of frugality when doing up its premises?

Although the decoration and refurbishment of 1 Parliament street are splendid, is my right hon. Friend aware that they cost about £36 million? The current refurbishment of 7 Millbank, although most desirable, represents a level of luxury of which some of us are almost ashamed. When I walk through the corridors of that building, I count the number of unnecessary light bulbs and encounter doors made of beautiful beech that are so heavy and large that a woman my size can barely shove them open—and I certainly will not be able to do so in a few years' time. Does not my right hon. Friend agree that we should think carefully when deciding the standards of accommodation for Members?

Mr. Channon: I am sure that my hon. Friend underestimates her physical and mental powers, but in general I agree with the important points that she makes. I expect that my hon. Friend realises that hundreds of people work at 7 Millbank, so it was inevitably an expensive project. She is right to say that such matters are now carefully scrutinised. Reasonable recommendations are often received from domestic committees, and work often has to be done on grounds of safety and, above all, of fire protection. My hon. Friend's point is well taken and I assure her that we will examine all budgets with great care.

Mr. Flynn: Could not part of the budget be used to solve a problem that was identified at a recent seminar for civil servants with severe disabilities? As it is impossible for such civil servants to enter the Chamber in a wheelchair, there is a bar on their promotion, because they cannot occupy the invisible Box in the corner.

Mr. Channon: The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) dealt with the issue of disability a few moments ago. The hon. Gentleman makes an important point, and I will see that it is drawn to the attention of the appropriate authorities.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Television Franchises

17. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what arrangements are in place to ensure that companies taking over regional television franchises fulfil the undertakings in respect of meeting local and regional needs given by their predecessor.

Mr. Brooke: The Independent Television Commission is responsible for enforcing the requirements on every regional licence holder to provide regional programmes. Those licence conditions apply regardless of changes of ownership.

Mr. Gunnell: The Secretary of State will be well aware that many of the bids by companies that subsequently won franchises promised regional programmes and the creation of jobs within the regions in which those companies would operate. If Yorkshire Television's franchise, for example, were taken over by another company, that would obviously have a significant effect on the jobs in Yorkshire promised by that company when it originally sought its franchise. What will be done to ensure that regional employment is not lost as a result of the decision to allow the acquisition of franchises?

Mr. Brooke: The licence holder remains the licence holder even if another company controls the licence following a takeover. In the case cited by the hon. Gentleman in the Tyne Tees area, the licence holder would continue to be answerable to the ITC for discharging the licence that it was granted.

Mr. Lidington: Did not we hear the same scare stories from the Opposition when the present ITC regime was introduced by the Broadcasting Act 1990? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the commission has proved effective in making sure that companies observe their obligations and that there is no need to doubt that it will prove effective in future?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments. The ITC said that the transition to the new arrangements was undertaken more smoothly and with greater stability than previous transitions.

Mr. Mandelson: In the light of the move by London Weekend Television to fend off Granada's predatory bid by jumping into bed with Yorkshire Television, is not the Secretary of State the least bit concerned that Tyne Tees Television could be a casualty in these shenanigans? Will he assure television viewers in the north-east that Tyne Tees Television's commercial viability and regional programme output will be entirely secure, whatever change in ownership takes place?

Mr. Brooke: As to the regional discharge of licences, I gave the answer to the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) earlier. As we discussed in the House last week, the fact that Yorkshire Television controls Tyne Tees, and the consequences that that has in terms of a takeover, are factors which would weigh in the mind of anybody considering such a takeover.

Arts Funding

19. **Mr. Sheldon:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he next expects to meet the chairman of the Arts Council to discuss funding.

Mr. Brooke: I regularly meet the chairman of the Arts Council to discuss a range of issues.

Mr. Sheldon: In reply to an earlier question, the right hon. Gentleman said that the task of the Arts Council was to provide a stable framework. Does not he agree that the thing that is clear about the Arts Council is its unpredictability? Are not the regional theatres, and Manchester in particular, suffering from that unpredictability, as are the orchestras in London?

Mr. Brooke: The Arts Council has the overall responsibility for the allocation of funds to various art forms and, when the decision is taken about which art forms, to particular institutions. It cannot be the case that those proportions are always set in concrete. The Arts Council made a decision at its recent meeting at Woodstock to allocate a larger proportion of funds in certain areas and a smaller one in other areas.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Prime Minister's Question Time

39. **Ms Jowell:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what representations he has received about the order and method of Prime Minister's Question Time.

The Lord President of the Council and the Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The only representation I have received has been from the Procedure Committee in its report into parliamentary questions—House of Commons No. 687, Session 1992-93. Its recommendation was:

> "On balance, we do not recommend any changes designed to alter the present balance between open and closed questions to the Prime Minister."

The Government accepted that view.

Ms Jowell: Given that "Erskine May" states that the purpose of a parliamentary question is to seek information or to press for action, what steps does the Lord President propose to take to prevent time-wasting at Prime Minister's Question Time by hon. Members who are seeking neither to obtain information nor to press for action but simply to show loyalty to the Prime Minister?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the Chairman of the Procedure Committee was not able to be here, but I will draw his attention to the hon. Lady's remarks. If she gives me the undertaking that no Opposition Member will seek to make political points during Prime Minister's Question Time, I might consider her request.

Oral Questions

40. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to amend the system for the tabling of oral questions.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to alter the system for the tabling of oral questions.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: May I draw the attention of my right hon. Friend to the difficulties that some hon. Members have in tabling oral questions for a Monday due to their constituency engagements? Will he suggest to the Chairman of the Procedure Committee that those hon. Members be permitted to table oral questions for a Monday on the preceding Thursday? Failing that, will my right hon. Friend suggest to him that oral questions be taken until 6 o'clock on Monday?

Mr. Newton: There has been some consideration of that matter, and I refer my hon. Friend to the further report of the Procedure Committee, following the Government's response. Of course, I will draw the remarks of my hon. Friend to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mrs. Beckett: Is the Lord President aware that there is still concern on both sides of the House about the implications of the workings of agencies, particularly the Benefits Agency, for the tabling of questions and whether replies are offered? All too often, hon. Members who seek to table questions to the relevant Secretaries of State find that answers cannot be obtained. Will the right hon. Gentleman examine the matter?

Mr. Newton: The right hon. Lady will know that some changes have been made in the way in which those matters are dealt with—for example, to ensure that replies from chief executives appear in an appropriate way for hon. Members to be aware of them. There are no further plans to change the arrangements at the moment. However, I would not reject out of hand what the right hon. Lady has said.

Sitting Days

41. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Lord President of the Council on how many days the House will have met during 1993.

Mr. Newton: On the basis of the House's agreement to rise for the Christmas recess on 17 December, there will have been 165 sitting days in 1993. Allowing for weekends and bank holidays, the number of non-sitting days will have been 88. Those figures compare with the averages for the calendar years since 1979, which are 166 sitting days and 88 non-sitting days respectively. If election years are excluded, those figures become 172 and 82 respectively.

Mr. Winnick: Does the Leader of the House recognise that there will be no consensus about changing the hours and sitting days so long as the Government treat the House with the contempt that they are showing this week? Does he realise that the manner in which the House is being treated with contempt will mean that there will be parliamentary warfare well into 1994 and that the responsibility for that lies entirely with the Government and the contemptible manner in which they are treating the business of the House on Tuesday and Wednesday?

Mr. Newton: I do not, of course, accept the hon. Gentleman's comment about contempt, but no doubt we shall have opportunities to debate that tomorrow. However, quite apart from the averages that I have mentioned, there were two non-election years—1986 and 1991—within the past eight or nine years in which the figures were almost exactly the same. In 1991, the figures were exactly the same as those that I have just given for 1993. In view of the reference to the Jopling report, the following is a direct quote from that report:

> "Compared with the legislative bodies in other large democracies the House of Commons continues to sit for more days and for many more hours in a year than any other."

As far as the great majority of the House is concerned, I make no apology for continuing to try to act within the spirit of the Jopling recommendations.

European Council

3.30 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): With permission, Madam Speaker, I would like to make a statement on last weekend's European Council, which I attended with my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The task that we set ourselves at this Council was to set Europe on a course towards economic recovery and the creation of new jobs. In Britain, unemployment has been falling since January, but across the rest of the Community it has been rising. Indeed, since the Edinburgh Council met a year ago, 1·5 million extra people have become unemployed. At Brussels, and in the White Paper "Growth, Competitiveness, Employment", we considered how this could be reversed.

The conclusions of the Council on the White Paper show that member states are now determined to pursue realistic, practical and market-oriented policies to improve Europe's competitiveness. In Brussels, we agreed on the need for firm control of public spending and low inflation; open markets; deregulation; a more decentralised Europe; flexibility in labour markets and reductions in social costs and the decisive role of private investment in generating economic growth.

These conclusions are very welcome. They reflect policies that we have advocated at Council upon Council. However, a number of my fellow Heads of Government, and the European Commission itself, would have found many of those conclusions unthinkable only a few years ago. Outdated policies, involving extra burdens on business and extra borrowing to fund spending by the European Commission, were firmly rejected.

Drawing on elements of the White Paper, the European Council agreed a common framework within which member states will consider measures aimed at improving the supply side performance of our economies. The emphasis on improved training and education, measures to reduce the costs of taking on new employees, deregulation at Community and national level, all closely echoed the themes of my right hon. and learned Friend's Budget last month.

I am glad to report to the House that the conclusions include the British proposal that Community and national legislation should be subjected to a test—an audit—of its effects on jobs. The European Council rejected the intrusive, damaging and defeatist notion of compulsory work sharing.

The European Council reaffirmed the conclusions that it reached at Edinburgh on the speedy completion of trans-European networks—infrastructure projects designed to improve the workings of the single market—supported by finance from the European investment bank. I am glad to say that the Council recognised the decisive role to be played by private investors in financing trans-European networks. Additional loans would only even be considered if there was evidence that priority projects were blocked for lack of finance. European Finance Ministers have been asked to examine financing in more detail with the help of the European investment bank.

The Council did not endorse the last-minute proposals brought forward for extra financing through so-called "Union bonds" issued by the Community.

There was firm agreement on the need to ensure that measures taken at Community level should not undermine domestic efforts by national Governments to reduce their own borrowing.

A theme running through all our discussions was the need for a successful conclusion of the GATT round of trade talks. That would be by far the most important boost to international confidence and job creation. Independent estimates suggest that the economies of European countries would be the biggest single gainers from the Uruguay round. Negotiations between the Community and the United States were continuing while the Council met. Sir Leon Brittan, the Council negotiator, is reporting to the Foreign Affairs Council this afternoon.

We always knew that the end game of the negotiations would be difficult. They are still going on. It is a hugely ambitious round of negotiations, covering $4·5 trillion of international trade. Success is a remarkable prize.

The Council discussed the internal implications of the GATT negotiations. The Council noted the Commission's assessment that the reformed common agricultural policy is compatible with the new commitments which would result from an agreement in GATT. Some delegations asked what the position would be if that judgment were to prove wrong. In debate on that, the Council agreed—crucially—that, if any additional measures were to prove necessary, they would not breach the financial ceilings agreed by the Edinburgh European Council.

The European Council also endorsed an excellent work programme drawn up by Home Affairs and Justice Ministers. In particular, it agreed to an Anglo-German proposal that the EUROPOL drugs unit should be set up forthwith and that the EUROPOL convention should be completed by October next year. Community action in this matter has a valuable contribution to make in the international fight against organised crime, drug trafficking and illegal immigration.

That particular decision illustrates a new appreciation in the Community of a distinction that we have long sought to make clear: between actions sensibly conducted in co-operation with our European partners, and policies which are for national Governments to decide. The principle of subsidiarity is now producing concrete results.

In Brussels, we secured agreement to repeal, withdraw or amend 17 directives out of a list of 24 put to the Commission jointly by the British and French Governments. Other Governments will now, I believe, follow suit. In particular, the German Government are pressing their own proposals to extend subsidiarity further. The necessary procedures are in place to ensure that that process continues. We are determined to maintain high standards, but we are determined, too, to simplify European legislation to make it less intrusive and to leave more room for national choice.

The European Council also discussed foreign policy issues. Foreign Ministers discussed with Lord Owen the position in former Yugoslavia. Although there has been some improvement in the delivery of humanitarian aid, obstacles to a political settlement in Bosnia remain. In a further effort towards peace, Foreign Ministers invited the parties to the conflict to a meeting in Brussels on 22 December. As the winter sets in and the suffering of the population intensifies, we must continue to seek a political settlement, however difficult this will be.

We also discussed the French Prime Minister's initiative for a pact on stability which aims to promote

[The Prime Minister]

stability and regional co-operation in central and eastern Europe. A launch conference will be held in Paris in the spring of next year.

I also had a useful meeting with President Yeltsin, who subsequently met the European Heads of State and Government.

At the summit, the Heads of Government agreed that the only road to economic recovery is the one upon which the Government are already embarked, with a year and a half of rising output already achieved. Low inflation, low interest rates, a reduction in industry's burdens and a lifting of the dead hand of regulation are the agreed signposts to investment and jobs. Open markets bring new opportunities to exporters; free markets encourage enterprise and prosperity. Europe still has a long way to go, but we on this side of the House will continue to point it in the right direction.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his statement.

At the outset, let me endorse the importance which the right hon Gentleman attached to a successful outcome of the GATT talks. We look forward to a full statement later in the week on the full implications for Britain of a final agreement. A successful GATT round is vital for growth and employment in the industrialised countries, and especially for our service industries. It is no less important to less developed countries in creating the prospect of increased trade for them.

As for the impact of the GATT agreement on agriculture in Europe, if it is the case that no more money can be spent on the common agricultural policy than that already agreed, does that mean that if some agricultural producers are to be compensated, some other aspects of the Community's budget will have to be reduced?

On the question of relations with Ireland, the Prime Minister made no reference to his discussions with the Taoiseach at Brussels. Can he say whether he is likely to make a statement on the subject before the House rises for the Christmas recess?

We welcome the commitment of the European Community to the substantial reduction of unemployment by the end of the century. We also welcome the strong emphasis on education and training on a Community-wide basis and the commitment to what is described in the communiqué as

"economic and social progress, a high level of social protection and continuous improvement in the quality of life".

Can the Prime Minister explain how reducing unemployment benefit from 12 months to six months, and persistently under-investing in training, squares with those objectives which are said to be agreed in the Community?

On the subject of indirect labour costs, can the right hon. Gentleman explain how he justifies transferring sick pay costs of £750 million from the Government to employers in the Bill that he is seeking to railroad through the House without proper debate on Thursday?

The Prime Minister quoted the agreement on the need for the speedy completion of trans-European transport networks. If there is no shortage of funds for those purposes, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer claims, why have so many delays occurred on major transport projects in Britain? Why is there still no opening date for the channel tunnel rail link? Does the Prime Minister not see the possibility of using extra borrowing capability at the European level to help to finance a project without which we will not have a successful rail connection with the rest of the single market?

On the question of foreign policy, can the Prime Minister say whether the discussions at the European Council will have a direct impact on the situation in Bosnia? Will more humanitarian aid be provided? Will the airlift to Sarajevo be stepped up? Will more troops be provided, as Mr. Stoltenberg has requested? Will brutality be more effectively confronted—for example, by the increased use of sanctions? If none of those things is to happen, what, if anything, of importance was decided at the European Council?

Finally, can the Prime Minister explain the Government's attitude to the extra borrowing capability in view of the severely conflicting noises which we heard before, during and after the Brussels summit? Before the right hon. Gentleman went to the Brussels summit, we heard how perverse the idea was that an extra 8 billion ecu of borrowing capability should be considered, but from the communiqué we now understand that the idea is under active consideration. If projects make sense, what is so wrong about borrowing for genuine investment in vital infrastructure projects which will improve our economy, create jobs, stimulate growth and competitiveness, and put our public finances in proper order in the medium term?

The Prime Minister: I will endeavour to respond to the points that the right hon. and learned Gentleman made that refer to our discussions over the weekend, and also to those comments that he made that had no relative involvement whatever in the discussions over the weekend.

Taking the last point first—on extra borrowing and what was said before we went there—before we went to the European Council, the point was made quite clearly that we saw no case for two particular aspects of the White Paper: first, the artificial targets on job creation, which are clearly ludicrous and unobtainable and were readily dropped by everybody when they looked at the White Paper; secondly, the question whether there should be special bonds issued by the Commission to underpin a large amount of extra borrowing. That, too, was rejected by everyone—conservative Governments and socialist Governments alike—and seems to be favoured only by the Labour Opposition in this country.

I agree with the right hon. and learned Gentleman about the importance of GATT agreement. As he rightly said, it is, of course, especially important for underdeveloped countries because the importance to them of opening up markets is likely to be even more valuable than the present sum total of world aid at present provided to them. They will be significant gainers if we are successful in delivering a GATT round during the course of this week.

On agriculture, it was decided that, in the event that the CAP turns out not to be compatible with the GATT—and it is the Commission's view that it is compatible—there would be no more money over and above that that was agreed in the financial perspectives at Edinburgh some time ago. There are other alternatives. It could mean a redistribution of resources within the budget, price cuts or other options. There is a range of options, none of which has yet been addressed. The point of principle that there is no extra money has been addressed and determined.

Ireland was not discussed at the Council, but it was discussed between the Taoiseach and me in the sidelines of the Council. We are both seeking a joint declaration, as the House is aware. It is important that it is a balanced declaration. I am more concerned with getting the declaration right than necessarily with getting it in a particularly short time.

As a result of the meeting that I had with the Taoiseach on Saturday, more work is currently in hand. I hope to speak to him by telephone later today, perhaps tomorrow morning. That is as yet undecided. At that stage, we will decide how and when we will be able to proceed. I am not yet in a position to say to the House whether that will lead to a statement before the House rises.

On unemployment, the whole purpose of the White Paper was to see what action could be taken in individual countries and across the Community collectively to improve the possibility of creating fresh jobs for the future. That was the whole thrust of it. The right hon. and learned Gentleman asked about unemployment benefit, which was not a matter raised. I might equally say to him that a minimum wage, so beloved of other countries, has led, in one country at least, to youth unemployment of 23 per cent., largely in a direct relationship to that policy.

On sick pay, the reductions to which the right hon. and learned Gentleman referred in terms of leaving an obligation on employers have been more than compensated for by parallel reductions in national insurance contributions to the extent that the overall reduction in national insurance contributions will cost the Revenue rather more than sick pay will cost employers.

The principal reason for the delay in the trans-European networks has been that no credible projects have yet been brought forward either by Governments or by the private sector across the European Community as a whole.

So far as the channel tunnel is concerned, the right hon. and learned Gentleman probably understands as well as I do that a principal problem there has been the question of planning delays and a necessity to ensure that people are properly consulted.

On foreign policy and Bosnia, I answered the right hon. and learned Gentleman's question in the statement that I made when I referred to the further meeting that will be held on 22 December. We are keen to see Tuzla airport opened. We are keen to ensure that the delivery of aid still continues. The view among many Foreign Ministers—though this was not discussed at a Heads of Government level—is that there is not a great deal of extra scope at present for more sanctions. What is desirable is to ensure that all the sanctions that exist are rigorously enforced.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Will my right hon. Friend confirm, and explain to the Leader of the Opposition, that more borrowing by the Community now, which will fall on the credit of the member states just at a time when we are trying to reduce our borrowing and our interest rates, would be absurd and perverse? My right hon. Friend is wholly right to resist it.

As to subsidiarity, is not the list of 16 or 17 measures from which the Community will desist a good start but rather modest considering that the United Kingdom put forward 71 measures and other countries must have put forward many others? Therefore, will he give us some encouragement that the ideas of the House and other national Parliaments and Governments will be allowed to go forward vigorously, thereby leading to a far greater list of proposals and measures that should be unravelled at Community level and repatriated or returned to the nation states?

The Prime Minister: I can confirm my right hon. Friend's latter point. The report from the Commission was welcome. In practice it recommends the repeal of about 25 per cent. of existing European Community legislation. Some of that will be repealed completely and some will be replaced by fewer and simpler measures. That is still to be determined. The Council has asked the Commission to bring forward early proposals to put that report into effect. More subsidiarity lists will be coming forward. A substantial list from the Germans is under consideration. We shall have further proposals to make, as will France and other countries. It is agreed that that is the commencement of a process and that further subsidiarity lists will be presented to the Council for approval.

My hon. Friend is entirely right in his first point about borrowing. For sound economic reasons, right the way across Europe, Governments are seeking to reduce borrowing and fiscal deficits. It makes no sense for individual nation states across Europe to reduce their borrowing while increasing borrowing collectively through the European Community.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): In view of the heavy emphasis in his statement on free market rhetoric—an emphasis that was also present in the British press briefings—will the Prime Minister confirm that the Council of Ministers did not throw out the baby with the bath water and that there is a proper element of public investment on infrastructure programmes designed to help push unemployment down? He somehow forgot to mention that.

Secondly, as to the effect of GATT on the CAP, given that there has been so much publicity about the needs of farmers in France and eastern Germany, is the Prime Minister fully aware of the needs of farmers in Scotland, who are facing imposed set-aside at an unacceptable level? Will he make sure that that issue is sorted out at the same time?

The Prime Minister: On the right hon. Gentleman's first point, there was no agreement at the summit to increase public expenditure. There is some public expenditure, which was previously agreed and in the structural and cohesion programmes, but that is long-established public expenditure agreed some time ago as justifiable. What is being added to that is the extra resources that we think will come through the European Investment Bank and the private sector to top up the money needed for trans-European networks. Only if those resources are unavailable will there be any further examination of whether money might be needed to complete desirable projects. No one is in any doubt that the resources are likely to be forthcoming from the private sector.

On agriculture, I set out the position some time ago. I am aware of the problems of Scotland and those of other parts of the United Kingdom. However, 60 per cent. of all Community expenditure is on agriculture. That cannot be a sustainable position over the long term, and we must look to reduce it, both proportionately and absolutely, as speedily as possible.

Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones (Watford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the subsidiarity report presented by President Delors not only, as he has just pointed out, holds out the prospect of repeal of 25 per cent. of Community legislation but, much more importantly, makes it clear that article 3b, as he and Chancellor Kohl negotiated it, is a substantial improvement over the position that pertained under the Single European Act? Does he further agree that we can now look to that, as in many other areas, for a new agenda for Europe, one much more in tune with the one for which he and the Conservative party have been fighting for many years?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. He is entirely right about the question of article 3b, which some Opposition Members much mocked. They will now discover, when they examine the list that comes forward and future lists, that, whilst they may have mocked it in the past, they will pay homage at its shrine in the future.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): As the Prime Minister thinks that GATT will result in jobs being provided across Europe and in Britain, will he say how many jobs will be provided in Britain, and by how much the unemployment total will be reduced in two years' time if the GATT negotiations are concluded satisfactorily?

The Prime Minister: After a reasonable number of years. I will write to the hon. Gentleman and tell him how many I think it is, but it will not be too many years. We estimate around 400,000 jobs. I cannot be precise as to how many of those will be created over the next two years. The hon. Gentleman set that time frame and I will endeavour to give him an answer, but GATT does not take effect for another year, so two years within GATT will be three years from now. I will write to the hon. Gentleman and give him a figure. The overall impact of the GATT deal, when fully implemented, over time will create around 400,000 jobs in this country.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): Will the approval of the House be sought before Her Majesty's Government commit the country to any further weakening of the unanimity rule, or any change in the arrangements for qualified majority voting?

The Prime Minister: I am interested that my hon. Friend mentioned that point. In particular, I notice that the Liberal Democrats' policy, enunciated the other day, was not to change qualified majority voting but to end the veto that has thus far been a significant part of our policy in the European Community. The ending of the veto would apply to all issues, including own resources, foreign policy, asylum and immigration policy. That is the implication of the speech made by the leader of the Liberal Democrats just a few days ago.

As to qualified majority voting, I do not have any proposals to bring before the House. There may well be discussions ahead in the Community and, if there are, I will take those issues as and when they arise.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): After systematically rubbishing the Delors White Paper all last week, how come the Government agreed to it over the weekend?

The Prime Minister: Because we took out the bits that we rubbished.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I received the presidency conclusions at lunchtime today and they are not very clear. Will my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister give a clear undertaking that, as far as French agriculture is concerned, there is no question of using the reserve to exceed the guidelines, as it was used at Edinburgh, on the basis that it should not be considered as being within the guidelines? We lost 1 billion ecu at Edinburgh. Will the Prime Minister give an assurance that that will not happen again? Will he protest to the President for putting out a statement called "the Presidency conclusions", which was as clear and precise as could be, that

"additional funding will be provided"

and ECOFIN has been asked today to

"enable the Commission to mobilise up to an additional 8 billion ecu"?

Is not this something that must be cleared up quickly in case of misunderstanding?

The Prime Minister: I am pleased to clear it up. The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) on the Opposition Front Bench has been gabbling about this for the past few minutes. It will be mobilised by the private sector through the European investment bank, not through artificial loans in the Community budget. As to the reserve, my hon. Friend may or may not be pleased to know that for the immediate years ahead there is no reserve in the Community.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Although I welcome the new stress on the dangerous levels of unemployment in Europe, and also welcome the recognition that a successful GATT round, increased infrastructure expenditure and wage moderation are all necessary to that end, is it not a matter of regret that the Heads of Government approved the guidelines under article 103 of the Maastricht treaty at the same time, which reaffirms both the timetable and the content of the second stage of economic and monetary union, with all that it means in cutting back on public expenditure and public borrowing? Does the Prime Minister think that it is possible to bring about an improvement in employment in Europe when, across Europe, all the member countries and states are dedicated to cutting public expenditure and public borrowing and conforming to a stable exchange rate in the exchange rate mechanism? How can that be possible?

The Prime Minister: It is not only possible; it is absolutely essential. If large fiscal deficits created jobs, there would be no unemployment right across Europe, because, in the past few years, European countries have dramatically increased their fiscal deficits at precisely the same moment as jobs have been lost. Unless we are able to reverse that trend, we will not put ourselves in a position where we are competitive enough to create permanent, long-lasting jobs. That is the policy to which each Government in the Community committed itself at the summit.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) asked about the guidelines under article 103 of the Maastricht treaty. The point about those guidelines is that they are non-binding recommendations; there is no obligation within them. They represent non-binding recommendations that would need to be met before any country was able, if we were to get that far, to enter into stage 3 of economic and monetary union, to which, as the right hon. Gentleman is aware, we are not committed.

The substance of the guidelines is thoroughly sensible economic policy to make sure that we get down excessive borrowing and keep interest rates low. That is something that I believe almost every hon. Member would applaud. They are not artificial, over-prescriptive and country-specific guidelines. The whole essence of them is that member states remain responsible for setting their own economic policy in line with their own national needs and conditions.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Having just come from two homes that were bereaved—they happen to be European constituents of mine—where the fathers were brutally and hellishly murdered last night, one on the doorstep of his own home, may I put to the Prime Minister what was put to me by one of the mourners at those homes today: is the Prime Minister convinced that the IRA is really intending to cease its violence? Is he in full agreement with Mr. Reynolds when he tells the people of Northern Ireland that that is so?

Does not the Prime Minister realise that the price that the IRA will be asking for a cessation of its violence is too high a price to pay for the people of Northern Ireland? Could he say whether Mr. Reynolds is speaking for him when he says that they both have now already got 70 per cent. of an agreement?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that the whole House would wish to send its deepest sympathies to the families of the two men who were so callously and brutally murdered overnight. They add to a catalogue of crime by paramilitaries over recent years which is a blot on the history of Ireland. I hope that such crime can soon be brought to an end and that we see it no more.

What I am seeking to do in the discussions that I am having with the Irish Prime Minister is, of course, to try to find a circumstance that will end such murders in the future. I have never pretended to the House that that will be easy. I believe that it is a policy worth pursuing in the hope that we will be able to bring an end to the violence that has for so long bedevilled the lives of people in Northern Ireland.

I know the concerns that the hon. Gentleman sets out on behalf of his constituents in Northern Ireland and the concerns felt by many people across Northern Ireland. In my discussions with the Irish Prime Minister, I am acutely aware of those concerns in every moment of our negotiations.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I welcome the Prime Minister's expression of concern. Of the trans-European routes, has imaginative planning been undertaken by our own nation to rejuvenate the west Britain ports and the links that would take goods across to Hull and thus open other avenues to Europe for our industry, which would build up our manufacturing sector? I am delighted that some progress has been made on GATT and I look forward to developments that will allow developing countries to improve.

Under the new concept of EUROPOL, will there be better co-operation between Community countries in the fight against not only organised crime but organised terrorism, or will we have to rely on those outside the Community to give us help, as happened recently with the arms shipment from Poland?

The Prime Minister: I certainly hope that we will get far better co-operation through EUROPOL on a range of issues, including terrorism. The particular target of EUROPOL is drugs, which are intimately related to terrorism, as a great deal of terrorism appears to be financed by drugs and money laundering. It is directly to attack those problems that EUROPOL is so attractive to Heads of Government in the European Community.

I can only endorse what the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) said about the GATT round and its importance to the developing world. As I said earlier, it will provide a bigger boost to the incomes of the countries in the developing world than the sum total of aid provided by the western democracies and Japan combined, so it is clearly of immense importance to them.

All options are open on the question of the trans-European network and I shall draw the particular example to which the hon. Gentleman referred to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is widespread concern about cross-border terrorism and the threat of cross-border crime? Will he use his influence to ensure that the EUROPOL drugs unit is set up in the timetable that he has outlined and that there is no delay?

The Prime Minister: I can reassure my hon. Friend that it is intended that the EUROPOL drugs unit will start work in the new year. Together with the anti-money laundering and trade-related measures, it should contribute to a comprehensive anti-drug strategy. We see EUROPOL as being at the centre of the analysis of European cross-border crime patterns and for information exchanges between national police agencies. It will initially concentrate on drugs crime and its implications, as I said to the hon. Member for Belfast, South, with the intention that it will complement and support existing police activities. I believe that over time it will make a significant contribution to stemming the rising tide of cross-border crime throughout Europe.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Does the Prime Minister assume that the benefit of increased jobs from a successful outcome of GATT will accrue automatically? What steps are the Government taking to alert British industry to the special challenges that it will face?

The Prime Minister: The principal cause of job creation will be the general increased flow of trade and the increased demand that will result. That demand will be especially reflected in the manufacturing area, and the lower tariffs elsewhere will offer significant extra opportunities in the services sector. Probably some of that will occur almost automatically without rising levels of efficiency, but the hon. Gentleman is on to a good point by saying that business and commerce in the country will need to look for the opportunities that arise from GATT, to invest for them and seek to take them. The greater the extent to which they do that, the greater the extent that we shall see an increase in jobs.

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the most urgent task for the

[Mr. Paul Channon]

Community in the next few days is to achieve a successful conclusion to the GATT round? Time is running out. What are the main sticking points that concern the Community, or are they largely resolved? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be a disaster for the world if concern for the French film industry allowed the talks to break down? What is the position of Her Majesty's Government and that of the European Council as a whole?

The Prime Minister: Although the present position is changing almost by the minute at the moment, Director General Sutherland achieved an agreement on most of the GATT rounds texts early this morning—about 98 per cent. of the way to the finishing line. There have been substantial negotiations between Sir Leon Brittan and Mr. Kantor, the American negotiator, who were meeting for most of the night and a good deal of today before Sir Leon Brittan had to return to Brussels to report to the Foreign Affairs Council. Of course, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is also attending that meeting.

The principal areas outstanding at the moment are difficulties on audio-visual matters—not the only outstanding matters, but the principal matters outstanding. Although the primary concerns rest with France, it is not the only European nation that has concerns over a range of audio-visual matters. I very much hope that we will be able to make progress on that as it would be a tragedy if the talks were to break down over a subject which, although important, is such a relatively narrow part of the whole GATT round at this stage. The United States has recognised the special nature of the audio-visual sector. The discussion on that has narrowed down to a relatively small number of detailed points.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Was any particular attention paid to the need for an effective Community-wide response to the political and economic refugees from central and eastern Europe who wish to take up permanent residence within the Community? It is important to have an effective economic and social strategy if we are to avoid racist attacks such as we have seen within sections of the Community.

The Prime Minister: We had some general discussion on collective asylum, which is operated co-operatively. The discussion was not specifically related to the countries that the hon. Lady mentioned, although we were all aware that there were areas of particular difficulties. The declaration on asylum commits members to common action on asylum. It is not a new proposition; it is an existing proposition. What it means in practice—so that no one misunderstands it—is that member states discuss together whether they can co-operate on asylum. They then decide intergovernmentally—not by Community decisions—whether they can take particular action. There was some discussion of that at the summit.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Will my right hon. Friend explain how the commitment in the European communiqué to achieve economic growth by low inflation, low interest rates and tight control of public spending can be reconciled with the desire on the part of the European Commission to issue vast quantities of so-called Union bonds? How can it make sense, when every country in the Community is trying to reduce its deficit, to add to that deficit by issuing such bonds? Would it not be far better to achieve success in the GATT negotiations than to pursue grandiose schemes of that nature?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend is entirely right. He states precisely the argument adopted by Britain and several other countries in our discussions at the summit over the weekend. It was for that and other reasons that a decision was taken not to proceed with the bonds to which my right hon. Friend refers.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The Prime Minister welcomed the moves made by the Council towards a more decentralised Europe. Does he accept that those moves are in line with the application of the principle of subsidiarity? If so, will he explain why the Government support the application of that principle by Europe in respect of the United Kingdom and, indeed, by the United Kingdom in respect of the Province of Northern Ireland, but not by the United Kingdom in respect of the nation of Scotland? Is it not the height of hypocrisy for a Government to mouth support for a principle at the Council of Ministers and then to apply that principle only when it is convenient for them to do so for party political purposes?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman clearly does not understand the definition of subsidiarity. The declaration on subsidiarity agreed by member states at the Birmingham European Council last year reiterated the point. It said:

> "It is for each Member State to decide how its powers should be exercised domestically."

Devolution is a separate issue. The principle of subsidiarity does not apply to the internal arrangements in member states. Indeed, such an idea would fly in the face of the principle itself, which expresses—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman will listen, it is just possible that he will learn something—not probable, but just possible. Such an idea would fly in the face of the principle, which explicitly prohibits unnecessary interference by the Community in national affairs.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the directives that are to be repealed include the bathing water directive and the drinking water directive? If that is the case, will he accept the thanks of all sensible people not only in the House but in the whole country? He and his Government have given the lead in bringing about the end of that nonsensical legislation, which is expensive and entirely unnecessary.

The Prime Minister: Yes, I can confirm what my hon. Friend says. The drinking water directive and the bathing water directive both need to be completely overhauled. They are over-prescriptive and outdated scientifically.

Ms Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Shame.

Ms Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): Shame.

The Prime Minister: I am sorry that the hon. Ladies think that an outdated directive which is no longer accurate scientifically is appropriate to remain in law. It explains a great deal about the Opposition.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does the Prime Minister think that when he agrees any matter of principle at the European Council it is essential that this House has an appropriate debate? Can he tell the House whether we had a debate on the home and justice matters that he agreed? Even if a convention is to be presented to the House at some due date, will that not mean that the royal prerogative used by the Government will replace the prerogative of an Act of Parliament?

The Prime Minister: I cannot conceive that any other nation state in the European Community spends remotely as much time, energy and effort on debating European matters, both before and after decisions, than this House. It is entirely proper that we should do so, but the concept that the Government should enable debate in the House on each and every issue, whether large or small, would effectively render any Government in power in no position to take decisions on behalf of the House or the country.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): Will my right hon. Friend tell the House whether we are on target to complete the negotiations with nations belonging to the European Free Trade Association on enlarging the Community according to the timetable set out at the special European Council in October?

The Prime Minister: Yes, we have reaffirmed that target for negotiating the entry of EFTA states. It is a very tough target and, although we have re-endorsed it, I cannot say that I would be surprised if we slipped a little. But at the moment the intention is to meet the target set out, so that providing that those countries get internal consent from their Parliaments and where appropriate from the referenda that they must have, they will be able to enter the Community and be full members by 1995.

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): The Prime Minister referred to the French Prime Minister's stability pact. Is there not a danger that the Paris 39 conference next year will complicate European Union relations with the countries of central and eastern Europe? Surely a plethora of organisations already exists, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the conference on security and co-operation in Europe and the North Atlantic Co-operation Council structures. Is it not ridiculous to establish another organisation, which does not seem to have a clear role or purpose that is distinctive from that of the others? Does he agree that it would be far better to take judicious decisions, for example, about human rights before one recognised Croatia? Does he accept that it is deplorable that there was no reference in the communiqué on the former Yugoslavia to putting pressure on the Croatian Government through economic sanctions?

The Prime Minister: On the latter question, the Community's views on each of the warring parties in Bosnia have frequently been stated at face-to-face meetings and I have no doubt that that will happen again on 22 December. No one involved in the present conflict in Bosnia can escape some share of the blame for what has occurred there in recent years.

On the stability pact, I can entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman on some matters. The focus of the ideas in the pact will be on six central and east European states and on three Baltic states. I can agree with the hon. Gentleman on the need to involve the CSCE, and all the states participating in it will be invited to the conference to launch the stability pact. The hon. Gentleman is quite right that they all have a direct interest in that. Those countries not immediately involved in the pact will be observers, and representatives of other international organisations, such as NATO and the United Nations, will also be invited.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my right hon. Friend accept my warm congratulations on getting, as he put it, "the rubbish" out of the Delors document and on converting it into a highly acceptable blueprint for the future of Europe, along the lines for which he and his colleagues have been working so long—notably, the reduction of burdens on industry, which will enable unemployment in this country to continue to fall and that fall to spread to European countries where unemployment is, sadly, still rising?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend; she is entirely right. We agreed strongly with much in the prescription for the action plan, not least because much of it was based on the contribution made by Community member states. We made our contribution, a significant part of which appears to be reflected in the White Paper. As I said earlier, we objected to certain elements of the White Paper and they are no longer in it. The action plan, which is a framework of policies for member states to pursue, is intended to deliver growth and jobs. I emphasise that it is for member states to pursue because that is an important point for the House. Some specific accompanying measures at Community level—deregulation, subsidiarity, and largely privately financed networks—will march alongside national measures. We also propose to monitor what happens to see the impact on employment prospects over a period of years.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): In his meeting with President Yeltsin, did the Prime Minister make it clear that Russia will not have a right of veto over the future security arrangements of the countries of central and eastern Europe?

The Prime Minister: I do not think that President Yeltsin has entertained the ambition that he should have such a veto. President Yeltsin and I discussed the internal affairs within Russia, the prospects for the election, and the co-operation agreement which President Yeltsin seeks to negotiate with the European Union. We did not discuss the countries to which the hon. Gentleman refers.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Does the Prime Minister agree that this afternoon's statement has illustrated to all fair-minded Members of Parliament in this Chamber the value of the United Kingdom being at the centre of European matters? Should not the few doubting Thomases who were not in favour of the Maastricht treaty now feel ashamed of themselves because their number is diminishing outside the House?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has a golden tongue.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): The Prime Minister referred to the European Free Trade Area countries as being "winners" following a successful round of GATT negotiations. Does he agree that there will be sizeable losers, not least the signatories of the Lomé convention, particularly sub-Saharan Africa? As, by 2002, the winnings are estimated to be approaching £120 billion, will he guarantee that he will argue, within the European Union, that a sizeable percentage of those enormous profits will be set aside to help countries that are currently in no position to help themselves?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady is quite right to the extent that some of the provisions will hurt individual countries. Some of them will not be amenable to this country, the United States, Japan or Germany. All countries will find that some issues do not help them. However, because of the substantial anticipated growth in world trade—*[Interruption.]* It cannot be real until it has happened. Of course it is anticipated, but it is almost certain. The overall impact of the substantial anticipated growth in world trade is that nearly every country, including most sub-Saharan countries, will gain.

The Lomé convention provides special arrangements for a number of countries. Many of those are complex and, in the negotiations, there has been careful examination of relatively poor countries that do not have the political clout to protect themselves sufficiently to ensure that they are not unduly damaged. If it turned out that those countries were being damaged, particularly sub-Saharan Africa where we have a long-standing historical role, we would certainly seek to do what we could to protect them.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has achieved, at this first European Council since the signature of the Maastricht treaty, the rejection of centralised borrowing by the Commission and strengthened subsidiarity considerably, does that signal that, at future Council meetings, we can look forward to more decentralisation and strengthening of nation states' co-operation within Europe?

The Prime Minister: I certainly expect more subsidiarity items to be agreed. Whether they will be agreed by next June or by next December, I cannot be certain, but more items under the subsidiarity principle will be remitted for national Governments to determine, which implies that there will be further repeals of Community legislation.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Last Thursday, the Leader of the House, when he stood in for the Prime Minister at Question Time, suggested that transparency and openness would be on the agenda at the Heads of Government meeting. In a democracy, is it not a fairly basic premise that people should know how their representatives vote? Was that matter discussed at that meeting? Will the Prime Minister ensure that information is supplied to the House on the way that our Ministers vote in Europe?

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom was in the lead in discussing transparency and openness at the European Council. However, it is a principle that did not meet with universal favour among our colleagues. British Ministers are always available at the Dispatch Box to be questioned on how they voted on any issue.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is highly desirable that, in the deliberations on the financing of infrastructure and the trans-European networks, the maximum possible role is given to public and private sector co-operation? Does he further agree that that is a far more prudent course than the unhealthy and incredible obsession with borrowing exhibited in certain quarters, including by the Leader of the Opposition?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. As I said earlier about the trans-European networks, some areas of public expenditure have long been agreed. The figures come from memory, but I believe that there is about 5 billion ecu in the structural and cohesion funds and about 7 billion ecu in the European investment fund. We are now looking for more from the latter fund. My hon. Friend is right to suggest that that is where the maximum amount of money should come from, but I also want the House to appreciate that there is some money in the structural and cohesion funds, which is effectively public money that will help to fund various items.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): It is said that the airbus project is an obstacle to GATT. What assurances can the Prime Minister give to me and to the 2,000 of my constituents at Broughton who make the wings of the airbus that he and the Government will fight our corner? Is he aware that British Aerospace is largely reliant on a successful airbus project? Will he assure us that he is fighting his corner and that President Clinton's election promises made in Seattle last year to Boeing airbus workers will not tip the scales in this important matter?

The Prime Minister: I share the hon. Gentleman's view of the importance of this matter. Of course, we do not negotiate directly in the GATT round—the European Community is collectively represented by a negotiator, Sir Leon Brittan. Both the United States and the negotiator are aware of our special interests. We have made it clear to the Commission, and hence to Sir Leon as negotiator, that it is essential that aero engines and indirect support are covered, as in the current Chairman's text.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I give a warm welcome to the first 17 directives that are to be reviewed or abandoned. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that that is just a foretaste of things to come? In particular, can he say whether the TUPE regulations are included, as the press led us to believe over the weekend? I very much hope that we are witnessing a change in attitude by the Commission and that, having introduced this list, it will take a positive rather than negative look at future lists put forward by this Government or, indeed, that put forward by the Germans, to which my right hon. Friend referred. Should not that attitude also apply in future to any proposed directives?

The Prime Minister: I confirm that the acquired rights directive is among those to be repealed or examined. That incorporates the TUPE regulations to which my hon. Friend referred.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Prime Minister aware, in respect of his meeting with Mr. Reynolds, that the feeling remains that if the opportunity for peace is lost now it may be lost for a long time to come? Bearing in mind the vile murders over the weekend to which reference has already been made, as well as the ethnic cleansing of Catholic people last week, is it not all the more necessary to go the extra mile in seeking agreement with the Irish Republic? We all recognise of course that any such agreement, which is highly desirable, will not necessarily end terrorist killings on both sides.

The Prime Minister: It is important to try to take the opportunity to make the progress that it is possible to make at the moment. It is important that we reach a balanced agreement—one that can be seen to be fair by all the communities in Northern Ireland. That is not easy to obtain; achieving a balanced agreement with the maximum chance of stopping violence is what is taking so long. I do not know how much longer it will take. We will not unduly delay, but it is worth while taking extra trouble to see if we can find a solution. I cannot promise that we will be able to do so.

If we cannot because genuine points of difference cannot be reconciled, we shall have to come to the House and say that it was not possible to reach agreement. I hope that that will not be the case. We are working hard to see whether agreement can be reached. If it is, we shall announce it as speedily as possible.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): It is not clear now, bearing in mind comments made earlier from Conservative Benches, that one of the most significant aspects of the European Council was the beginning of the reversal of the European Commission's endless regulations and unnecessary interferences in matters that could be handled better at national level? I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the important role that he played in that process. Is it not in stark contrast to that of Opposition parties, who want to pass more of Britain's sovereignty to Brussels?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's remarks. Some matters are more appropriately handled at national rather than pan-national level. The essence of subsidiarity is that such matters should be done at a national level. There will always be areas where it is most appropriate for us to deal with matters collectively, and they will continue to be dealt with that way. However, I hope that we shall over time examine all existing legislation and determine which of it, in an excess of enthusiasm over the past 10 years or so, has gone to the European level but would have been better left at national level.

ESTIMATES DAY

[1ST ALLOTTED DAY]

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, 1993-94

Class II, Vote 2

Peacekeeping Operations

[Relevant documents: The Third Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee of Session 1992-93 on The Expanding Role of the United Nations and its Implications for United Kingdom Policy (House of Commons Paper No. 235) and the Government Observations thereon (Cm 238) are relevant.

The Fourth Report from the Defence Committee of Session 1992-93 on United Kingdom Peacekeeping and Intervention Forces (House of Commons Paper No. 369) and the Sixth Special Report from the Committee of Session 1992-93, containing the Government's Observations thereon (House of Commons Paper No. 988) are also relevant.]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a supplementary sum not exceeding £98,121,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1994 for expenditure by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on grants and subscriptions etc. to certain international organisations, special payments and assistance, scholarships, military aid and sundry other grants and services. —*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

4.31 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): I am grateful for this opportunity to debate the vital questions of peacekeeping, the United Nations' contributions to peacekeeping efforts around the globe, the third report from the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, "The Expanding Rôle of the United Nations and its Implications for United Kingdom Policy", the Government's recent reply to that report, and the Government's reply to the recent request from the United Nation's Secretary-General for follow-up comments on peacekeeping operations—all of which documents are available.

The Foreign Affairs Select Committee report published last June was a substantial piece of work and it is appropriate to offer words of thanks to those who contributed to it, in addition to the hard-working Committee. I refer in particular to Mr. David Travers of the university of Lancaster, specialist adviser to the Committee.

The study of the United Nation's expanding role involved extensive travel, although not exactly to holiday spots. Members of the Committee visited Cambodia, Croatia, Macedonia, Kosovo, Nairobi and Somalia, as well as the United Nations. I thank my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary for arranging for posts to give members of the Committee strong support. I mention in particular Sir David Hannay at the United Nations, Mr. Burns in Cambodia, Mr. Sparrow in Croatia, and Foreign Office officials who accompanied some visits where there was no diplomatic representation—such as Mr. George Busby, who travelled from Belgrade to accompany the Macedonia and Kosovo group, Mr. McCrudden from the post in Nairobi, and Mr. Geoff Cole, who travelled specially from London to join the Somalia group.

[Mr. David Howell]

There was a considerable amount of support and help for the Committee, and I am grateful for that. The report was written and prepared while enormous changes were going on in the material that we were studying and in the nature of the United Nations operations around the planet.

In May the Foreign Secretary stated that the United Nations had operations in four of six continents. At the beginning of 1992—some 23 months ago—there were 10,000 peacekeeping troops deployed around the globe. At the beginning of this year, that figure was 60,000—a vast increase. Indeed, if the Mozambique deployments during this year develop as it was thought that they would, the figure would rise to 100,000 peacekeeping troops deployed around the globe and administered and directed from the United Nations in New York and Geneva.

The cost of those operations in 1992 was $3 billion, of which the United Kingdom contributed $90 million. The figure has risen rapidly during this year, with the latest figure showing that the United Kingdom contributed $60 million in the first three months of 1993 alone. I imagine that our contribution for the whole year will be far in excess of any that we have made in the past.

While the Committee was writing the report, huge changes were occurring. Since then, even more rapid and striking changes have occurred in peacekeeping operations and in world opinion about those operations. I think in particular of the virtual flip in opinion in the United States about the new world order and about the role of the United Nations. I am afraid that that change has occurred since June and has been driven primarily by deep disappointment and bitterness over events in Mogadishu.

The change has been driven in particular by the vivid photographs of the corpses of American service men being dragged by jeering mobs through the streets of Mogadishu. The photographs have had a fundamental effect on American opinion. More than any other communication, those horrific photographs have had the effect of turning opinion in the United States—and possibly elsewhere—against the high hopes of the United Nations of managing a new world order, and against a great deal of the work of the United Nations. The photographs also turned opinion against the idea of America playing a forward role as the world's policeman here, there and everywhere.

The United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Ghali, has gone on record as saying that the United Nations is giving up on the idea of peace enforcement—perhaps as a result of that incident. It is not giving up on peacekeeping, of course, but it is giving up the idea of military enforcement to bring about peace in the world's trouble spots. That has occurred in the past in the Korean war and to a considerable extent when Saddam Hussein was pushed back out of Kuwait. The Secretary-General's comments came after the production of the report and to that extent events have overtaken us.

Meanwhile, since we visited the former Yugoslavia as part of the production of the report, there has been the grim recognition that the partition of Bosnia is inevitable. I think that it might have been more realistic to realise earlier that that was coming, and to raise hopes of keeping an independent Bosnia less high. Many lives have been lost in pursuing that unattainable objective.

Meanwhile, again, Mr. Arkan terrorises Kosovo. Preventative deployments have taken place in Macedonia and that is a good thing. Sanctions against Serbia are still in place, but they do not seem to be working effectively. As the House has heard, others are pressing for sanctions against Croatia, and that has also happened since the Committee produced the report.

Also, Mr. Jan Eliason—who the Committee met when he was head of the department of humanitarian affairs—has resigned amid some doubts about the effectiveness of those new arrangements at the United Nations. The United Nations has sent a mission to Georgia, and there has been an international peacekeeping effort of a kind which, I confess, I know little about. The United Nations has also been involved in Haiti, where frigates—including one from this country—have been deployed. In the middle east, the PLO-Israeli deal is now threatened by extremists, while elsewhere in the middle east, Saddam Hussein continues to assert his claim to Kuwait, to question the implementation of United Nations resolutions and to attack the marsh Arabs. Indeed, he may have been implicated in using chemical weapons yet again.

Although there may be many other developments, the final development that has occurred in respect of United Nations peacekeeping and its financing is the fact that the United Kingdom has unfortunately been pushed off the United Nations Budgetary Committee. When the Minister replies, I would like to know how serious that is. We tend to be pushed off every three years and then get back on again. However, this is a bad time not to be as near as we can to the centre of the administration of United Nations finances.

All these developments have produced a change of mood since the summer and earlier in the year when it was thought that the United Nations would be the answer to every prayer. We have now gone to the opposite extreme: from excess euphoria, we have bounced over to excess gloom. It seems that the United Nations cannot achieve many of the things that people hoped it could after the end of the cold war.

I believe that the gloom is overdone. When Dr. Boutros Ghali paid me the honour of asking my opinion on the matter, I told him that, despite all the criticism and the change of opinion in America, I thought that the gloom was overdone and that the United Nations remained a very powerful instrument which, reformed in the right way, can deliver a major contribution to world stability and the ending of violence and fragmentation around the globe.

That was the spirit in which we wrote our report. On that basis, we set out a range of proposals for reforming the United Nations and its administration and methods for tackling international crises and for intervening. In our very long report, we argued that the United Nations cannot do everything. That was obvious. As the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) put it very graphically—and we used his words in paragraph 263 of the report—the United Nations cannot

"wipe the tear from every eye."

When deciding where it should intervene and where it should move on from humanitarian intervention to more heavyweight intervention, it is necessary to have criteria to decide upon what principles it should work. We set out some of those criteria in paragraph 267. We argued that they were the kind of questions that policy makers and national governments should ask before they decide to support a resolution to intervene in a particular trouble spot.

The Government have produced a reply to our lengthy report which is, if I may say so, a little diffuse and not made easier to comment on by the fact that there are no numbered paragraphs. However, from reading the report, I feel that the Government are not so enthusiastic about those criteria as the Committee was. At least the Government agree that there must be a mandate specified from the outset before intervention. That is very important indeed.

We argue that one must go further than that and ensure that countries which commit themselves and their policies and resources must be aware from the start that the most timid initial humanitarian intervention can lead to a much more complicated military involvement. That is the point at which people who have committed themselves at the start must stay committed and not turn their backs and walk out leaving the United Nations floundering.

It appears from the Government's response to our report and their response direct to the Secretary-General that they agree with our Committee that better command and control procedures at the United Nations are badly needed. They agree with our suggestions, and the suggestions of others, that a proper planning and operations staff at the United Nations is required. They agree with our thoughts about better communication and information flows for the United Nations.

When the United Nations tries to command and control a force in the field, in a sense it operates blind because it does not have its own intelligence networks. We must consider what nation states can do, without undermining the national interests concerned, to provide better information and intelligence flows. I detected from the Government's reply that they recognise that that problem can be met.

The Government also agree with the Committee that one should be sympathetic to the idea of stand-by forces for the United Nations. There is a sharp distinction between stand-by forces and standing forces. Stand-by forces would enable the United Nations to know what capabilities are available for certain needs and requirements around the world. The United Nations would be able to have an effective list of what was available.

The Committee turned down very strongly the different idea of having standing forces waiting about to be deployed by the United Nations in certain missions. We believe that that idea was not sensible because missions vary vastly and one never knows exactly what kind of troops are required. The same argument applies to the idea of earmarking particular forces for United Nations work.

In their reply, the Government do not appear to agree with our argument about sanctions. We argued that really limited sanctions tend to become more and more limited and are finally eroded to the point of uselessness. We believe that if sanctions are to be effective, they must be applied with vigour in a full-blown way from the start. We made that point in paragraph 130.

It is a pity that there is reluctance to recognise that point. It would be very valuable to have sanctions working effectively on Serbia at the moment—although I am not sure whether it should be part of a deal in exchange for land. If they were working really effectively, they would at least create conditions in which the Bosnian Muslims do not feel that they are being asked to accede to a totally unjust peace. That is what they feel now as they know that the sanctions are not working thoroughly and that both their opponents, Serbs and Croats, have access to more arms than they do.

We should now re-examine the sanctions procedures. We should argue that very much tougher sanctions should be maintained at all times, and particularly now with regard to Serbia.

All in all, the aim of the report was, as we state in paragraph 263, to describe

> "a range of practical ways in which the work of the United Nations could be made more effective, which we call upon the United Kingdom Government to support—especially ways of extending the diplomatic and other preventive work of the Organisation, its Secretary-General and the other UN agencies."

Obviously what we said was not comprehensive. There are United Nations missions and activities around the world which we did not get near and some of those may turn into demands for heavier commitments of resources before very long.

We are at a critical moment. There is a tug of war between the belief that the United Nations can solve all the post-cold war problems as they grow and the belief that the United Nations had lost credibility in various areas, including in Yugoslavia and particularly in Somalia. The Americans say that they are going to pull out on 31 March whatever happens—and heaven knows what will happen after that. There could be some very dark developments in some of these areas.

There are regions of success. Namibia prospers as a result of United Nations efforts. The United Nations is withdrawing in Cambodia and it looks at the moment, although this may be a dangerous prediction, as though a more peaceful order will prevail. However, there is nothing but defeat and setbacks in other areas.

With those mixed feelings, with some caution about over enthusiasm and hope that the United Nations can be reformed, we set the report before the House. I hope that it will be valuable and useful to hon. Members as we contemplate this vast business of peacekeeping, with all its expenses and frustrations, which lies before us in ever growing quantity.

4.48 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I congratulate the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) and his Committee on a most comprehensive report on an extremely important and difficult subject. Over the next few years, the report will be regarded as absloutely essential to how the United Nations develops.

I also thank the Government for choosing this aspect of the Foreign Office estimates to be discussed. The debate enables hon. Members to examine many of our international commitments. We do not normally have such an opportunity. Also, the debate allows us further to re-examine the role of the United Nations in this post-cold war era, with the background of the Select Committee's valuable report.

The debate also encourages interested hon. Members to come to the House on a Monday, when there is only a one-line Whip and when there will probably be only one vote, to advance their interests in respect of many countries. The Government participate in a very wide range of peacekeeping activities within the United Nations.

I must admit that, not being an expert or an accountant, I lost my way somewhat when I examined the estimates. I thank the Foreign Office officials for their generous help in

[Mr. Allan Rogers]

filling in the gaps—literally. Some sections of the estimates, particularly those dealing with international organisations and peacekeeping forces, are not clear to the lay person. Perhaps the Government could do a better job in presenting funding figures in the same currency, providing more comprehensive explanations of expenditure, and advising when assessments correspond with projections.

Our present commitments are comprehensive and world wide, but they are also different and reflect different involvements. As the right hon. Member for Guildford said, one cannot anticipate problems or what one needs to do to try to resolve them. One of the biggest issues that we fact—it is mentioned in the report—is when and where the United Nations could and should be involved. When does it have, as the French call it, le droit d'ingerence, or the right to interfere?

In his "Agenda for Peace", Dr. Boutros-Ghali, the Secretary-General, suggested that it was time for the United Nations to consider fighting natural disasters as well as man-made ones. However, the continual question is whether an ostensibly global organisation should infringe the national sovereignty of affected nations when their own Governments do not meet their needs. That question is much easier to answer when it is applied to natural disasters or humanitarian crises, but it is much more difficult to resolve, as we have seen in Yugoslavia, when sanctions and military force need to be deployed.

The Foreign Affairs Select Committee suggested some guidelines that should be drawn up for humanitarian assistance, but the Government pointed out—yet again, I agree with the right hon. Gentleman—in a most inadequate response to the Committee that such guidelines would erode the flexibility of the United Nations to respond to emergencies. However, it is obvious that the present system is not working. Some guidance is necessary, but only to reassure a Government or areas that come under scrutiny or need action that they are not being picked out for special treatment and that nations are responding objectively.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the universal declaration of human rights gives the basis for such an alteration in guidelines? It is a later document than the charter and it emphasises that individuals and communities have rights under whatever nation state. That should be the starting point of the guidelines.

Mr. Rogers: I accept that that point could be considered, but the Select Committee and the Government, in fairness to them, realise the enormous difficulty in drawing up guidelines. Bearing in mind the report to which the right hon. Member for Guildford referred, one could make a very strong case for interference by the United Nations in the affairs of this country, particularly in respect of Northern Ireland. I do not know whether Parliament would agree to that.

The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) should bear that point in mind when it comes to interfering in the affairs of sovereign states. After all, the United Nations was founded on the principle that member states are sovereign, that their boundaries are inviolate and that it would be wrong to interfere in the affairs of a member state.

When discussing the United Nations and peacekeeping, it would be wrong to ignore or overstate the part played by non-governmental organisations. The commitment, dedication and humanitarian work of NGOs is unquestioned, but a lack of both funds and Government support often prevents them from fulfilling or completing their tasks.

In a written answer on 16 July, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs said that the Government do not earmark money for British-based NGOs and that money is neither given directly to NGOs nor specifically to United Nations programmes for the funding of NGOs. Perhaps the Minister will say whether that is still the Government's policy. I am sure that other hon. Members agree that the ability of NGOs to act swiftly in providing humanitarian aid is not only crucial in relieving suffering but could obviate the need for more formal United Nations intervention, even of a non-military kind.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I am sorry, but I do not quite understand the hon. Gentleman's question. On occasions, money is made available to NGOs to spend in countries of concern. That happens quite frequently. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is seeking an answer to a different question. I did not quite follow the line of his question—I apologise.

Mr. Rogers: On 16 July 1992, a written question was answered by the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. He said:

> "We shall continue to consider on their merits requests from British non-governmental organisations to fund specific projects . . . We do not earmark for non-governmental organisations any specific part of our contribution to the United Nations programme."—[*Official Report*, 16 July 1992; Vol. 211, c. *968*.]

The Government should re-examine that policy and perhaps set aside a small amount for NGOs to ensure that relief operations can begin in the interval between the emergence of humanitarian crises and the decision of member states to send in a United Nations mission.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): If the hon. Gentleman analysed the facts, he would agree that the Governmnent have consistently used NGOs more and more each year, as they are very relevant to certain countries and certain conditions. If the hon. Gentleman analysed the Foreign Office estimates, he would find that non-governmental organisations have had more and more money each year to carry out the work that we all agree is necessary.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman may be right—I confessed that I had difficulty in wading through the estimates. However, I looked for that specific matter, and it is in a special section. If the hon. Gentleman examines it, he will see that money is not specifically earmarked on a year-by-year basis for NGOs, but that is not to say that money is not given on specific request.

As we know, the end of the cold war brought about a completely different international situation. There was a period where there were clearly defined roles and interests, but now there is a great deal of uncertainty. We also know that the United Nations has never functioned as originally intended because of the bipolarity in the exercise of the veto when interests were threatened. The Security Council of the United Nations was able to make firm decision on only a few occasions—for example, with regard to Palestine, Korea, the Congo, South Africa and the Falklands.

The passage of resolution 678 in 1990 with regard to the cold war led everyone to hope, as the right hon. Member for Guildford said, that the United Nations could fulfil the constructive role envisaged by its founders and perhaps positively create a new world order. Unfortunately, since then—partly because of the accelerated break-up of totalitarian regions—the number and complexity of conflicts has meant that the United Nations has been asked to fulfil tasks that, for many reasons, it is unable to do. Of the 27 peacekeeping operations undertaken since 1948, 13 are still under way and eight have been launched in only the past two years.

I am sure that we can recall all the relative optimism when it was agreed that the United Nations should be used to resolve the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Indeed, last year, the right hon. Member for Guildford told the House:

> "The Select Committee took the view that our hopes must rest on the United Nations as an effective force. It may have to remain in Yugoslavia for some time."—[*Official Report*, 5 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 464.]

That comment expressed hope, but it also realistically anticipated despair—an anticipation which has been fulfilled. One cannot see a resolution to the problems in the former Yugoslavia—but that is true in almost all instances. Most of the problems in which the United Nations has become involved have remained unresolved. In Bosnia, peacekeeping forces have an inadequate mandate and are too small to be effective.

In Cambodia, the elections were monitored and the United Nations will now withdraw, but the UN was still unable to cope when one side did not accept the result. At present, the difficulties between the Khmer Rouge and the elected Government are still on the table. In Somalia, a massive force is unable to resolve the problems because of the lack of administrative and government structures and a mandate that is not clear. In Western Sahara and Angola, the same inabilities persist.

An analysis of those relative failures shows that there is a common theme in all the situations. The Security Council of the United Nations was not able to act decisively and quickly, its mandates were inadequate, its resources were inadequate, and the problems and political aims were not clearly identified. Those shortcomings raised the whole question of the future of the United Nations, its role and its effectiveness.

As the right hon. Gentleman said, some people now question and criticise the United Nations as an institution. Some talk about using other institutions and structures to resolve conflict and, indeed, creating new structures to achieve that objective. Fortunately, a vast majority of politicians and countries realise that there is no real alternative to the United Nations. What is also evident from analysing the issues that have been resolved by the United Nations is that regional organisations have not been able, for various reasons, to do much about the problems either.

Neither the European Community nor the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe is able to stop the bloodshed in the former Yugoslavia. In Angola, Somalia, Mozambique and the Sudan, the Organisation of African Unity has been unable to resolve the conflicts. The Organisation of American States is still unable to deal with several crises in its hemisphere, especially in Haiti.

Obviously, the answer lies in increasing the effectiveness of the United Nations, both internally by improving its decision-making processes and making resources available to implement decisions taken, and externally by reviewing its relationship with member states and the regional groupings of those states. We believe that there is a role for regional organisations, either independently or in conjunction with the United Nations, in resolving most conflicts, which are, after all, almost always regional.

We know that peacekeeping and peacemaking can be brought about not only by sanctions and the use of force but by such means as arms control, disarmament and confidence-building measures, improving the economic and social conditions in the areas of conflict—that is perhaps ignored and not invested in—using effective preventive diplomacy and providing efficient peacekeeping mechanisms.

Undoubtedly, the present resources and energy of the United Nations are spread too thin. Member states still prefer action that is low cost with a limited commitment. As the right hon. Gentleman said, it is much easier for the United Nations and its member states to rely on economic sanctions of debatable efficacy which are often broken and unenforceable, and unlikely to address the structural problems of the political systems at which they are directed.

As well as the vast increase in the activities of the United Nations, the concept of peacekeeping is undergoing profound change. That area is under active review not only in the Select Committee's report but in the report entitled "Agenda for Peace" of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. That report is sensible, realistic and challenging.

The Secretary-General proposed that members of the United Nations must provide resources to implement the potential decisions that are given in the report. For example, he suggests that the United Nations should move from peacekeeping to peacemaking, including crisis prevention and the preventive deployment of troops; that peacekeeping should be expanded to include the imposition of sanctions and involve the training of civilian police in politically neutral military forces; and that more effort should be made in post-conflict peacebuilding which is essential to ensure that peace, once established, takes firm hold.

Those proposals would require substantial changes within the United Nations. But whatever changes come about, all the other reforms of the United Nations are irrelevant without financial reform. In September 1992, an international advisory group on United Nations financing observed that the United Nations lived from hand to mouth. The committee, which was chaired by Shijuro Ogata and Paul Volker, made some simple suggestions: all countries should pay their assessed United Nations due on time and in full; interest should be charged on late payments; the working capital fund should be doubled from the present level; and other measures should be introduced to improve the financial efficacy of the organisation. Those issues are highlighted in the Select Committee's report.

Whatever is finally agreed, there is an urgent need for a link between peacekeeping operations and the process of political settlement, and for a strengthening of the mandate of peacekeeping forces to ensure the security of personnel

[Mr. Rogers]

and prevent parties to the conflict from impeding the conduct of operations. If the United Nations is to be more effective, it must develop the intelligence-gathering facility referred to by the right hon. Gentleman. It is grossly unfair to criticise the United Nations for its operations in certain areas of the world, because it simply does not have the facility to gather intelligence so that it can plan its role in any area almost on a day-to-day basis.

The Opposition are absolutely committed to a future role for the United Nations. We firmly believe that the creation of a new world order—indeed, world peace—relies on an effective international organisation. The search for other structures, for example, such as that that we see in Europe at the present time in relation to NATO and the Western European Union, are not incompatible with the function and role of the United Nations, but they cannot and will not be a substitute for the United Nations itself. I believe that the report by the Select Committee is of significant importance and will be used in any future discussions about the role of the United Nations. But it is important that the House gives unequivocal support for the United Nations and for its development as an effective institution for world peace.

5.10 pm

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): I am sure that the whole House is grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), Chairman of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, for the documents that are before us, which clearly underpin so much of our debate today. The whole House will recognise, as the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) said, that, in many ways, the documents can be seen as important reference works when we look at the grave problems of United Nations peacekeeping activities around the world.

As we are under pressure of time, I shall be brief and concentrate my remarks on the challenges facing the United Nations and its direct British support in the peacekeeping role in Bosnia. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State pointed out so vividly in his article in the *Sunday Times* yesterday, there has been a tendency for media attention to drop away, in that rather sad way we see when somehow it becomes yesterday's news.

All the signs are that the problems in Bosnia are worse now than at any time. The estimates which were made last year for the possibility of half a million dead because of starvation—which, thank God, were not realised—have become a real concern and possibility in this much harder winter. This is happening at a time when military activity has been stepped up and when there is a feeling that there is a fight to the finish. Against that background, I strongly support what the estimates imply in terms of additional and increased activity in United Kingdom assistance in peacekeeping and in disaster relief for Bosnia.

I shall concentrate on the degree to which the efforts of the United Nations, our Government and national resources may be backed up by parliamentary endeavour. As I have said, I recognise the important role that is played by the two Select Committees, whose reports we are considering. I recognise, too, the roles that are played by others who are represented here today, including the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, and by many of our colleagues involved in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and in the Council of Europe. I do not seek to make any special claim for initiatives to which I and the organisation that I have the honour to lead in the Inter-Parliamentary Union can lay claim.

I returned yesterday from Geneva after a meeting at the weekend of our executive in which we tried to decide how an international parliamentary mission might be of use in this grave situation. Like so many others before us, we have found real difficulty in identifying practical and effective steps to end the tragedy. However, we are conscious of the fact that the mandate which was given to us by 125 Parliaments, which was brought forward at our conference in New Delhi in the spring, clearly called on us to hold consultations on human rights and to support efforts for peace in the region.

As a result, I took the opportunity in June to accept invitations from the Speakers of the Parliaments of the former Yugoslavia, now Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia and Slovenia, to visit them. That was as a direct result of their membership of the IPU. Following our latest discussions over the weekend within the executive of the IPU, it is clear that there is a strong feeling that we should now make an effort to add to that a dialogue, through first-hand experience in Bosnia, particularly in Sarajevo —although we have no formal links as such with Bosnia.

A number of elements have become clear from all the discussions we have had during our meetings over the weekend involving the 13 countries represented on the executive. The problem is by no means confined to the countries in Europe. The concerns, especially for the Muslim peoples of the former Yugoslavia, are widely shared by our membership. Attempts are being made to find practical methods and to achieve co-operation between north and south. At the same time, we do not wish to be seen simply to be going on for "me-tooism" or to get in the way of those involved in the critical task of disaster relief.

In that particular task, it is clear that our country, our military forces and those who support them are playing an outstanding part. We asked ourselves what were realistic objectives for a mission of this kind. It is important to understand the unique nature of our links with the country of Yugoslavia—Serbia Montenegro—which, because of its continued membership, meets us regularly. We have access to it, yet it is in a situation which shows a weakness of the United Nations—it has been effectively ruled out of any activity in the General Assembly.

Such opportunities for activity are virtually non-existent, and the country's links are confined to technical committees such as the Economic and Social Council. It seemed to many of us that there were opportunities to pursue, for example, the issue of war crimes in discussions in Belgrade, and that, recognising that war crimes were by no means confirmed to one of the three protagonists, those talks should be extended to discussions in Zagreb, with the added interest and support of Slovenia, with the Parliament of Ljubljana, which has been particularly constructive in the dialogue.

Because we recognise many of the anxieties that have been expressed by hon. Members, including my right hon. Friend the Minister, about the United Nations' difficulty in taking action on war crimes, particularly with respect to access to those identified, it seemed appropriate to try to work out a range of proposals which we hoped would help. We came up with three objectives. The first was to encourage the promotion of domestic prosecution of alleged war criminals who found themselves on the territory of any of the three states under the appropriate Geneva conventions.

The second was to promote mutual assistance between parties in criminal matters involving grave breaches of the Geneva conventions and protocol 1—for example, additional protocol one, article 88—and co-operation with the United Nations under additional protocol 1, article 89. Although I cite those technical details, in the interests of time I will not spell them out. Their deterrent effect will be familiar to many who are in the House tonight.

Thirdly, it seemed to us that there was an obvious opportunity to promote better respect for human rights in all the countries that would be visited by such a mission; but, particularly in Bosnia Hercegovina, we felt that, although in the overall sense we were looking at human rights, we should clearly devote every effort to support peace efforts. That included support for our own military, and others on the ground.

I have therefore written today to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, seeking direct support by Her Majesty's Government in facilitating the mounting of such an expedition. It is envisaged that it will be made up of representatives from Australia, Argentina and Scandinavia. with my own oversight as president and possible involvement in leading the delegation, in whole or part, depending on logistics and the opportunity to fit in with others in the mission.

Although we will also seek the support of the United Nations through our Geneva headquarters, the reason for seeking support from Her Majesty's Government to what essentially is an international expedition stems in part from past experience; we had outstanding support in the visits made last June to Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford said, we have all found that our diplomats and those in the field have had a particularly useful and well-organised approach to providing access not just to the people whom we might normally expect to meet but to the media, opposition parties and others who want to put forward a more critical line than we would simply receive if we met those representing the Government parties.

In all those arrangements, it is proposed that our mission should be staffed by the head of the IPU presidential office in London, whom I shall mention, no doubt much to his embarrassment. Mr. James Radcliffe is well known to many hon. Members as an example of what, through secondment from the Foreign Office, it is possible for an international parliamentary organisation to achieve in a partnership between Government and Parliament.

I am aware of the efforts of others. I make no special claim that our mission can produce something dramatic, but the point must be fairly made that our group, because it mirrors the United Nations, has a broader spread than any other international parliamentary organisation. It has a proud history of foundation by a British and a French parliamentarian more than a century ago. It may be able to demonstrate, as many in the Chamber will agree, that parliamentarians can undertake international tasks.

I hope that it will be seen as an example that gives the lie to those who regard such activities as frivolous or part of the travel club syndrome. The nature of such international representations from countries that have no obvious and direct linkage with the problems of the region shows how such problems can be considered and worked upon in the wider international parliamentary community.

Any mission such as this, which has the opportunity to see and encourage at first hand the staggering efforts of those working for relief in Bosnia, is to be welcomed. Having seen the work of our people as part of UNPROFOR in Zagreb, I am anxious that we should extend that work, especially to support the United Nations command headquarters in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

I hope that such a mission will command the general support of the House and of Her Majesty's Government. I recognise that I am raising a matter of which I have given my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister virtually no notice, but it is a small example of the way in which parliamentary diplomacy can supplement preventive diplomacy, as urged on us by the UN Secretary-General. I hope that our mission will be seen not only as a contribution to the work of the Select Committee and the estimates which are before us but as something on which we may build in years to come.

5.22 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): I agree with what the hon. Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) said about the mission that the IPU is hoping to undertake. I wish it well, and I hope that it gets the co-operation that it needs from the Foreign Office. It is important that we have not just one-way traffic between Parliaments in the west and elsewhere—for example, the Balkans—but two-way traffic. I remind the hon. Gentleman that it is next to impossible for the Members of the Bosnian Parliament in Sarajevo, a city under siege, to respond to invitations to visit other European countries. It is as important to break that aspect of the siege of Sarajevo—the spiritual siege of Sarajevo—as it is to break the material siege.

The right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) spoke of the high hopes at the end of the cold war and of how those hopes have been disappointed. As he stressed, it is important not to overdo the gloom. The opportunity for a more proactive, more interventionist role in regional conflicts, provided by the end of the cold war, is still there. The end of the cold war did not mean the end of those regional conflicts and disputes and they are no less complicated or intractable.

However, one important dimension has been removed from them, and that is the fear that intervention could lead to the wider entanglement of the two rival super-powers. The removal of that dimension provides the international community with an important opportunity, which it has to grasp and of which it must take full advantage. Over the past couple of years, we have run up against various obstacles and difficulties with the mechanisms and procedures to try to deal with regional conflicts, principally the mechanisms of the United Nations.

Before I say anything about those difficulties, let me add that, in trying to be more active in responding with help to resolve regional conflicts, the outstanding principle that we must defend is that of non-aggression. We must maintain respect for internationally recognised frontiers. The words "internationally recognised" are perhaps the most important in that phrase. We must not distinguish between frontiers in terms of whether they are thought to be artificial or of recent establishment, that they might be seen

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by some to be unfair, that they might divide communities or that they might lead people on one side of a border to wish that they were on the other.

We cannot bring those factors into play when we try to maintain the principle of respect for internationally recognised borders. One of the causes of our failure in the Balkans is that we tried to distinguish between borders and frontiers that we felt were more durable, more just, more correct and more defensible and those that we thought were more artificial. We cannot make those distinctions. If we try to do so, we shall quickly find ourselves on a slippery slope.

Not many borders in Europe, particularly in eastern Europe, would stand up to the kind of scrutiny and examination that some people have tried to use on the new borders in the Balkans. The key has to be that if the borders are recognised by the international community, they must be maintained by the international community. I fear that the fact that we have not maintained that principle in the Balkans has been a great blow to our hopes of the new world order.

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): Is my hon. Friend arguing that the situation in former Yugoslavia would have been resolved if people had taken a different attitude to the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, or is he arguing—this is how I interpret his remarks—that it does not matter what the historic lines on maps are, we can have a process of almost permanent instability so long as some people somewhere think that they should have "self-determination" and that everybody else should recognise that? I was not entirely clear which road my hon. Friend was following.

Mr. Macdonald: It was neither, which shows that I was not getting the point across. I was trying to say that, whatever border is internationally recognised, that is the border which the international community should be defending with every means at its disposal. We should not distinguish between borders that may be internationally recognised but are difficult for us to defend and those that could be argued by some to be an artificial creation or a recent creation.

Some of those attributes may attach to all borders, but if we are to maintain international order the international community must be prepared to rigorously defend any borders that it has recognised as a legal border, no matter how recently brought into being. If the line has been recognised by the international community, the international community must defend it. If we fail to do that we will be on a slippery slope. We will end up making excuses about certain conflicts and certain kinds of aggression by putting forward the argument that the aggression does not matter so much because the border is recent, controversial or open to dispute.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): Is it not more complicated than that? I accept the main thrust of the hon. Member's argument, but is there not another case? In Cyprus, for instance, the two sides fought themselves to a standstill, and the United Nations is quite properly monitoring the line along which they did so. That was not an internationally recognised border until the war caused it to be one.

Mr. Macdonald: The key point is that the international community still does not recognise that border. That is a line between two communities which was determined by aggression. The international community has rightly refused to recognise the line that has been created, and continues to insist that the original border of Cyprus, the original integrity of Cyprus—as recognised by the international community before the fighting—must continue to be the base point.

Mr. Rogers: I agree with the general thrust of my hon. Friend's argument, but I am not sure how we would put it into operation, for example, in the former Yugoslavia. When do we stop the clock? In 1945, one of the subscribers to the United Nations was the country called Yugoslavia. Is my hon. Friend now arguing that the function of the United Nations should have been to support the Government of Yugoslavia in maintaining their sovereign territory, or do we move the argument forward two or three years, or 20 or 30 years, until we get to a time when Yugoslavia is broken up, and say, "Well, those are now the boundaries that have to be defended, and the United Nations should acknowledge and support them"? I accept the general thrust of my hon. Friend's argument, but there are enormous difficulties in following it in such a simplistic way.

Mr. Macdonald: The question of internal borders is very difficult. While we all support the principle of self-determination of nations, communities or minorities within states in its broadest sense, we must be careful not to allow support for the principle of self-determination to become automatic support for the principle of secession. It is important that we try to maintain the integrity of nation states, which are the building blocks of the international community.

The constitutions of some nation states allow for various parts of those states to secede. Similarly, the international community may recognise the constitutions of those states as well as the federal constitutions of various parts of those states and their right to secede. It could be argued that, from 1974 onwards, the republics within Yugoslavia had a constitutional right to secede. I agree that we must be careful not to allow our respect and support for minority rights and for the principle of self-determination of communities to lead to an interminable fracturing of existing states. That is a danger which we must guard against.

My hon. Friend is also right that the principle I am putting forward is, in many ways, a simplifying principle. Unless we try to put forward such a simplifying principle, any hope of maintaining a consistent line and policy when we face the challenges that will come from eastern Europe and elsewhere during the rest of the decade will disappear. It will then be difficult to maintain the kind of stability and order that we seek. If we allow disputes to arise, and the resolution of them by aggression to succeed, many borders in eastern Europe could be disputed. That is unfortunately what we have done in the former Yugoslavia.

As to the United Nations, the problems that we have seen over the past couple of years have diminished our original optimism. Those problems can be divided into three categories: lack of material resources for the United Nations, the problem of its internal organisation when it comes to peacekeeping, and a certain lack of will when faced with various conflicts that we should try to do more about.

As to the material resources of the United Nations, there is no doubt that those available for peacekeeping have to be built up. A recent report of the United Nations revealed the startling statistics that its peacekeeping budget in 1991 was less than the combined budget of the New York fire and police departments. That was in a year when there were already several peackeeping operations in place around the world. There is no doubt that the budget is utterly inadequate for the tasks that the United Nations will be asked to perform during the rest of the decade.

The right hon. Member for Guildford raised the point about the United Nations Organisation. The United Nations lacks an independent intelligence gathering capacity and has difficulties with command and control of United Nations operations. Another great problem is the lack of co-ordination between forces that are unused to working with each other and have different levels of equipment and training.

I visited NATO with a group of colleagues earlier this year, and we were told by General Sir Richard Vincent, the chairman of the military committee, that, in deciding the number of troops he thought necessary for the implementation of the Vance-Owen proposals, he had to take into account all those various deficiencies in the United Nations organisation. Given those deficiencies, in order to do its job the United Nations has to deploy many more troops than would otherwise be necessary.

The important point about standby forces has already been made. We must look more and more to regional organisations to help to carry the load for the United Nations. We should be looking to regional organisations in Africa, Asia and Europe to share some of the burden. We in Europe have to take a very hard look at how we organise our forces, particularly in the European Community.

The European Union now has more than 2 million men under arms, yet it protests its absolute impotence and inability to act to sort out regional conflicts in Europe without massive help from the United States, particularly with ground troops. Such a position is unsustainable and the European Union must look towards integrating its forces, particularly in an era of diminished resources all round.

The third factor that has led to a decline in optimism about the abilities of the UN is the difficulty met in imposing political will, as has been obvious in the Balkans. I do not believe that it has been the failure to impose military will that has held western Governments back from intervening in the Balkans on a grand scale. My conversations with General Vincent and his predecessor, General Eide, have convinced me that a lack of political will has been the key to the failure of the West to intervene more aggressively in the Balkans.

Western Governments had hoped that the conflict in the Balkans could be contained, that the war in Bosnia could be limited to Bosnia and that it would eventually burn itself out. That hope will be dashed in months and years to come. Our failure to intervene at an earlier stage in that conflict, perhaps during the bombardment of Dubrovnik, means that when we do eventually intervene with military forces—I am sure that that will be necessary—the operation will be far more painful than it would have been had we intervened earlier.

Even those who disagree with me about the need for military intervention in the Balkans must agree about the importance of maintaining the flow of humanitarian aid to the region. A couple of colleagues and I visited Sarajevo in October and we saw the privations caused by the siege. The aid that is getting through is nothing like enough to relieve the population.

The figures may sound impressive: 6,000 flights delivering 60,000 tonnes of aid by air to Sarajevo in two years. That should be compared, however, with the 40,000 tonnes of aid that was delivered in one month by air to Saudi Arabia during the Gulf crisis. More tellingly, it should be compared with the 200,000 flights that delivered more than 2 million tonnes of aid to Berlin in 1949—a city which suffered a shorter siege than that of Sarajevo. Such comparisons raise a giant question mark about the serious intent of western Governments' aid efforts in Sarajevo and elsewhere in Bosnia.

I have raised this matter with the Foreign Secretary. The Minister of State has written to me to explain that an attempt will be made to increase the tempo of the airlifts to Sarajevo. He stressed the difficulties that have been encountered because there is only one flight path in to and out of Sarajevo and because no night flying is allowed due to the supposed greater dangers that such an operation poses. He argued that that one flight path meant that planes were given a 30-minute time slot to land and take off from Sarajevo.

Such excuses are inadequate. I do not see why it is not possible to establish more than one flight path and to organise night flights to deliver aid. I do not know why each plane needs a 30-minutes time slot when planes land at Heathrow every couple of minutes and planes landed every minute and a half during the Berlin airlift. Those excuses are not credible and I fear that western Governments' seriousness of intent in delivering humanitarian aid is no greater than their seriousness of intent in maintaining international law and the principles previously enunciated in the Balkans.

5.44 pm

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): As my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) said, the Select Committee on Defence published a report on the United Kingdom's peacekeeping and intervention forces on 9 June and the Government replied on 3 November. I should like to take this opportunity to refer briefly to our report and to draw to the attention of the House a couple of our specific proposals.

It is a pleasure to agree entirely with the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) about the need to support the role of the United Nations. It is the only international body that can possibly give legitimacy to the peacekeeping operations which various countries are attempting around the world. If we allow the United Nations to fail, we will go down the route that we followed in the 1930s with the League of Nations and, in the end, the world will once again descend into a massive conflict and an era of instability. The United Nations must be supported and Great Britain has a particularly useful role to play in providing our share of that support.

It also gives me great pleasure to agree with the Ministry of Defence—I do not always find myself able to do that, nor does the Select Committee on Defence—about the wisdom of not attempting to earmark specific forces for

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use in the United Nations arena. Were we to do so, we would fall into the trap of trying to anticipate the unanticipatable and provide forces for something that might never occur.

It is important to train specifically the forces that will be used in United Nations peacekeeping in certain areas. I welcome what the Government said of that requirement in their reply on 3 November to the Select Committee's report:

> "It may be necessary to refine some skills (for example, environmental hygiene, first aid and mine awareness) and to teach some new skills (such as mediation, conciliation and integration with non-governmental agencies) which would not normally be required for military operations. In this context, it may be helpful to think of peacekeeping as a separate environment (in the same way as jungle, mountain or Arctic operations) for which trained forces need specific familiarisation training in order to be as effective as possible."

That is a good analysis of the need to train our forces to enable them to play a full part in peacekeeping. Our experience in Northern Ireland makes us the world leader in providing that kind of training and producing the forces that are capable of fulfilling that role.

I also welcome the fact that the Government affirmed in paragraph 39 of their reply that employment in peacekeeping operations should enjoy a high status and stated:

> "We are keen to deploy high quality personnel to such 36appointments".

I am still concerned, however, about the way in which United Nations operations are funded. We are in great muddle about providing the funding for the forces that we use in various peacekeeping roles. Because of our current deployment in Bosnia, for example, the Ministry of Defence is left with a big bill for enforcing the no-fly zone with the Jaguars and the Ark Royal group in the Adriatic. That bill is met from the defence budget.

I understand that the Ministry of Defence reclaims UNPROFOR costs—"additional" ones only, I believe—from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which, in turn, needs extra money from the Treasury to meet that claim. We all pray that, in due course, the United Nations will reimburse us, but that seems highly unlikely to me. The flow of money takes an extremely circuitous route and the Select Committee recommended:

> "Additional financial provision should be made available to the Ministry of Defence specifically for peacekeeping expenses in the next public expenditure survey."

It was not.

The Government reply to the Defence Committee stated:

> "The relevant interdepartmental financial arrangements have existed for some years, and are clear and well-understood by the Departments concerned."

They may be understood by the Departments concerned, but I do not think that the logic behind them was understood by anyone else. The Select Committee on Defence, with, I hope, the support of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, would like that to be reviewed. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), who chairs the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, will join that request.

I cannot believe that it is in the interests of the Foreign Office occasionally to find sums levied through it by the Ministry of Defence. For example, in Cyprus, some of the money that is claimed from the Foreign Office by the Ministry of Defence errs on the side of over-generosity. The cost of the Ferret squadron that was with the United Nations forces in Cyprus was charged through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office at £4·3 million a year. Fond as I am of asking the Ministry of Defence for more money, I find that sum hard to justify in those circumstances. I hope that we shall find a more sensible way to fund our United Nations requirements and to stop the circuitous route by which it is done.

I am conscious of the fact that many of my hon. Friends want to speak, so I shall briefly consider two specific areas where there are United Nations peacekeeping forces at the moment—Cyprus and Bosnia. The Select Committee on Defence visited Cyprus in May and found the Canadian forces on the point of withdrawing, as were the Danes. At that time, Britain was dramatically reducing its contributions and no substitution had been found for the Danes. The thin red line between the Turkish and Greek sectors was looking extraordinarily thin. I am glad to be able to say that an Argentine contingent replaced the Denmark troops. None the less, there is a sad lack of forces between the two communities in Cyprus.

Mr. Lester: Is not one aspect that concerns people on the subject of putting troops into Cyprus the fact that it has taken an inordinately long time to reach any solution? I met Canadian officers who had begun as lieutenants and have now returned as brigadiers because they were there for so long and there is still no further move to settle the problem.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I accept my hon. Friend's point. It has taken a long time to find a solution. I am not sure what the solution is or whether my hon. Friend would care to offer one. I am certain that the conclusion that should not be reached is one in which the Greeks and the Turks begin fighting each other in Cyprus.

When we returned, we expressed our concern that the Ferret scout car squadron, which was with the United Nations forces, was being withdrawn and was not replaced at that time by any other armour. The reconnaissance squadron was withdrawn from the sovereign base area and, at the same time, the armour that was hitherto held by the 34 Squadron of the RAF regiment was being replaced by Landrovers.

At that time, the only armour left to any of the British forces in Cyprus were the Ferret scout cars, which the commander had the presence of mind to transfer from the armoured squadron to the infantry regiment and to train some of the infantry to drive. There was at least some armoured cover in the event of trouble. There has been a proposal, although it has not been dated or allocated numbers, to send some Saxons out to the sovereign base areas.

When we made our criticisms, the Ministry of Defence said:

> "The security situation is much more settled and, put simply, UNFICYP has less to do than in the past".

That statement must have been drafted, if not published, before the Greek elections, because that is certainly not the case. From all the news that I have received from that part of the world, it seems that the new Greek Administration are likely to be much more aggressive in their support for the militants in the Greek Cypriot community than their predecessors. I am seriously concerned that if the United Nations showed any sign of weakness in its determination to keep those communities apart, we might find ourselves again facing serious problems.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is not the role of the United Nations in Cyprus more than a question of keeping the two communities apart? Is not its equally important function to be able to introduce some confidence-building measures? Is not that what the United Nations is doing at the moment—trying to open up Nicosia airport and use the military zones as a point of contact for the two communities? It is not just a question of keeping the two sides apart; we need to get them together.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. I am not trying to deal with the issue in that way. I am concentrating on the military consequences of United Nations participation in the military arena and I am presenting the report of the Defence Select Committee. In the broader sense, we must seek through different negotiations to reach the stage—which we have not yet reached—when United Nations forces become unnecessary. That is a separate and more important facet of the problem in Cyprus.

I am also concerned that the Cyprus problem must not be allowed to become a catalyst, by which the two eastern members of NATO—Turkey and Greece—find themselves in military conflict. That would have an extraordinary wide effect on the whole NATO security position and on the security of the eastern end of the Mediterranean. We must keep sufficient United Nations forces there until diplomatic negotiations succeed, to ensure that there is not a flaring up of military or generally aggressive antagonism between the two Cypriot communities.

There seem to be two clear objectives for the United Nations to follow in Bosnia—to limit the conflict so that it does not spread to Macedonia, Kosovo and through the eastern Mediterranean countries and to find a solution whereby Bosnia can be divided in a way that is equitable, sustainable and acceptable to all three communities in that devastated country.

I visited Bosnia in March and I have never seen such a desolate and inhuman place. All natural human feelings seem to have disappeared. I read a letter from a serving soldier in which he described it as being like the kingdom of Mordor—all sense of justice, humanity or religion seems to have been thrown out the window and all three sides are behaving with unacceptable bestiality towards each other.

In those circumstances, it is extremely hard to see how a solution such as the one that I have outlined as necessary can be found, but I wish Lord Owen and his team every success in their endeavours. Sooner or later, the participants must become war-weary and reach some kind of arrangement so that the conflict can be brought to an end. When that occurs, I have no doubt that the United Nations must move in and enforce the newly agreed areas and divisions so that the position can be stabilised and all three communities learn to live in peace—if not together, at least next to each other.

In the meantime, I believe, as does the Committee, that the humanitarian role that our troops perform magnificently cannot go on indenfinitely. The troops in Vitez are surrounded by forces that are likely to become more directly hostile to the United Nation forces in their midst. There must be a clear time limit within which we shall have to withdraw troops if no solution can be found along the lines that I have suggested. I do not believe that we can keep our humanitarian forces in place in Bosnia for much longer. How long that will be is a matter for Her Majesty's Government, but I should be reluctant to accept a decision to keep our forces there through another winter. However, I would be equally unlikely to wish to remove them now, as they still fulfil a useful humanitarian role this winter.

Those are the two major United Nations commitments in which our troops are involved, and there are few others, which is one reason why I do not especially look forward to the defence review. The defence requirements are clear and unarguable. The requirements are that we look after Northern Ireland, that we look after our interests in Germany and NATO and that we produce troops for the United Nations when we are requested to do so and when it is within our capability and in our interests to comply.

We currently have few other commitments. Our commitments in Cambodia will soon be finished. We pulled out of Sinai a year ago. In their reply to the Defence Select Committee report, the Government announced that they had decided to withdraw our 15 officers from MINURSO, the United Nations mission charged with facilitating a referendum in the western Sahara. I believe that it is right that they have done so. We sent only two Hercules to Somalia. In retrospect, we might have been better advised to play a slightly bigger role. Our advice might have been helpful in obtaining a more precise definition of the targets in that area.

We have no commitments other than those that I have outlined. However, there is no doubt that we shall have others. The way international affairs are going, I am sure that the United Nations will ask us to participate in missions—if nowhere else, certainly in Bosnia once peace is declared. We shall be asked to help enforce the peace agreement. The United Kingdom would be requested to send at least a brigade and probably substantially more. We would find it almost impossible to comply with that request, certainly for any length of time, without seriously disrupting our other defence commitments.

I welcome the Government's statement in paragraph 27 of their reply to our report setting out the terms on which they would be prepared to give further support to the United Nations. They said:

> "Requests to participate will continue to be considered case by case in the light of other commitments, available resources and foreign policy objectives. Specific factors taken into account include the likelihood of the operation achieving its stated aim, whether it can be expected to contribute to a lasting political settlement, and whether it calls for capabilities that British forces are especially well able to provide, and whether the objectives and mandate proposed for the peacekeeping force are clear and precise."

I am glad that I did not draft that sentence. Its grammatical weakness speaks for itself. I hope that the requirements for the peacekeeping force will be clearer and more precise. The Government continued:

> "The cost and likely duration of the mission are also important considerations . . . We can confirm that full consideration is also given to the scarcity of particular assets, and the disproportionate impact of supporting a number of small operations."

Those criteria are well expressed. They are the ones that the Government should follow.

My anxiety is that, even in the case of Bosnia, which is fairly predictable, we could not fulfil the requirement that we are likely to be asked to fulfil without impacting badly on our other commitments. I am also worried that the number of small conflicts to which we are asked to send some peacekeeping forces disrupts badly our ability to train our armed forces for their primary role, which is to defend us in time of war. It is almost impossible to get together a brigade, let alone a division or any larger unit,

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to train artillery, infantry and armour together because of the number of commitments which each of those sectors is called on to fulfil in Northern Ireland and elsewhere.

The proposal of the Defence Select Committee, which I endorse, is that there should be an increment in our armed forces sufficient to match the likely overall requirement of United Nations peacekeeping, just as we have an increment for leave, for training abroad and for the times when a soldier is away from his unit for various duties. We should do exactly the same thing on a larger scale for United Nations commitments so that although we do not earmark soldiers, sailors or airmen for United Nations peacekeeping activities, at least we can be confident that we have the number to do so whenever necessary without disrupting all our other military commitments.

6.3 pm

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): I am not sure on what basis the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) opened the debate, but it is appropriate in any case that I should apologise to him and to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for missing much of his opening speech. I was unavoidably detained.

Although the Minister of State, the right hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), has temporarily left his place, I should like to convey through him to the Foreign Office staff, with whom many of us in the House have regular contact, my personal gratitude for the courtesy and efficiency with which they always deal with requests for information and assistance such as I have had cause to make of late. It is worth making the point to the House and to the public that we employ some first-class people in the Foreign Office in embassies around the world and in the offices in Whitehall. I wished to grab a moment to make that clear.

The main burden of my remarks relate to the peacekeeping operation which the United Nations are mounting with British support and British funds in, over and around Iraq. From my personal experience, we are creating devastation in and around that area and calling it peacekeeping. Some aspects of that peacekeeping greatly worry me and, increasingly, civilised opinion around the world.

I had cause at the weekend to call the office of the Minister of State to make inquiries, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), with whom I spoke several times at the weekend. The House will be glad to know that he is recuperating from his operation and hopes to be with us again in February. None the less, he is taking a close interest in parliamentary affairs from his sickbed.

He and I were both concerned at the weekend by reports that appeared in *The Guardian* on Saturday. On subsequent investigation, it turned out that the reports flowed from an item that was gazetted by the Government in the *London Gazette* on Friday—that the United Kingdom Government had sequestered £186,000 from funds which belong to Iraq and are frozen in this country. The Government have transferred those funds to the United Nations "in support" —I think that that was the phrase—of UN efforts.

Of course, it depends on the purposes for which the funds are to be earmarked whether I and others like me think that the sequestration is a good thing. I should like to probe the Government as part of a discussion of the general issue. It is strange to many of us that the item should have been gazetted on Friday and therefore presumably sent for publication before then, at the very time when the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) was in Iraq accomplishing the splendid achievement of convincing the Iraqi authorities to free the three British prisoners held in Baghdad who were subject to inordinately long and savage sentences for relatively minor transgressions of Iraqi law.

At the very time when we were throwing hats up for the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, the Government decided to purloin—it will be interesting to hear the Minister's description of the transfer if it was not purloining—£186,000 of Iraqi assets. At the same time, Iraqi citizens are suffering massively from the impact of the economic embargo.

The United Nations Security Council resolutions allow the sequestration of Iraqi frozen assets, but it is my understanding that they must be assets flowing from the proceeds of the sale of Iraqi petroleum or petroleum products paid for by or on behalf of the purchaser on or after 6 August 1990.

My information is that almost none of the funds that are being frozen and are available for sequestration by the Government fall into that category. Some of us are therefore suspicious that the funds were not covered by the UN resolution and we should be grateful for some elaboration. That seems to beg some questions.

First, is the money being transferred from London to New York to assist in the humanitarian relief of ordinary Iraqi citizens , who have never voted for Saddam Hussein, have never had a general election or any opportunity to remove his Government from office and yet are suffering enormous deprivation as a result of the United Nations peacekeeping operation or, as I have argued, the UN devastation and continued humiliation of the state of Iraq?

The second question, which flows from the first, is that if money had been transferred for humanitarian purposes, has a deal been done in New York by Her Majesty's Government with the Iraqi Government, whereby the money was transferred to New York in exchange for those British prisoners? If there has been a deal, we should know about it and we should know what other deals may be in the pipeline. It goes without saying that £186,000 is a derisory sum in any case. I am not sure what United Nations efforts can be supported by the transfer of such a small sum; it seems to me that it would not even pay the telephone bills of the United Nations peacekeeping operation in the area.

Mr. Rogers: I thank my hon. Friend for mentioning that important issue. He has prodded my memory. Some time ago, I led the Opposition side on a committee that dealt with compensation for victims of the Iraq war. A couple of days ago, I read that the first category of people who should have received compensation from the fund set up by the United Nations—people who had suffered injury or the loss of a husband or wife—had not yet received any. I hope that before he sits down my hon. Friend will press the Minister on what the Government are doing about compensating those victims. I agree with my hon. Friend about the suffering of the Iraqi people, which he described so cogently.

Mr. Galloway: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I know that the Minister has heard him, is writing down the question and is doubtless formulating an answer.

The question on which I am seeking to press the Government remains: what is the money and has it been transferred for humanitarian purposes in Iraq or, to use the phrase in the *London Gazette,* has it been transferred to "support" United Nations operations of other kinds? For example, has it been transferred to support the military operations that are taking place around the Iraqi borders and in and over Iraqi territory? If that were the case, it was a needlessly provocative act to have embarked upon on the same day that a former British Prime Minister was in Baghdad pleading for the release of British citizens, quite apart from being wrong in principal because the Iraqi people have suffered more than enough already. Has the money been transferred for humanitarian purposes? That is what we want the Government to tell us.

I must press upon the Government the case that the devastation that we call peacekeeping, against and around Iraq, has already gone far enough. The Government ought to seize the opportunity that undoubtedly exists as the international ice, which has packed in and around Iraq during the four and a half years since the Gulf war, begins to crack.

When the hotels in Baghdad are full of Italian, French, German and Spanish business people; when the oil price has tumbled to about $13 a barrel in anticipation of the flow of Iraqi oil products to the markets; when there is a visibly increased and improved tempo in the United Nations, the Security Council and sanctions committee; and when the meetings between Tariq Aziz and Ralph Exus were apparently so successful that we might at last begin to see a light at the end of the tunnel, in the hostilities between the international community and the Iraqi Government, we ought to be seizing the opportunity to bring some relief to the people of Iraq. That would be a real measure of peacekeeping, rather than the devastation that we are calling peacekeeping.

As the Minister of State knows, my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow and I visited Iraq in May. In a couple of weeks, I am going with Ahmed Ben Bella, the former Algerian leader, Mr. Ramsey Clark the former United States Attorney-General, and Members of Parliament from France, Greece and elsewhere on a mission to study further the devastating impact that the war, its aftermath and the economic embargo and blockade are having on the people of Iraq.

It has been said in the House before, but it bears repeating when we are discussing what type of peace is being kept in the Gulf today, that the malnutrition and sickness that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow and I witnessed with our own eyes would have moved a person with stone for a heart, so terrible were the conditions. We visited hospitals where there was no medicine and no spare parts for the medical equipment. There was no electricity for operations and women were having caesarian sections without anaesthetic because none was available. The garbage lay uncollected in the streets—tonnes and tonnes of rubbish mounting up on every corner because the spare parts for vehicles to collect it do not exist and nor do incineration facilities.

The great waterways of the Tigris and Euphrates are unprotected and unprotectable by the authorities. They are teeming with water-borne diseases, which make children, old people and others more and more sick when there is no medicine or equipment with which to treat them. The Minister knows about the tremendous increase in marasmus, kwashiorkor and malnutrition of all kinds, as well as in polio and cholera, which is a result of the poisoned water that Iraqis in urban and rural communities have to use.

Iraq is a developed country which is being de-developed by the United Nations with our participation, using our funds to support the United Nations effort. It is being de-developed by the very Governments and countries who used to be so friendly with Iraq and its Government. The Conservative Members in the House this evening are a fairly civilised bunch, but none has sought to argue that case. For the record, I am a founder member of the campaign against oppression and for democratic rights in Iraq. I was marching, petitioning and picketing for democracy and against dictatorship there long before this and other Governments were converted to opposition to the regime in Baghdad. I stand in second place to no one in my opposition to the bestialities of that regime.

My argument is that the peace that we are keeping is not affecting the regime, which is stronger than it was four years ago. The peace that we are keeping is starving the ordinary people of Iraq, who have no means of defending themselves from our peacekeeping and no means of overthrowing their Government. Indeed, in their emaciated, depressed, hungry and sick state, they are much less able to overthrow their Government than they would be if the embargo that we call "peacekeeping" did not exist.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Is not the point that, if the evil Iraqi regime were to get its hands on more resources, it would use them not to soften the circumstances of its people but further to oppress its people?

Mr. Galloway: It is perfectly possible for us, within the United Nations, to develop an agreement with Iraq whereby assets could be transferred—as that block of £186,000 was unfrozen and transferred to New York on Friday—with specific agreements about the purpose for which that money should be spent. It is perfectly within our power, and I assure hon. Members that the Iraqi Government would grab such an opportunity with both hands. Iraqi assets held in London could be spent with British firms on baby milk compounds, on medical, X-ray and anaesthetic equipment and on foodstuffs. We could supervise the purchase of those products here in Britain from British firms and transfer them for distribution, which could be checked in association with the Iraqi Government, to those who need it on the ground.

The Minister of State knows that the tempo that I have described is increasing and changing. Something is in the wind vis-a-vis the international community and Iraq. Why do we not unfreeze several million pounds, as we unfroze the £186,000 on Friday, and specify that they can be spent with British companies on those vitally needed peaceful products that will keep alive children, sick people and old people who are currently dying for the want of them?

I have detained the House for long enough. As well as answering my specific points about the £186,000, I implore the Minister, in the light of these new conditions and circumstances, to look at the matter again and encourage the United Nations also to do so.

6.21 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I shall not follow the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) by talking in detail about Iraq, but I am sure that the House has listened with great attention to what he said. May I simply say that, if there is a prime responsibility for the terrible suffering in that country, it lies with Saddam Hussein. It is important that we should all recognise that.

It is also important to recognise that if any of the atrocious conditions which the hon. Gentleman so graphically and movingly described are to be laid at the door of the United Nations, it is because we have not yet perfected—far from it—the art of peacekeeping and peacemaking. In the years ahead, we must consider how far the international community can tolerate the existence of a dictator like Saddam Hussein when it must go to war against him. To my mind, our greatest mistake two years ago, when the troops were about to go on the road to Baghdad, was not to have delivered an ultimatum for that man to get out in 48 hours, failing which we would continue.

I shall not pursue that argument at this stage because I wish to talk briefly about another issue that has been discussed by a number of colleagues on both sides of the House—the issue of Bosnia. That, too, brings into sharp focus the essence of peacemaking and peacekeeping.

It is now nearly two years since the international community recognised the existence of Bosnia as a sovereign state. One can argue about whether that was wise or foolish, but the fact remains that we did it. Bosnia was granted a seat at the United Nations and its Government, which, I remind the House, is multi-ethnic, was recognised, and is still recognised. Within Sarajevo today —difficult as it might be to believe—the Speaker of the Bosnian Parliament is Serb, while within the Bosnian Government there are Serbs, Croats and Muslims who still cling to the ideal of a multi-ethnic state. Theirs is the Government which the international community recognises.

It would be outside the terms and remit of this debate to discuss arms embargoes and armed intervention. We have all discussed those issues in the past months and the House is fairly well aware of my views. However, I shall not pursue those arguments today, save to say that we must always ask how morally defensible it is, on the one hand, not go to to the aid of a beleaguered or attacked state and, on the other, not to give it the means to defend itself. We have not resolved that moral dilemma.

Whatever one may think or say about what could have or should have been done—more than two years ago I wanted tough deterrent action to be taken when Dubrovnik, a world heritage site, was bombarded—we cannot escape the fact that, as an international community in the United Nations, as a European Community and as NATO, we have all failed. The sign of our failure—the 2 million-plus refugees in the centre of Europe; 200,000 or thereabouts killed, most of them civilians; the suffering and carnage; and the raping and pillage—beggars belief. That it should have happened less than 50 years after the end of the second world war to end all wars in our continent of Europe is a lasting disgrace and a shame on us all. That is not to impugn the sincerity or motives of those in the British or any other Government who as roundly condemn and deeply deplore all that as I do.

However, today we are discussing peacekeeping and the United Nations. The credibility of the international community is at stake if that sort of thing can happen within our continent of Europe in 1993. We have only to look for a moment at the result of the Russian election today to realise just how unstable our continent is and how many more Bosnias are just waiting to happen. I could be rebuked for omitting to mention some of those places, such as Georgia and Azerbaijan, where they are already happening. If we cannot, within the next few months—the time scale is that short—create a more credible and effective peacekeeping operation within the United Nations, the portents are dire indeed.

In a different context, hon. Members have referred today to Cyprus and the terrible problem that will remain until the Cyprus question is resolved, which could mean Greeks and Turks—two NATO allies—fighting each other. I remind the House that the same could happen in the Balkans if the shameful situation in Bosnia is not contained and we have war in Macedonia or Kosovo. If the Balkans go up in flames and Bulgaria is drawn in, Albania will be drawn in, and it is almost inevitable that Greece and Turkey will be drawn in on opposite sides. The stakes are as high as any that we have had to play for this century. How can we have a more effective United Nations peacekeeping operation?

In asking that question, I make absolutely no criticism of the leadership, devotion or bravery of United Nations troops in general or of British troops in particular. They have acquitted themselves with outstanding distinction. However, they have been carrying out an operation with their hands tied. Although resolutions have been passed in the United Nations that would have allowed them to take deterrent action against Serbia, and against Serbs within Bosnia, those actions have not been taken.

The hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald), who is not in his place at present, very bravely led a small group to Sarajevo. He told the House, as he told me privately, about watching the shells fired from Serbian placements into Sarajevo being counted by United Nations monitors, but nothing being done about them. We all know about the aid convoys that have been held up or turned back.

Only the other day a grotesque story was brought to my attention. The South African Muslim community had paid for a 130-bed mobile hospital, which currently is in dock just outside Bosnia. Despite all the forms that have been filled in and all the money that has been paid to provide private transport and so on, for four or five months it has not been allowed through to where it is needed. Only 10 days ago I sent a fax about that to Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and many others have also interceded, but still the hospital is not in Mostar, where it should be.

That sort of incident is an indictment of the effectiveness of the peacekeeping operation and can only be seen as such. The whole credibility of the United Nations is at stake. If we do not take action to ensure that the aid gets through, and if we do not have a massive airlift into Sarajevo this winter, as my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) said, hundreds of thousands of people could die from starvation and privation. It looks as though the winter will be very severe in a country where it is perfectly normal for temperatures to be below zero for week after week.

I say to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister that it is desperately important that there is a more effective

United Nations peacemaking and peacekeeping operation. Because the stakes are so high and because the things that could go wrong are legion, I suggest that the permanent members of the Security Council, of whom we are one, take the lead. This is far too important a subject merely to be on the agenda, even if it is permanently on the agenda. We need a summit meeting of the five leaders—or certainly four; I accept that China is in a different category.

The Presidents of the United States, France and Russia and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom need to sit down together and talk about peacekeeping and peacemaking within the United Nations context. They are all both contributors and beneficiaries, actual and potential.

Those who say to me that Bosnia is not a British or a European interest are talking dangerous nonsense. Of course it is a British and a European interest that peace should be brought to our continent and that the conflagration should not spread and become totally out of control. Define anything that is more in our interests and I will listen with amazement.

During this period of good will, when parliaments will not be sitting, there is an opportunity—the beginning of a new year—for the big four to get together and to try to hammer out some guidelines for peace and to work out how they can be implemented. There is an opportunity to give a pledge on the standby arrangement for troops—referred to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) when he opened the debate so splendidly—that can be made available. It is a positive and realistic suggestion that I hope will be heeded because it is in the interests of all that it should be.

The Chairman of the Defence Select Committee is not in his place, but I point out that the Government must pause and think very carefully about our defence expenditure. France has already done that. We have a good record, of which we have every right to be proud, of defending the interests of this country. The Government have no need to feel ashamed. However, we have cut too near the bone, and if we cut into the bone we will inhibit the effectiveness of the very matter that is the subject of our debate today—an effective international peacekeeping and peacemaking operation upon which, without wishing to sound over-dramatic, the very future of this planet depends.

6.36 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) spoke with feeling. I do not want to join those who make self-fulfilling prophecies, because the test of a prophet is whether his prophecy is fulfilled. However, the hon. Gentleman has underlined some important points and in particular has emphasised the necessity for clear thinking at this time. I wonder whether within two months the United Nations will have a programme in hand to guide us in future. Like the hon. Gentleman, I think that in that programme a clear objective is required on the role of peacekeeping and, above all at this time, the role of peacemaking and intervention.

I must tell the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) that I am not convinced that his illustration of Northern Ireland was good guidance on how the United Nations could intervene. It is not a matter of occasional claims of lapses in human rights or alleged human rights; it is a pattern of procedure where there are clear abuses of human rights. I was interested recently to discover that in the United States, the Irish green lobby said that the Brits were imprisoning Irish men in hell holes of concentration camps —yet when John Joe O'Docherty was extradited to the United Kingdom to serve his sentence and was asked by an American reporter what the prisons in Northern Ireland were like compared with those in the United States, he said that they were better because we care for our prisoners.

Mr. Rogers: I certainly did not use Northern Ireland as an example of when or how the United Nations should intervene. The right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) said that the convention on human rights should be adopted and could be a plan for the United Nations to act on. I said that some people might want to invoke the convention as an argument for United Nations inteference in the affairs of Northern Ireland.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I am glad that I gave the hon. Gentleman the opportunity to clarify the position. However, the record will show that the impression given was somewhat different. I understand his problem with reading financial statements and accounts. I have long since discovered that accountants are in a cabal of mysticism, concealing rather than revealing. We must probe to get answers at that level.

We are all in debt to the right hon. Member for Guildford because of the way in which he guided our thinking with his lucid introduction of the Select Committee's report. I echo his tribute to the work of Britain's permament representatives in New York, including Sir David Hannay and his staff. I was a member of a recent parliamentary delegation to the United Nations that praised Jan Eliason. However, thereafter he resigned. That was a loss to the United Nations and I regret whatever was the cause of that happening. All members of our cross-party delegation were most impressed by the calibre of Mr. Eliason.

Global security has become a problem. In that context, Britain is a medium-sized power with a developed sense of global responsibility. I would not want us to opt out of that responsibility but I believe that we must meet it realistically. The Government say that the United Kingdom recognises that the requirement for varied peacekeeping and intervention forces is likely to grow, yet our forces are being reduced under "Options for Change" and the cost of equipment is rising.

I join the Chairman of the Defence Select Committee in pleading, as others have today, for a re-examination of United Kingdom forces. They are able to do the job required, whereas those of other countries cannot—particularly those relying on conscripted personnel with little experience of serving overseas or of facing danger. Most British service personnel have served abroad and confronted danger, and they expect to do so again.

The hon. Member for Rhondda, I believe, referred to Mogadishu. I share his views, because the reaction of British troops and of the population of Northern Ireland when they saw the despicable treatment of two of our soldiers at Casement park contrasts starkly with the reaction of the American military and American people when they saw such events in Mogadishu. That is why I believe that our forces are the best equipped in the world to deal with that situation. They have 20 years' service there. Despite the pressures on them, the number of allegations against them that merit being pursued can be counted on the 20 digits that the average man has.

Mr. Rogers: If I may correct the record, the reference to pictures of American corpses serving to bring home to the American people the situation in Somalia was made by the right hon. Member for Guildford.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I am grateful. I thought that I had identified the wrong speaker.

The scope for non-military peacekeeping and intervention is considerable. In that context, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Overseas Development Administration need urgently to re-examine their organisation, numbers and priorities. I doubt, however, that non-governmental organisations would be doing a service to the United Nations if they were to take money earmarked for the UN budget. Certainly the UN would not want that to happen.

We may pray that British forces will not be asked soon to take part in any large-scale amphibious peacekeeping or peacemaking operations, because we are still awaiting the new landing platform helicopter, which is not due for delivery until 1998. For the next five years, British amphibious capability will be threadbare—with potentially serious implications for United Kingdom peacekeeping and intervention forces.

As to funding, United Nations member countries seem ready to will the end but not the means. More and more responsibility is placed on countries such as the United Kingdom that have played their part. It is regrettable that while the United States benefits from the seat of the UN being in New York, it has not paid its way. I understand that the UN could be bankrupt by the end of December as it awaits funds from Washington delayed by procedural problems. Member countries must face reality and pay their dues up front instead of being in arrears. I am not speaking specifically of CIS countries, which have many problems—but they are among the laggards, in common with Japan. There is a great need for common agreement on how UN operations will be funded.

Reference was made to intelligencef gathering. Another major problem is operation and control. There is some evidence that UN headquarters in New York are locked at weekends. Is there a system for controlling operations then? We believe in democratic control of our forces. We acknowledge that they must act according to what is happening on the ground, but even then there should always be feedback to political control. In the absence of UN control, is NATO command and control used? Many countries are unhappy about that organisation's possible involvement. There is a problem with command and control, and with the way in which international contingents communicate.

If we are to be involved in peacekeeping and intervention, we must maintain a mix and balance of forces. The United Nations must properly finance its operations, and its interventions must have a clear objective and a set of operating principles. Finally, there must be an effective command, control and communcations system. If we are to participate, we should stress that other nations must be prepared not only to make decisions that involve us but to put their money and forces where their mouths are.

6.47 pm

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): We owe a great debt of gratitude to my right hon. Friend the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee and to my hon. Friend the Chairman of the Defence Select Committee for their contributions to this debate and for the way in which, over the past two or three years, they have led their Committees with such skill and dedication.

This country has a proud record of working in support of the United Nations—Korea in the 1950s, Cyprus in the 1960s and 1970s, almost anywhere in Africa in the 1980s and 1990s, and Kuwait and Bosnia in the 1990. No other country has a record to equal our own.

The remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) were most disturbing, because he clearly pointed to the problems that the United Nations will face in the months and years ahead, in part due to the changing attitude of the United States towards its involvement in peacekeeping world wide. That is the main problem that we have to face. While we cannot say it was an easy ride from 1945 until 1988, it was relatively so. During that period, the superpowers were in a position to keep control of events. Otherwise, a conflagration would have followed, as surely as night follows day.

We now have the collapse of one superpower, and the other seemingly prepared to go back on its natuaraal role and not become too involved. That is due to a sad situation in Somalia, as a result of which the United States has now said it will withdraw from Somalia on 31 March, no matter what happens.

The future is not bright. We shall have to operate again, hopefully in support of the UN. However, does the UN have the will to perform the duties and functions which can only be performed by the UN? If not, we are in desperate trouble. One need look no further than the borders of the old Sovier Union, and to places such as Azerbaijan, Georgia and Kazakhstan. We can see what might happen in the future if we are not careful and if we are not prepared to intervene as and when it is necessary.

In that context, I ask my right hon. Friend the Minister of State whether those newly emerging states are seen by the UN to be truly independenet. Are they also seen by the Foreign Office to be truly independenet or are they seen to be within the sphere of influence of the old Sovier Union? It seems to me that, while we may say that they are independent states and while we may stand up for them in the UN, what is happening on the ground tells a quite different story.

It is quite right that, because we are talking mainly about Europe, we should discuss Bosnia at length. Most hon. Members have mentioned Bosnia, which has been the focal point of the debate. I will mention the situation in Azerbaijan. There are 7 million Azerbaijanis—1 million of those poor, unfortunate people are now refugees. They are living in squalor in tented camps and in conditions which, I would guess, are at least as bad as those which pertain in Bosnia and throughout other parts of former Yugoslavia.

What do we, or the British public, know of the situation in Azerbaijan? We know little because the media do not focus on events in Azerbaijan. They focus on Bosnia, so the public do not know about Azerbaijan. Twenty per cent. of the territory of Azerbaijan is occupied by Armenia. The United Kingdom is one of the few countries to have made strong representations in the United Nations about that intolerable situation. I understand that the United Nations has passed the conduct of affairs to the conference on security and co-operation in Europe, and the CSCE has visited the area.

There is a United Nations representative in Baku. The poor chap is virtually alone and has minimal back-up. The

CSCE goes to Nagorno-Karabakh about once a quarter with a committee, and it then reports to the United Nations that the situation is intolerable. We say that we respect the territory and the rights of the Azerbaijani people to their own territory and that we stand by that, but nothing happens. Those 1 million people will remain in tents in the refugee camps in conditions at least as bad as, if not many times worse than, in Bosnia.

What is happening is the first turn of the screw. The Russians have "switched on" the Armenians during the past few months in pursuit of their own imperial interests. I do not want to labour the point, but Liberal Democrats are now in a strong position in Russia, and they do not in any way conform with the Liberal Democrats in this House. However, they are now a potent force and their declared aim is to re-establish the Russian empire by hook or by crook. They will be in total concert with the military—and Yeltsin owes the military—so where do we go from here?

What are we prepared to do if the Russians make up their minds to go back into Azerbaijan and insist on stationing Russian forces there again, as they are quite likely to do? Those are not just my words, and that is not just what I personally have seen in Azerbaijan. An article in *The Economist* last week was full of pessimism, making it quite clear that the Russian intention is to draw the border states back into the fold. However, that will not happen without active intervention from other parties.

If there is a risk of a major flare-up, surely it is in that possible conflict area on the borders of Russia, Turkey and Iran. Who knows who could be drawn into that situation? Does the United Nations have the will to intervene there in a way in it is not prepared to intervene elsewhere? If not, do the United States, Britain and France have the will to resume their old role and to act—hopefully under the United Nations umbrella—as and when necessary to keep the peace in the world? It is in our interest and in the interest of many other western countries to do just that.

I will make two final points. First, I am delighted that stand-by forces have been mentioned. However, if we are to have them, the composition and the equipment of those forces must be absolutely right. We still do not have the "mix and match" right within our armed forces for the type of operations in which we are likely to be involved. Naturally, as a Member of Parliament representing a west country constituency, I have to say that it is high time that the EH101 and Apache helicopters were ordered to support those troops.

Secondly, the worst thing that we can do within the UN is to look around and take troops from any country, whatever their quality. My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) will know only too well from his visits to Bosnia the horrifying stories about the indiscipline and the general state of disarray of some of those contingents. If the UN is to play a part in the world in the future—it will be a tough role to play—for goodness' sake let us make sure that only forces which are disciplined and capable and under a good command structure can take part in operations mounted on behalf of the UN and, most particularly, where our own troops are to be engaged.

6.58 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I thought that the hon. Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) was a little unkind to suggest that there was any similarity between the Liberal Democrats of this country and the Russian Liberal Democrats. I have not seen the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) ordering his troops into tanks and rolling those tanks towards London. I suspect that we will not see that happening, either from Russia or from the west country.

I will share the time available to me with my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes). I am grateful for a few minutes to speak, because I had the opportunity to visit the UN last week as a member of a small delegation from the Council of Europe. We met Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the President of the General Assembly, officials and ambassadors.

I came away with three distinct feelings. I was optimistic to know that the UN played such a central role in the world and that its position was assured in that respect. I was encouraged by the consensual feeling and general acceptance of the fact that the UN needed to be changed and that there was a willingness to achieve change so that it could deal with the greater challenges after the cold war. However, I was also pessimistic, because that requires resources and the complaint was that resources were simply inadequate.

There has been much talk here, as there was in New York, about the role of regional groupings. I suppose that we are fortunate in Europe to have a super-abundance of regional organisations like the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, NATO, the Western European Union, the Council of Europe, the European Union and the European Free Trade Association. However, there is a feeling that some of the activities of the European regional organisations are overlapping and duplicating the activities of the United Nations, and vice versa.

Given that there are finite resources, it is essential to achieve as much agreement as possible between the various organisations in respect of their functions, as that will save money on behalf of all the organisations. I understand that there is to be a Commissioner for Human Rights at the United Nations. The Council of Europe, with its responsibility for the Court of Human Rights, has great experience, expertise and knowledge of that subject. It would make sense to use the Council of Europe in terms of human rights in Europe.

There may not be a great demand for such expertise in western Europe at the moment—although I can think of one case, in which I do not want to become involved now, in respect of which human rights are undoubtedly being infringed. However, there is a great demand in eastern Europe for the services of those who can bring a greater appreciation of human rights. The Council of Europe could certainly do that.

The Council of Europe also has expertise in building democratic security. It can help to build democratic and political institutions in eastern Europe. It has a great deal of knowledge and it makes a great deal of sense that the United Nations should use that knowledge. It should not be duplicated.

I had an interesting discussion with the organiser of the United Nation's electoral assistance unit. The United Nations is facing a much greater demand for electoral assistance as countries move from totalitarianism to the democratic uplands. They need advice and assistance. Certain parts of eastern Europe require advice and assistance on how to set up political parties. That is not

[Mr. Tony Banks]

something in which the United Nations can become involved, but national Parliaments and regional organisations can certainly become involved in it.

The need for greater co-ordination in the observance of elections clearly emerged from our discussions. The elections in Russia were almost a farce. It seemed that the voters in Russia would find their way to the ballot box impeded by large numbers of observers from a range of international organisations, national Parliaments and Churches.

It is essential that there should be co-ordination. People should know why they are going to observe elections and their efforts should be co-ordinated by umbrella organisations. We can obviously provide such assistance through regional organisations such as the CSCE and the Council of Europe. If I had turned up to cast my vote in Moscow and had found the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) blocking my way and acting as an undertaker, that would have caused me wry amusement. I am jolly glad that it was exceedingly cold for him.

With regard to peacekeeping, clearly the United Nations has too many problems to deal with at the moment. It is involved in 23 situations. Many hon. Members have said that we hear a lot about Bosnia, Haiti and Somalia because of media attention. However, there are many areas about which we are receiving no information. Thousands of people are being killed in Angola. The whole of the south, including large parts of Africa, is largely being ignored in this post-cold war situation. That must be regretted.

Media attention also places pressure on the United Nations to solve problems immediately. That cannot be done, as we have seen in Cyprus, where United Nations peacekeeping forces have been located for some 26 or 28 years.

All the peacekeeping operations we become involved in —no matter how many—will cost money. It is obscene that the world was prepared to spend $1 billion a day during the cold war in preparation for war, but is not prepared to spend a tiny fraction of that amount now to try to clear up the mess caused by the cold war and to provide the United Nations with the resources to do just that.

In his "Agenda for Peace", the Secretary-General suggested that there should be rapid response forces which he described as specific units. Such units are provided for under article 43 of chapter VII of the charter. As we have included powers for such provision in the United Nations, and as only now can the United Nations fulfil its proper functions as they were designed in respect of the Security Council, it seems rather short sighted for the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, endorsed by the Government, to say that it is not prepared to support the Secretary-General's call for specific units.

Such units would give the United Nations the ability to respond rapidly to situations before they develop into the kind of tragedy that we have seen in Bosnia. It is short-sighted of the Government and the Foreign Affairs Committee to have dismissed the idea—if not out of hand —and not to have gone along with it. I hope that there will be an opportunity for second thoughts. I believe that that is the way to make the United Nations peacekeeping and peace enforcing machinery far more effective. I will finish now and give my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South some extra time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) gives time to no one. I call Mr. Gapes.

7.6 pm

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) for allowing me to make an edited version of my speech, and I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me.

Reference has been made to the change from the optimistic prognosis of a few years ago to the current gloomy view about the UN and the problems that it faces today. I am by nature an optimist, but I have become very pessimistic over recent weeks about the future of the UN and the great demands that it faces.

The Secretary-General's report, "Agenda for Peace", refers to those demands and states:

> "nations and peoples increasingly are looking to the United Nations for assistance for keeping the peace—and holding it responsible when this cannot be so".

However, it is not fair to hold the UN, as an institution, responsible. The nation states refuse to give the financial, organisational, political and military means to the UN to enable it to do the job. It is not the UN's fault if it cannot do the job. It is not being allowed to do that job.

I spoke at a school in my constituency this morning. A young Muslim boy told me that we were practising double standards in Bosnia. He said that we were quite happy to intervene in Kuwait, but we were not prepared to do that in Bosnia. I believe that he is wrong. I argued forcefully that the two situations are very different. However, it is clear that there is a substantial body of opinion, both outside and inside this country, that holds that boy's view very strongly.

If there is a peace agreement in Bosnia—we know that the prospects for that are not good—and if the meeting on 22 December leads to a breakthrough, 50,000 troops will be required to enforce that agreement. From my conversations last week with leading people in the United States Congress and leading Democratic Senators, I am extremely doubtful whether the American Congress will agree to give President Clinton the 25,000 troops necessary for a United States contribution, which I was told a month ago in NATO, would be required in respect of the 50,000 troops.

The United States, Britain, France and perhaps the Benelux countries will provide those troops. If we do not receive the 25,000 American troops, there will be no way that European Union countries alone will ever find the necessary number. Even if we have a peace agreement, national Governments, for national reasons, will not provide the forces to make such an agreement stick.

The Foreign Affairs Committee's report contains 70 recommendations. Regrettably, I do not have time to mention even seven of them. The Foreign Office's response is woefully inadequate. It does not even refer to several recommendations. It is time that the House had a proper response from the Government. When we produce detailed reports which entail months of work and lots of travel and cost the House and the British taxpayer thousands of pounds, the Government peremptorily dismiss or cursorily answer the points that are made. We need far better than that.

It is time that all of us recognised the importance of the international dimension in our affairs. It is not adequate to have a three-hour debate on an issue of such importance. We need a much longer debate so that we can examine the proposals in detail and make an informed decision.

7.10 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): The fact that we found it necessary to lay the supplementary estimates and, indeed, the important speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) emphasise the great importance that we all now attach to peacekeeping within the United Nations. Indeed, the number of troops deployed and the increase in costs that we have seen are powerful evidence of the expansion in peacekeeping. I shall provide a few figures to demonstrate that point.

In 1991, there were 10,000 troops deployed in peacekeeping; in 1992, the figure increased to 44,000 and at present the number stands at 75,000. As for costs, which are another measure of the increase, in 1991, they were $482 million, in 1992, they were $1·5 billion, and in 1993, they were an estimated $3 billion. The United Kingdom now has 2,800 troops deployed in peacekeeping operations. As the House will know, our contribution to United Nations peacekeeping, exclusive of our own troop costs, is more than 6 per cent. of the assessed cost. In 1992, our assessed contribution to United Nations peacekeeping costs was $93·5 million. Those are extremely substantial sums.

The Committee's report, which has been spoken to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford, is a very important contribution to the debate. Notwithstanding the changes that have undoubtedly taken place during drafting, many of the report's conclusions remain highly relevant and correct. I share, incidentally, the feeling of my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford that there is increasing unwillingness within the United States, for the reasons that he mentioned, to become involved in peacekeeping operations, and that causes me at least very grave concern.

There are a number of comments and conclusions within the report with which I strongly agree. To start with, I do not think that one should or can expect the United Nations to act wherever there is a crisis. Most certainly, there have to be criteria. I agree with the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) on the need for criteria, and that was spelt out by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State when he spoke to the United Nations General Assembly in September.

Indeed, there is also a need for us to determine our own criteria when trying to determine in which operations we wish to become involved. That will certainly take account of national interest and whether we have the right mix of forces for any particular task, and how the particular peacekeeping ranks in priority terms with other national defence commitments to be judged at the time.

Mr. Rogers: The right hon. and learned Gentleman raises a very important point if he is saying that Her Majesty's Government will pick and choose where they will participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations. In their reply to the report, the Government said:

"a United Nations peacekeeping operation should not be mandated unless there is a reasonable chance of success."

It is a rather crude way of putting it, but is the right hon. and learned Gentleman saying that we should opt for easy operations and leave messy ones to others?

Mr. Hogg: I did not say that; nor does it stand up to analysis. We have about 2,400 troops in Bosnia. Although that is not a peacekeeping operation in the conventional sense, it is an extremely difficult one. Inevitably, one must pick and choose between operations. About 18 operations are being conducted by United Nations peacekeeping forces at the moment, and we are a party to three or four of them. I do not think that it would be right to participate substantially in more than that number. One has to allocate one's own priorities.

Another point that one needs to make is that a number of other organisations can be involved in peacekeeping. There was a very interesting debate in Rome, in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, about the circumstances in which the Commonwealth of Independent States, in particular Russian forces, can operate in the CIS under the authority and with the consent of the CSCE.

I agree strongly with the points that were made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) and by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford about the need for improved control and command mechanisms. That point was made by the hon. Member for Belfast, South, as well. I agree, too, with the overall conclusion that it would be an error to allocate or to earmark forces on a permanent standby basis to the United Nations. That point received endorsement from my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), the Chairman of the Select Committee.

We should also keep well in mind the importance, where appropriate, of trying to intervene early in developing crises by pre-emptive measures. That is the importance, perhaps, of the missions that have been sent by the CSCE to various countries within the former Soviet Union. It is also the importance of, for example, the appointment of the CSCE high commissioner on minorities or, to take the point of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), the United Nations Commissioner on Human Rights. By pre-emptive action of various kinds it is possible to reduce the risk of conflict.

Mr. Tony Banks: It is very difficult, is it not, to respond rapidly when the Secretary-General has to ask Security Council countries or other countries to provide troops? The whole point of having units on standby and allocated was that the Secretary-General would not have to do that and that the troops could move in very quickly.

Mr. Hogg: That is right up to a point, but the problem that was pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster is that it is jolly difficult to know exactly the nature of the requirement on the ground that one will encounter in a rapid deployment. One could have an awful lot of people hanging around doing awfully little and with skills which are not wholly appropriate if one opted for that earmarking or standby approach. I would not commend it, and it would involve substantial control and command arrangements which we simply have not yet come to terms with.

I now refer to some specific points. My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford expressed grave concern —I understand why—about why our expert was not elected to the advisory committee for administration and budgetary questions. That was a disappointment to us. It is not, however, in any sense fatal to our capacity to influence decisions in that respect, not least because that committee

[Mr. Hogg]

advises the fifth committee. As my right hon. Friend knows, we have our people on the fifth committee to which the advisory committee is but an advisory committee.

The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) did not like our presentation of the accounts—he was supported by the hon. Member for Belfast, South. He has a point, and I will see whether we can do something to improve the accounts. The hon. Member for Rhondda went on to say that the United Nations should intervene more readily in circumstances where national governments are not currently meeting a need in the country involved. That is an important point.

To some extent, we have already been pushing the frontiers forward in, for example, north Iraq and south Iraq. However, one must stand back and say that the actions of the United Nations will always represent and reflect to some degree an assessment of strategic interest on the part of countries in the Security Council. There must be genuine interests at stake which engage their concern sufficiently to enable one to rally a consensus around an interventionist policy. Many countries have grave doubts of principle—most notably China and India—about the intervention by the United Nations in the internal affairs of other countries.

Mr. Rogers: I do not understand what the right hon. and learned Gentleman means. Is he saying that, unless there is a specific national interest, Britain will not contribute to peacekeeping activities?

Mr. Hogg: I did not say that. Hon. Members must realise that the Security Council of the United Nations is in a sense an aggregate of independent states which will certainly determine where their national interests lie when deciding how they will vote in the Security Council. That is inevitable and right.

There are many countries where there are grave issues and discords, and serious civil wars, which would justify intervention, if we judged them exclusively on moral terms. However, we will not intervene and there is no pressure to do so. One only has to say "Tadjikistan" to oneself to realise the force of what I am saying. The majority of countries on the Security Council will not wish to deploy troops in Tadjikistan, notwithstanding the fact that the crisis area is a grave one.

The hon. Member for Rhondda—he was supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster—said that there is no real alternative to the United Nations and it is an error to look at alternative institutions. I go a long way with him, but not quite all the way because there are regional organisations that have an important role to play. We should not underestimate that role. The most important organisation in this context is the CSCE in the field of pre-emptive action—I mentioned the appointment of the CSCE High Commissioner of Minorities—and in missions designed to ascertain facts or promote settlements, for example, in Nagorno Karabakh, the Baltic states or Moldova.

Earlier, I referred to the Rome conference. There may be a possibility that the CSCE will be an instrument for approving peacekeeping operations by CIS forces in CIS countries. That matter must still be examined.

I shall answer the question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West about the status of all CIS countries. Those countries are all sovereign independent states and we regard them as such. We do not in any sense regard them as part of Russia or as countries over which Russia has some right of intervention. They are absolutely independent states.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) spoke about Bosnia—and he was right to do so. I agree that the position in Bosnia is likely to get much worse this winter unless there is an early peace agreement. That emphasises the importance of the Geneva talks, the need for Serbs to make greater concessions on land and, above all—having regard to my rather bleak assessment of probabilities—the need to keep humanitarian routes open.

My hon. Friend raised a specific point about war crimes. He said that the republics in the former Yugoslavia should use their own law to try people for war crimes. I agree with that, but one does not need to invoke the Geneva convention; most people can be tried under the domestic legislation of the individual republic.

My hon. Friend has written to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State with a proposal that we should start a mission. I have noted what my hon. Friend said—it is an interesting idea. We will certainly look at the suggestion, but I can give no commitments at this stage.

I agree with the proposition of the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) that the end of the cold war has made intervention easier and I understand the reasons that caused him to say that. I also agree with his broad proposition that we should stick to existing frontiers, notwithstanding the fact that many of them have been drawn in a fairly arbitrary and brutal manner. If we do not stick with those frontiers, what else do we have? To be honest, the principle of self-determination would lead to the fragmentation of the former Soviet Union and much of central and eastern Europe.

We must stick to the frontiers, subject to two provisos. First, where there is a genuine agreement of the respective parties to change the frontiers, so be it. It is not for us to stand in the way of genuine agreement. Secondly, I want to pick up one word used by the hon. Gentleman, because I do not know whether he meant it in the sense that it is usually meant. He said that we should "defend" existing frontiers. I start from the proposition that we should stick with existing frontiers, but I do not believe that the international community should go to fight on every occasion.

For example, one only has to consider the case of Azerbaijan and Armenia, which was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West, to see the truth of this. How many hon. Members think that the international community should go to war with Armenia? Yet so far as we can judge, Armenia has invaded Azerbaijan and expanded the Lutchin corridor substantially. I have that major reservation, although I agree with the hon. Gentleman's broad proposition.

The hon. Member for Western Isles and two of his colleagues came to see me about Sarajevo airport. I wish to ensure that we have the maximum use of Sarajevo airport, for all the reasons given by the hon. Gentleman. Following that meeting, I made an inquiry and an RAF officer went to Sarajevo to make a further inspection. We believe that all that can be done is being done to increase the use of the airport. A lot of work is being done on the runway and that is being expedited, but it is a small, ill-equipped airport and the problem is one of handling. To tell the truth, it is much better to rely on road transport when it can be managed, although we will try to maximise the use of Sarajevo airport. I disagree with the proposition that we are not doing our best now.

My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster made an important speech. I am grateful for his support and I agree with much of what he said. He said that we should not earmark forces for peacekeeping, we need to change the training of forces and we should give a high status to peacekeeping operations.

I felt that the hon. Member was a bit unfair about Cyprus. It is true that we have been running down our forces in Cyprus—we still have a considerable number there; I think the number is 475 troops—but the running down reflected our assessment of diminishing risk. The operation has been continuing for a long time and we must accept that other countries have a burden to carry in this matter and it is not right to look to a continuous United Kingdom presence. To be honest, I do not feel embarrassed about the matter.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) made a number of points. I thank him for his kind words about the Foreign Office staff. They are much appreciated and will be passed on to the staff, even though they come from the hon. Gentleman.

A more important point relates to assets and prisons. Absolutely no deals were made, none whatever. That is not something that we would want to do and we did not do it. On the sequestration of assets, the position is that the United Nations Security Council resolution 778 permits member states to sequestrate Iraqi frozen assets related to proceeds of sale of Iraqi petroleum or petroleum products, paid for by or on behalf of a purchaser on or after 6 August 1990. The Treasury considers that approximately £186,000 of Central Bank of Iraq frozen assets held by the Bank of England related to such proceeds of sale, and the Bank considered, too, that there were no third-party claims against them.

Notice has been given of our intention to transfer—not yet done—to the escrow account, which will be used for a variety of purposes. Thirty per cent. goes to the compensation commission and the remainder goes to a variety of purposes, some humanitarian—some probably do not fall strictly under that heading—including food, medicines, the United Nations Special Commission, United Nations guards for convoys and the like. The Iraqi interest section now in the United Kingdom is aware of that intention and has been asked to make its comments.

Mention was made of the plight of Iraqis—perfectly true, their plight is awful. It is also perfectly true that, under Security Council resolutions 706 and 712, Saddam Hussein has a capacity to solve that problem. Those resolutions enable him to sell oil to a very substantial value, the proceeds of which will go to a variety of purposes, including the relief of humanitarian suffering in his own country. He has chosen not to do that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) was entirely right when he said that it is Saddam Hussein who must take the responsibility for what is happening.

Mr. Galloway *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: I am afraid that I shall not give way, as I have only one more minute. I apologise.

I shall now comment on what my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South said about Bosnia. His position is well known and he has held to it consistently. he will forgive me if I say that, broadly speaking, I disagree with him. I particularly disagree when he says that we are all to blame and that it is a disgrace to which we all are party. It is not. It is a disgrace to which the active warring parties are party, not the rest of us. What is more, if one dilutes that proposition, one relieves the warring parties of responsibility. I can see that Mr. Deputy Speaker is about to call me to a stop, so I must finish.

The debate was concluded, and the Question necessary to dispose of the proceedings was deferred, pursuant to paragraph (4) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of estimates).

Class IV, Vote 2

Aerospace Support

[Relevant documents: The Third Report from the Trade and Industry Committee of Session 1992-93 on the British Aerospace Industry (House of Commons Paper No. 563) and the Fourth Special Report from the Committee of Session 1992-93, containing the Government's Observations thereon (House of Commons Paper No. 945.)]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a supplementary sum not exceeding £1,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to complete or defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1994 for expenditure by the Department of Trade and Industry on regional development grants, exchange risk and other losses, selective assistance to individual industries and firms, UK contributions arising from its commitments under the International Natural Rubber Agreement, a strategic mineral stockpile, support for the aerospace and shipbuilding industries, assistance to redundant steel and coal workers, for expenditure related to petroleum licensing and royalty, for other payments and for loans to trading funds.

7.32 pm

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): It is pleasing to be able to debate the report on aerospace, the third report of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. I shall put on the record our thanks to our staff, the Clerk, Mr. Gerhold, and his staff, who worked so hard in producing the report, and to our two advisers, Keith Hayward, professor of international relations at Staffordshire university, and Professor Garel Rhys, head of economics at Cardiff business school at the university of Wales. I also thank the Minister for sending me a letter at 6 o'clock this evening in response to some of the questions—I am sure that he is listening—that arose from the Government's reply. I do not think that the Minister takes us further forward on the points that we raised, but if my interpretation is wrong, I have no doubt that he will correct me when he replies later this evening, if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The aerospace industry is that rarity in the United Kingdom—a high technology industry with added value in which the United Kingdom is one of the world leaders and has a large trade surplus. We have the third largest aerospace industry in the western world. We have one of only three prime manufacturers of civil aero-engines, an airframe company, which has the fifth largest aerospace turnover, and a strong aerospace equipment sector. I am sure that hon. Members will not need reminding of the importance of the British aerospace industry: a turnover of some £10 billion-plus; a consistently positive trade balance, amounting to £2·5 billion in 1992; 9 per cent. of all the United Kingdom's exports of manufactures; and employment and training of a highly skilled work force. Unfortunately, all that has diminished. There were roughly 250,000 employees in the early 1980s, decreasing to about 150,00 in 1992. There has also been a lot of technology spin-off to other sectors of our industry.

Given the strength of the industry, why was the Select Committee somewhat worried about it? Some argued that the industrial problems which have occurred, including the difficulties encountered by British Aerospace, are the result of a severe cyclical downturn in civil aerospace and a longer-term decline in defence sales, which are affecting all our overseas competitors.

The real problem is structural. It is to do with the very long time scales in the aerospace industry for developing new products and receiving a return on investment. That is the most distinctive feature of the industry, which underlies the whole of the Select Committee's report. British Aerospace told us that the period from designing an aircraft to recovering the investment can be as long as 20 years, and that the design depends on technology development before that. Time scales are even longer for aero-engines. Dowty gave us an example of propellers based on technology that had taken some 25 years to develop. Dowty also said that it was making supplies for the Spitfire, but that is probably the exception, not the rule.

Those long time scales mean that the United Kingdom industry's current position now is the result of investment in the past 20 years or so and does not necessarily mean that all will continue to be well. The industry's future depends on the investment and research in technology acquisition being made now.

There is growing evidence that the United Kingdom industry is losing ground. Between 1980 and 1991, growth in United Kingdom industry turnover—using constant prices—was only 1·5 per cent., compared with 3·3 per cent. in the United States, 4 per cent. in France, 8 per cent. in Germany and 8·5 per cent. in Japan. In 1991, unfortunately, we were overtaken by France. The industry is worried that its present research and technology acquisition may be insufficient to keep up with its competitors, which receive greater Government assistance.

That was the reason for the Committee's inquiry—to examine the state of the industry and to see whether the worries about its future were justified. We concentrated on civil aerospace, but we are well aware that the civil and defence sectors are, to a large extent, interdependent. The Government replied to our report but, unfortunately, failed to answer many of the main questions raised.

Another distinct feature of the aerospace industry is the close involvement of Governments. One obvious reason is the strong defence interests. Another is those long time scales, which make it difficult to finance investment in the usual ways. Another is the belief by Governments that the aerospace industry has a strategic importance as a high-technology industry with spin-offs to other sectors.

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his Committee and its report. Will he pick up the thread regarding space activity which is mentioned in the report? I recognise that the Committee did not feel able to examine the matter in detail, but it made the point about linkage between aerospace and space, particularly on the technology spin-off, the convergence of civil and military and the need, with the peace dividend, to shift more into space activities. Does he agree that that is something to which the Government should return, even though the Committee was not able to do so?

Mr. Caborn: That is the point. We were not able to investigate that matter. There is a synergy of activity that needs investigating. The hon. Gentleman rightly says that there is a spin-off, which I think is extremely important to the industry. Unfortunately, the Committee did not have time to go into that aspect, although we refer to it in the report. In practice, the international aerospace market is a global industry, but it is not a free market. Our industry is competing against heavily subsidised foreign competition, although our Government recognise the distinctiveness of aerospace by providing launch aid for new products and by having a separate civil aircraft research and demonstration programme. We acknowledge that. However, the Government do not do enough to enable our industry, with its acknowledged technical excellence, to compete on equal terms in world markets.

Foreign Governments rarely advertise the full extent of the help that they give their aerospace industries, but two points are worth emphasising—the massive state aid assistance towards research and technology acquisition in the United States and the considerable assistance that has built up the German industry. According to the DTI's figures, the German industry has received three times as much launch aid as the UK industry in recent years. That injection of support resulted in Germany's turnover doubling between 1985 and 1989.

It is also interesting to note a document called "Statement of Position of Future Aid for Aviation Research and Technology from the Federal Government", which says:

> "The Federal Government sees an efficient German aircraft industry as an important contribution to Germany's economy. It welcomes international and, particularly, European cooperation by the German aircraft industry and its contributions to joint programes.
>
> The German aircraft industry can only contribute to competitive European aircraft industry if it maintains and constantly develops its already high level of technology capability . . . A statement of position on future aid for aviation research and technology will be established by early 1994 and a decision will be taken on a concept of aid to aviation research and technology and about the relevant financing."

Let us look at a statement made by the President of the United States entitled "Technology for America's Economic Growth, A New Direction to Build Economic Strength". The main figures in that statement are startling by any standards. Clinton's technology proposals for the period 1994 to 1997 will involve a budget increase of $17 billion. Inevitably, a large proportion of that extra money will find its way into the American aeronautical industry. The Clinton report specificallly calls for

> "increasing research on civil aviation technologies, including an examination of the economic, marketing, safety, and noise aspects of advanced aircraft. We will also support advanced in-flight space and ground-based command, navigation, weather prediction, and control systems. US aeronautical, research and development facilities infrastructure such as wind tunnels will also be revitalised."

In addition, aerospace companies have been the main beneficiaries of the awards announced thus far under the Clinton technology reinvestment project, the 1993 budget of which was $472 million. Compare that with what happens in this country.

For those reasons, the Committee believes that there is a serious problem and that some changes in policy are needed. Obviously, Government action is not enough on its own. It is essential for the industry to improve its productivity. It is doing so, and we were impressed by its progress. International collaboration is increasingly important as the cost of developing new products rises.

We examined a number of collaborative ventures, such as the highly successful one between Rolls-Royce and BMW. However, collaboration and increased productivity are not sufficient to maintain a competitive United Kingdom industry. Unless our firms maintain their technological edge, they will not be able to attract the best partners and the best terms for collaboration. I make it clear to the Minister that what we have taken to the negotiating table on all collaborative deals has been not a cheque but our technology. The House should take that seriously.

The Committee report focuses on four sectors, the first of which is launch aid for developing new products. That is not a subsidy, as has sometimes been claimed. The money is repayable with interest, as the product is sold. Occasionally, sales have been too low but, at the moment, the Government are receiving more money than they are paying out. According to the DTI, the purpose of launch aid is

> "to remedy a deficiency in the market arising from the reluctance or inability of companies or institutions to finance the heavy deployment cost of new aircraft products, since their return is subject to high risk and can be made only over the very long term".

Applicants have to demonstrate that a project is commercially and technically viable, that the Government will receive an 8 per cent. return and that, without that aid, the project would not otherwise go ahead.

It is unfortunate, therefore, that, when our report was produced, the *Financial Times* editorial of 22 July was somewhat ignorant of the facts of launch aid. It said:

> "Yesterday it served up a similar recipe for the aerospace sector: a five-fold increase to £100m in government subsidies; more generous aid to launch new products; and possible additional hand-outs to help companies convert from military to civil products."

Let me quote the example of Rolls-Royce, which wrote to me yesterday. It said:

> "Funds received under this scheme"——

under launch aid——

> "are not only repayable, but also carry a requirement to generate a real rate of return for the Government. In the case of Rolls-Royce, the Company has, since 1972, received nearly £500m in launch aid but no new launch aid has been provided after 1986. By the year 2000 we expect to have repaid ¯660m to the Government. The taxpayer is therefore deriving a significant return from this programme, whilst ensuring that the aerospace industry continues to generate wider economic benefits for the UK in the form of employment and exports."

I hope that the author of that *Financial Times* editorial will take note of what Rolls-Royce says.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): The hon. Gentleman is right to say that existing launch aid programmes do not carry the element of subsidy but are set out on purely commercial terms. I hope that he will therefore explain what may have given rise to that editorial —the conclusion of his report, which suggested that terms for the repayment of the launch aid should be drastically eased.

Mr. Caborn: We said that in the context of the wider area in which our aerospace industry is playing. Let us cast an eye at our major European competitors. For example, although the Federal Republic of Germany gives launch aid, it does not demand the return that we demand in the United Kingdom, so that money is fed back into the industry. If the hon. Gentleman cares to read our report carefully, he will find the answer to his question.

We made one major recommendation about launch aid —that the DTI should adopt a more positive attitude towards equipment makers, and should take into account the size and resources of equipment suppliers when assessing whether launch aid was needed. The DTI told us that there was no ban on equipment makers receiving launch aid. However, no equipment maker has done so since 1981. Our evidence showed that the DTI was wrong

[Mr. Caborn]

to believe that equipment makers were necessarily much better able to obtain a commercial return within a reasonable time than makers of airframes or aero-engines could. For example, according to the Electronic Engineering Association, it typically takes 10 years for avionics systems to achieve a profit. Market failings apply to equipment as much as to airframes and aero-engines. The Government's reply repeats the arguments that we profoundly disputed.

Launch aid for the larger civil aircraft has typically been 50 to 60 per cent., but it is now restricted by the agreement between the EC and the United States to 33 per cent., and it may be reduced further as a result of the negotiations on the general agreement on tariffs and trade—we hope to see an end to them soon. Thus, the direct support on which Europe has concentrated will be severely curtailed.

The Americans responded by providing indirect support instead, in the form of assistance towards research and development. The agreement limits that to 3 per cent. of the civil aircraft industry's annual commercial turnover in the country concerned and to 4 per cent. of the annual commercial turnover of any one firm. However, indirect support is far harder to monitor and control than direct support, so the American industry may have an advantage over European industries.

To be effective, any increase in support for most parts of the aerospace industry will need to be in the form of indirect support for research and technology acquisition. It was particularly fortunate that the DTI's aviation committee produced its national strategic technology acquisition plan, known as NSTAP, shortly before we began our inquiry. The purpose of NSTAP was to identify the technologies that the aviation committee believed United Kingdom industry would need during the next two decades and to sort out priorities.

Category 1 was the technologies on which the industry's future competitive edge will depend, such as advanced wing design. Categories 2 and 3 were less central but still important. Those could, if necessary, be acquired through collaboration whereas category 1 technologies needed to be developed by the United Kingdom alone. I stress that this is an area that is not clear in the report. If we are to take technology to the negotiating table for collaborative deals, category 1 must have the type of support that is rightly demanded by the industry.

NSTAP is not about picking winners but about developing a range of enabling technologies that the United Kingdom industry can incorporate into competitive products. It can be regarded as an early technological foresight exercise.

NSTAP also discusses ways of increasing the effectiveness of research and technology expenditure, such as organising it within a clearly defined national strategy. The Committee attached great importance to NSTAP as a way of maintaining the competitiveness of the United Kingdom's aerospace industry.

NSTAP did not come with a price tag, but the industry's estimate is that it would require £90 million to £100 million a year from the Government over a 10-year period. That sum would need to be matched by an equivalent amount from the industry. That is more likely to be forthcoming for a collaborative effort such as the ones described in NSTAP.

Unfortunately, that sum compares with only £22·5 million spent on the DTI's civil aircraft research and development programme in the present year. In 1993 prices, £85 million was spent in 1974. One can extrapolate from that information the fact that the current net return to the Treasury from the aerospace industry is the result of the investments made some 10 or 20 years ago. According to Dowty, £90 million to £100 million is the minimum necessary to keep us ahead in the race.

We made two linked recommendations—that the Government should make a full assessment of the expenditure on research and technology acquisition that they believe is necessary to maintain the industry's technological competitiveness and that they should increase their funding of aerospace research and technology acquisition to a level that is sufficient to maintain the industry's technological competitiveness. We want the Government to benchmark their funding of the industry against that provided by foreigners. That is not an unreasonable request.

The Government's response has been disappointing. Although they state that they are adopting the priorities set out in NSTAP, they are simply maintaining the existing level of funding. They have failed to reply to our recommendation about assessing how much funding is needed to maintain the industry's competitiveness. They state:

> "priorities must be set between the various demands of industry and the economy as a whole."

Of course they must, but how can priorities be set unless the Government have first found out what is needed? Either present funding is sufficient to sustain the industry or it is not.

If the Government can show that funding is sufficient, there is no problem. If they cannot, either funding must be increased or we must resign ourselves to the British aerospace industry slowly losing its competitiveness, with all the consequences that that involves. It is essential that we find out what is required to maintain competitiveness so that we know which path the United Kingdom is following.

As to the third major aspect of the report, the Government's greatest impact on the aerospace industry is through defence procurement, and I am pleased to see the Minister here this evening. Our report was chiefly concerned with the civil sector, but all the major United Kingdom companies produce for both civil and defence markets, and much of the technology is common to both. Throughout the world, overheads have tended to be borne by the military work. We therefore looked closely at the MOD's procurement practices.

Until the early 1980's, much defence procurement was undertaken without competition through preferred contractors, and development was largely on a cost-plus basis. Since 1983, there has been a more commercial approach, with a much higher proportion of competitively let contracts. That has clearly had advantages. According to the MOD, it has saved not only money but sharpened the defence industry's commercial edge.

That approach was strongly criticised by many of our witnesses and it contrasts strongly with the procurement policies in other industries. The cost-plus approach and competititve tendering are not the only ways of organising procurement; there is also the partnership approach which is associated most strongly with Rover and Nissan in the car industry. No one suggests that Rover and Nissan are ripped off by their suppliers. They give their suppliers a hard time, but it helps them to improve their performance and offers them a long-term relationship, provided they continue to meet standards and targets.

Only two weeks ago, my colleagues visited Rover and heard about the change in relation that is now one of the jewels in our manufacturing crown. Only four or five years ago, Rover would get six or seven suppliers around a table, get a big stick, beat them on the head and ask them whether they could reduce their prices by 2p. Instead, they would knock them down by 3p, but Rover had more rejects and defects on motor cars coming off the line. Now Rover and Nissan have long-term relationships and negotiate contracts with their suppliers of between five and 15 years. That brings stability to the industry. The results are not only better and cheaper components for Rover and Nissan but a vastly more competitive motor components industry.

One cannot necessarily transfer the same sort of relationship in full to defence procurement, but one might reasonably suspect the MOD to see what it can learn from successful innovations in other areas, and the Committee recommended that it does so instead of leaving it to the National Audit Office to examine its procurement issues. It would be helpful if the Minster would inform the House whether "partnership sourcing" is part of the terms of reference for the NAO examination.

The Committee was also dissatisfied with the way in which the MOD conducts its procurement. In questions to the Minister of State for Defence Procurement and civil servants, it became clear that recommendations made by officials were based solely on the defence aspect, and that other factors, such as the industrial consequence of decisions, were simply drawn to the attention of Ministers.

The Minister showed some sympathy with the argument that wider civil interests should be taken into account rather than exclusively military interests. If that is to be done, consideration of the wider issues, such as the long-term strength of related industries such as civil aerospace, should be built into the procurement process from the start, and we recommend accordingly. The Government's reply does little more than describe existing practices.

The fourth major aspect of the Committee's report was a call for the Government

> "to set out in much greater detail than hitherto the overall policy framework and view of the industry's future which it intends to guide individual decisions affecting the United Kingdom aerospace industry."

That is nothing to do with the Government interfering in industrial decisions, or extending their role in the industry. It would not necessarily mean any extra spending. We are seeking a more coherent approach by the Government in areas in which they already make decisions—on research support, launch aid, procurement, international collaboration, export promotion and training.

That would need to be based on a view, developed in consultation with the industry, of where the United Kingdom industry's competitive strengths lie and how they can be maintained and extended. The benefits would be more consistent Government decisions across departmental boundaries, ensuring that limited resources are used to best effect and that the industry knows what to expect from Government.

That was the most inadequate aspect of the Government's reply. It says little more than

> "the DTI constantly reviews the issues facing the aerospace sector"

with various organisations, firms and other Departments. We believe that the evidence discussed in our report showed present practices fall far short of what is needed, and short of what foreign Governments with clear aims and strategies achieve for their aerospace industries. We have pressed the DTI for further consideration of the issue.

Another point concerns the further reductions in military, expenditure and the conversion of defence resources, especially in technological skills and the use of civil manufacturing. We recommended a study of how British industry can be assisted in the transfer from military to civil manufacture. Unfortunately, the Government said that there was no need for a study and that it should be left for either market forces or Europe to decide.

The United Kingdom aerospace industry has to compete in the market as it is, dominated by Government-backed competitors. There is no free market in aerospace products. The Trade and Industry Select Committee concluded that the United Kingdom industry needed more effective Government help, probably including some increased spending, to enable it to compete on equal terms in world markets. Without that, the industry was likely to lose its technological competitiveness, not in the next year or two, but slowly over the next decade or so. The Government may wish to dispute that, but they have not done so in their reply to our report.

That extra help is needed; the question is how high it will be on the scale of priorities. Is manufacturing industry, including the aerospace industry, a priority or not? I have no doubt what the answer to that question should be, and I believe that our report points the Government in that direction. If we want to keep the jewel in the crown shining and not tarnished, I suggest that the Government respond to the report's recommendations more positively.

7.59 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I must declare a commercial interest. I chair a company which is actively involved in the aerospace industry, so I have a professional concern for its welfare. I have also just concluded a parliamentary industrial fellowship—a post-graduate attachment—with TI. The subject I concentrated on, mostly with Dowty Aerospace, was the future of the aerospace industry at a time of airline recession and defence cuts.

The severe downturn in the civil air transport business and the drastic reductions in military budgets have impinged in a most dramatic way upon an industry which is crucial to the economic welfare of our nation and vital for our national security and prosperity.

I believe that the Government have a strategic interest in maintaining the United Kingdom as one of the leading aerospace nations in the western world. They should tailor their policies accordingly and bear five things in mind when constructing that strategy. First, for defence considerations, the Government should remember that we need a truly competitive military aerospace business. Secondly, they should note that rotary wing manufacture is an industry with a future, civil as well as military. Thirdly, we are already in civil air transport construction and need to remain so. Fourthly, we are pre-eminently the western European nation with a world capability in the construction of aero engines. Fifthly, the Government should consider that we neglect space at our peril and that we need to invest more in it. I should add to those five points a sixth—

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

consideration of equipment—because, unless we concentrate on those five points, it is likely that we will not have a competitive equipment and component sector.

There are two aspects to the civil sector. British Aerospace, which has come to dominate the manufacture or part-manufacture of civil air transports in this country, went through an extraordinary process of expansion in recent years. It followed a process of diversification into all kinds of activities which bore no relation to its core businesses. It was almost as though the company made a Gadarene rush into acquisition, diversification and expansion. Under Mr. Cahill, BAe has now wisely returned to its roots and is focusing on its core businesses. The process of doing so, however, is difficult and painful and it has caused much readjustment within the company.

It has been decided that for the smaller range of civil air transports, the regional jet range of four-engine turbo fans based on the 146, a partner should be sought in Taiwan Aerospace. This may or may not come to fruition and it looks much less likely than it did, but BAe should have sought a more appropriate partner, such as Fokker, in good time. Fokker is now part of DASSA, so an opportunity was missed. I hope that we may retain some part of the regional jet market in years to come, but it will not be easy.

Likewise, it will not be easy to retain an important and significant share in the smaller twin-turbo prop market, where there is already significant overcapacity. In its wisdom, BAe is pursuing collaboration with PTN in Indonesia to try to develop complementarily the Jetstream series of aircraft. Indonesia has been working for some time with CASA of Spain. We shall see if the arrangement works out; I hope that it will. Again, however, it must be said that such readjustments and attempts at new partnerships have come very late in the day.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that Parliament was lobbied today by the management and workers, with the support of their local authority, of the Jetstream project? They pointed out that it was difficult for Jetstream to compete with some competitors who had an advantage because the subsidies given to them by their Governments were far in excess of the support given by the United Kingdom. Does the hon. Gentleman agree with that delegation that we should give similar support or that we should ensure, through GATT or the European Community, that there is no unfair competition so that Jetstream can compete fairly with the other aircraft?

Mr. Wilkinson: I take to heart what the hon. Gentleman has said and I share the concerns of the workers at Prestwick, and those who come from his constituency. Like the hon. Gentleman, I want to see what was Scottish Aviation prosper under its new guise and have an assured future. It will be very difficult to ensure genuinely fair competition, however, because nations that are embarking on creating indigenous aircraft industries are bound to give generous support to the easiest part of the industry to develop—the construction of relatively unsophisticated twin-turbo prop aircraft.

I want negotiations through GATT on this matter, as on all others, to prove in the future to have been a success. I cannot say that this area of BAe's business is absolutely secure yet. The company is, however, determined to make it competitive, and I am sure that the workers at Prestwick are working as hard as they ever did to make a success of it. It has good a good product range.

The larger end of the product range is represented by the airbus series of aircraft. Here again, launch aid has proved itself. When I was chairman of my party's aviation committee in the mid-1980s I remember going along to see my right hon. Friend, Mrs. Thatcher, with the past committee chairmen to argue for launch aid for the A320. She replied, "Oh John, it will never work. Boeing will dominate the market. Why should we waste our time on things like that?"—or words to that effect.

We managed, however, with the support and encouragement of the Labour party and that of Lord Varley, then an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, to table an early-day motion which commanded the support of nearly half the membership of the House. As a result, we persuaded Her Majesty's Treasury to invest £220 million in launch aid. The A320 sold more aircraft off the drawing board than any airliner in west European history.

The purpose behind this anecdotal account is to show that there genuinely is a worthwhile role for launch aid. When those responsible for the airbus come to build a really big aircraft to compete with or to succeed the jumbo, the new aircraft could be a worthwhile candidate for launch aid.

What worries me about the military side of business is the way in which the European fighter aircraft programme has absorbed such a large proportion of the Government's defence budget for development. For understandable reasons, the first flight will probably be two years late and the entry into service will be some four years late. I compare that with the achievements of Avions Marcel Dassault which is building its Rafale aircraft on its own and has already got several prototypes in the air for the French air force and for the French fleet air arm.

I am also interested in the progress of the Swedish Saab JAS39 programme. I know that BAe has a marketing agreement with Saab for the aircraft and that it is lending its expertise, especially in the development of the flight control system. However, for the next generation of combat aircraft, I wonder whether we should have four-nation programmes again. They are complicated to manage and extremely political in nature.

Also, if a programme such as the EFA consumes such a disproportionate part of what used to be known as the Air Force's budget and is now the MOD's budget for air systems, it has a negative impact on important equipments which are at least as important as the platforms. For example, a stand-off weapon for Tornado has been in mind for many years and still has not come to fruition. The RAF needs an intelligent anti-armour weapon, especially as the MLRS 3 has been cancelled.

Britain's defence has been degraded by the fact that we cannot afford, at least in the immediate future, to deploy a medium surface-to-air missile to replace the Bloodhound. I also gather that the mid-life update of the Tornado to the GR4 standard will not be as comprehensive as would otherwise have been the case. In future, I hope that we shall not invest such a vast amount in mega-projects but will consider them more carefully.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Does my hon. Friend agree that, although the first flight of the Eurofighter 2000 has been somewhat delayed, first flights of previous aircraft have also been delayed and it is therefore not outside the band that one would expect? Despite the fact that the Eurofighter has not yet flown, the in-service date from the French air force for Rafale is after that of Eurofighter, in 2001, and the Rafale aircraft will be more expensive and inferior to the EFA.

Mr. Wilkinson: All those things may or may not be true. I hope they are, because I like to see projects in which the British have a leading role proving to be the best. The projects must be the best because, if we are deploying a front-line fighter/attack aircraft, it must do its job against a potentially well-equipped adversary. For good military and industrial reasons, I hope that what my hon. Friend—who has considerable experience and professional wisdom in those matters—said is true. Nevertheless, I feel bound to inject a note of caution.

In a relatively short time, we shall also need an enhancement of our air transport force. We have all recognised the importance to our aid efforts and to our military deployments of the Herculese C130 aircraft which are in service with the RAF. They are wonderful work horses, but they cannot go on for ever. There must be a limit to the process of refurbishment. There is an improved version of the C130—the J version—available to the RAF. Were it selected, it would benefit British industry because the RAF would be the launch customer and a number of British suppliers such as Dowty Rotol for the propellers, Westland Aerospace for the nacelles, Smiths, Lucas and Marshalls of Cambridge would benefit. More than that, we would get a transport into service which was much more cost effective than the existing version of the Hercules.

I hope that the Government will recognise these facts and will not let themselves be diverted into thinking about what may or may not come into service in the next century —future large aircraft, or whatever. I doubt whether the Ministry of Defence has the money to invest development funding in a strategic turbo fan transport of the FLA category.

One has only to consider the problems McDonnell Douglas has had with the C17, which is badly over budget, late and performing below specification. Since we took the Belfast out of service many years ago, we have not invested in a strategic long-range transport aircraft. We have not bought C5s or C141s. Instead, when needed, we have chartered civil Belfasts and used them for military purposes. Can the decision on the Hercules C130 be postponed any longer? I do not think that it should be.

Nor should we postpone for too long important decisions which affect the future of our rotary wing aircraft constructor Westland. There are two major programmes vital to the future of the company—first, the selection of an attack helicopter for the Army and I hope for the Royal Marines too, and I say that advisedly; and a new support helicopter for the Royal Air Force. The Secretary of State for Defence has announced that he intends, as I understand it, to buy a mix of EH101 support helicopters and additional Chinook helicopters. We shall certainly need them and the attack helicopters soon because wherever our troops are deployed—whether in peacekeeping operations as we debated earlier or otherwise—we always need more helicopters.

The aero engine business is important to our future as an industrial and engineering nation. It is remarkable how we have stayed in the big league for so many years and how competitive Rolls-Royce plc has remained, even after the trauma of the failure of the company in 1971. Rolls-Royce plc now has a range of products which have important niches in their respective markets—for example, the Trent for big long-range twin jets, the Tay for the medium-range civil transports and long-range business aircraft, the EJ200 for the European fighter aircraft and other military programmes, the RTM 322 for helicopters or for potential business aircraft use, and the BMW-Rolls-Royce 700 series of collaborative engines for medium-range transports.

Rolls-Royce plc needs to be sustained because it is of strategic importance to Britain. I do not know whether it will come to an arrangement with Pratt and Whitney or how it sees its commercial future. However, it is crucial for our national defence and our engineering capacity that we stay in the aero engine business. If Rolls-Royce plc asks the Government for launch aid for programmes which it believes to be commercially viable, I hope that its request will be sympathetically received.

One also ought to bear in mind that the market for spares continues for 25 to 30 years after an engine has gone out of production. For example, spares for the Dart, the Spey, the Avon and the Tyne are still being manufactured. Engines such as the Adour, the RB199 and the Pegasus will serve the spares businesses for many years to come.

Looking back at the development of our aircraft industry over the past generation, the decision which I believe to be most fatal for the welfare of the space business in Britain was the one to opt out of the launcher business. You will remember, Madam Deputy Speaker, that in the mid-1960s we had in Blue Streak a launcher which could have provided the main launch facility for Europe for decades to come. Instead we unilaterally decided to get out of the business.

Aerospatiale, CNES—the French national space agency —and the French Government decided to support the Ariane series of launchers, and very good business they have proved. In space, we have concentrated more on telecommunications, remote sensing and so on. This is an appropriate field. It is good business and it is worth while. But as other nations such as Japan, China and India all recognise the importance of space, we shall need to invest more.

I congratulate the Select Committee on its timely report. I am pleased that the Government have given a thoughtful reply to its recommendations. I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement should have taken time to share the debate with us. It is in the interests of our country that the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Trade and Industry work together to support an industry of such crucial commercial and strategic significance.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. It is self-evident that many hon. Members want to speak in the debate tonight. We do not have a great deal of time. I ask hon. Members who catch my eye early to exercise considerable restraint. Otherwise, there will be many disappointed Members.

8.21 pm

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): I find this a rather refreshing debate. It is unusual because, for a change, we are speaking about industry. So often, we find

[Mr. Ken Eastham]

ourselves discussing insurance, finance and housing, but on this rare occasion we are talking about making things—things that we can make well and sell abroad.

Tonight, we are talking about something we are really good at. One thing that we are good at is the aerospace industry. As far as it goes, our industry is the best in Europe. The only major competitor is America, so we can sell our goods abroad. This debate is not about begging or about pleading for something to which we are not entitled. Many of us feel that the aerospace industry is entitled to more consideration from the Government. Unfortunately, it does not have it.

I remember reading a newspaper headline after a report of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry was published. It said, "DTI snubs Select Committee on the conclusions of its report." The Trade and Industry Select Committee has achieved a unanimous report. It is to be congratulated on the way in which it has gone about it. The industry is also to be congratulated because it had co-operated in a non-political way with a sincere desire to improve British capability and profitability.

It is a great pity that we have received little encouragement so far. I plead with Ministers urgently to review their thinking. The aerospace industry is one of the few success industries. If the United Kingdom aerospace industry failed, some of our competitors, such as Germany, France and others, would be delighted. It would mean less competition for them. They would become more and more prosperous and we would gradually wither away.

Even the Government have talked recently about the need to improve our industrial base. The Prime Minister and other Ministers have said that. That is somewhat belated, but we who come from industry are delighted that, at last, industry is being recognised. Even the Engineering Employers Federation raised its hands in despair 12 months ago and said that not enough was being done for the engineering industry.

I am sad to have to tell the House tonight that only last week in my area, Ferranti—a well-known company—was on the point of closure. Several hundred highly skilled jobs could be lost, mainly in the north-west. The nation can ill afford to lose those highly skilled people. They would lose their job through no fault of their own. It is not a case of their incompetence, lack of skill or lack of competitiveness. On this occasion, it was just a case of bad management. That is [illegible] fact. Those hundreds of jobs are now to be smashed.

It is also a fact that the aerospace industry has been contracting at a tidy old pace. About 27,000 jobs have gone. I should like to impress on the Government that unless they do something radical, that contraction will accelerate. We shall lose one of the finest industrial winners that we have.

I should like to underline a few special issues. The first is GATT. I sincerely believe that we must not give the United States aerospace industry more favourable terms than other countries. We already know that the United States heavily subsidises its aricraft industry. It has a massive defence industry which is far bigger than any aircraft defence industry in any other country in the world. It has the largest space industry and a massive satellite empire. That is all high-tech industry which we know is being spilled into the American aircraft industry. For those reasons, we must be extremely careful when we negotiate with the Americans in the GATT round.

Another issue is national strategic technology acquisition. I understand that the Treasury is receiving £30 million net cash in launch aid for the A320. Yet it is deplorable to report that the civil aviation fund is being cut. That is not a sign of progress. Those are some of the damning facts that have to be faced up to.

The hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) referred to the need to develop the European future large aircraft. There may be a debate about whether we should enter that industry. I believe that we cannot afford not to. At present, America has a monopoly in very large aircraft. We must attempt to stop world monopoly of, say, the American Hercules. The only way in which we can do that is to apply ourselves, along with other European countries, to producing the goods.

It is no good saying that we cannot, or should not do it. The same was said about the airbus. People said that it would not work. I am not a little Englander, but I believe that our engineering is as good as any in the world. Therefore, I do not believe that we cannot develop a large aircraft. We can do it if our engineering skills are given the chance. If we embarked on such a project, we would also avoid heavy import costs. It affects the balance of payments when one makes massive purchases of such aircraft. There is no doubt that such purchases will continue.

My next subject is export credits. We have not supported industry very well and for proof of the pudding one has only to make comparisons with the favourable terms that Germany and France have been able to offer, which mean that we are not playing on a level playing field. We have been greatly disadvantaged and there is no doubt that, owing to certain changes, such as the end of the cold war, the market is declining and will become far more aggressive. We can, therefore, justify additional help from the Government.

If the Department of Trade and Industry had offered more support we would have gained a larger market share. For example, we could have built a larger proportion of the airbus if the DTI had given more assistance; we got the wings. We are grateful for that, as it has been a money spinner. However, some people have no doubt that it we had been more determined and had had the courage to invest more, we could have had a bigger share of the cake and made more of a very successful aircraft than just the wings.

One final plea is that we must remember that the aerospace industry is highly technical and that the staff in it need quality training. If we are to be world leaders we must place more emphasis on high-tech skills and spend some money on them.

I do not think that any hon. Member has mentioned that we must also remember the industry's hundreds of equipment suppliers and their sub-contractors. Thousands of supply jobs will be at stake outside the aerospace companies if there is any further contraction in the industry. Time is not on our side. We must make some decisions now. We cannot put it off, or say that we will think about it at the turn of the century. By that time, it will be too late and other countries will have wiped our industry out. We must decide whether we are to have a British aerospace industry. I predict that if we do not take that decision, our aerospace industry will become just another British engineering graveyard.

8.32 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I am pleased that we have had the opportunity to discuss the aerospace industry and I associate myself with the remarks of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn), who opened the debate. I agree with him that the industry has been a world beater. It contributes 9 per cent. of out total manufacturing exports, valued at £7·7 billion last year. In addition, our industry is 30 per cent. more efficient than the German industry at manufacturing aircraft. It operates at the frontiers of science in a number of different areas of technology and that is well established by three articles in the most recent edition of the journal of the Royal Aeronautical Society.

The first article deals with the YF22—the latest American fighter—and reflects the advances in two areas in which aviation has led other industries—the lightness and strength of materials. Those advances will be taken a stage further by Eurofighter 2000—an aircraft which will be 85 per cent. non-metal. While it is the same size as Tornado—an aircraft which illustrates the previous generation of technology—it is none the less 30 per cent. lighter and considerably stronger. For good measure, its radar signature is 50 per cent. less than that of the Tornado. Despite all those advances, in real terms, the aircraft is cheaper than the Tornado. Those new materials and the techniques used to produce them economically will have an ever-widening use in commercial aircraft—as has happened with the previous advances in military technology that have transferred directly to commercial aircraft—and in many other industries.

The second article described fly-by-wire systems, which are designed to make aircraft lighter, but also to improve their reliability and to reduce pilot error. In aircraft today, the controls are operated by touch, but in future they might even be operated by sight. Those advances are at the forefront of technology. Britain is again ahead, or at least abreast, of the world. The new systems require highly complicated software, which is constantly testing the frontiers of artificial intelligence. The systems that are being tested for aircraft today will have applications in a wide range of industrial processes tomorrow, as the interface between man and machine becomes even more sophisticated.

The third article describes jet engine development, where increased thrust aligned with efficiency and reliability—to say nothing of aviation's constant need for lightness and strength—are driving engine designers to look for even more esoteric material and production techniques, to allow higher temperatures at the back end of the engines, while increasing mass flow at the front. As hon. Members have said, Rolls-Royce has been at the forefront of those developments, especially in the development of the wide-core fan, which has revolutionised compressor development. The company has also developed turbine blades that allow even higher inlet temperatures. The developments are vital to Rolls-Royce if it is to continue to sell engines in the same numbers.

Another illustration of the advanced nature of the aircraft industry is to be found in management techniques. Here I must differ with my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson). Any development is highly expensive and, therefore, partnerships are the order of the day. That means that design teams in different countries, speaking different languages, have to communicate effectively with each other. That is taken to the ultimate in the production of the Eurofighter 2000, where one wing is produced by the Italians and the other is a combination of British and Spanish manufacture. I hope that we shall see it fly successfully within the first quarter of next year.

The techniques used to allow such management practices to be successful have a direct bearing on some other industries, as they, too, find that the only way to fund the development of new products is through partnerships with companies in other countries. Because it is operating at the frontiers of science, the development of new aircraft and air systems is highly expensive. In the past, Governments have been intimately involved in such developments—not always successfully—but it is worth pointing out that, during the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s, the British Government's involvement in many developments had a direct bearing on the size and strength of the aircraft and component industry today.

The aerospace industry is a long-term industry. Investments 20, 15 or 10 years ago have a direct bearing on the number of people employed and the wealth created today and on revenues to the Exchequer. Even Concorde, which in pure cash terms was not a commercial success, has allowed our component and avionics industries to remain at the forefront of today's techonology. That has meant considerable export success during the past decade for many companies, contributing much more back to the Treasury in tax revenues than was expended on the development of Concorde.

Many other countries recognise the need to foster and develop their aircraft industries. I noticed in *The Times* on Saturday that the French balance of payments surplus last month almost accurately reflected our deficit. That is in no small way due to the whole-hearted commitment to aviation of the French. They have built up an industry that was almost non-existent after the second world war into one that is slightly larger than ours today, a fact made clear by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central.

The Americans, too, have recognised the importance of the aircraft industry and have funded virtually all their civilian programmes through research and development contracts for similar military projets. Other countries, particularly in the developing world and around the Pacific rim, also want to create and develop their aerospace industries. It might seem strange that so many countries wish to do that, bearing in mind the high cost and poor returns in the short term. The reasons are twofold: first, they recognise the long-term nature of the industry—aircraft produced today are likely to be in service in 20 or 30 years' time; and, secondly, the cost of maintaining and supplying them with spares many times exceeds their original price.

Nothing illustrates the long-term nature of the industry better than the British Government's decision in 1971 to pull out of the Airbus consortium. As a result, now that we are back in we have only 20 per cent. rather than 33 per cent. of the content of any of the aircraft produced by that consortium. That means a smaller British contribution than would otherwise have been the case. When we consider the number of aircraft that the Airbus consortium has sold,

[Mr. Keith Mans]

which runs into thousands, that fact alone partly explains the balance of payments difference between France and Britain.

The need to support the aviation industry is recognised even by the general agreement on tariffs and trade, which allows Governments to contribute up to 33 per cent. of the launch aid for new aerospace projects. The point is simple: even if we sign the GATT, no one should be under the misapprehension that it will allow us to trade on a level playing field with others that want us to become involved in aerospace activities if we do not continue to be involved in launch aid and support our industry.

We must recognise the strategic importance of the aerospace industry to this country. That means not that we should initiate state-run projects but that the DTI should get behind developments that help aerospace companies in this country to maintain their position in the world. That will mean supporting new development and research in all sorts of areas, particularly those that I mentioned earlier. It means encouraging partnerships between different companies to produce specific aircraft or series of aircraft, as well as the provision of launch aid.

As the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central said, there is much evidence of the support that the Americans are giving their jet engine industry, amounting to some $760 million a year. What is even more significant about that amount is that some of the money being provided to launch the G-90 engine produced by General Electric—the direct rival of the Rolls-Royce Trent—is being provided by the European Community through the link between General Electric and the French engine company, SNECMA.

It is therefore no surprise that the decision taken by British Airways a year or two ago to buy that engine was based on the better price that GE could offer compared with Rolls-Royce, largely because of the subsidy that it received not only from the American Government but from the European Community. That example shows clearly the importance of the British Government getting right behind Rolls-Royce in this highly competitive jet engine industry, which will mean wealth creation, tax revenues and jobs running well into the next century.

That is true also for commercial aircraft. Because the Americans can no longer cross-subsidise, to the extent that they have in the past, civilian projects from military technology, they will directly subsidise commercial aircraft. Indeed, President Clinton has said as much in a number of speeches.

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): My hon. Friend will be aware that the Woodford plant of British Aerospace, where it builds the 146, is in my constituency. The company is looking to the future, with a deal with Taiwan and further development on the 146. Does he agree that it is essential, should the Taiwan deal not go through—we all hope and are fairly confident that it will, but have our doubts because we cannot be certain—that the company should have a chance to look for other partners because of the expertise and efficiency at the plant and the sacrifices made to produce an efficient manufacturing base at Woodford? Does he agree that, in those circumstances, it is essential that the Government ensure that such plants survive to be competitive in the future?

Mr. Mans: I agree with my hon. Friend to the extent that, if the regional jet series of aircraft produced by British Aerospace are to be successful in the future, they will need to look for partners outside this country. In that context, the British Government should get behind industries that are looking for partners to ensure that projects like the regional jet series continue, and continue to sell well abroad.

Another point that must be recognised relates to the reduced contribution that defence budgets, particularly ours, will make to research and development. In the past, we have partly gone down the American road of funding development through the defence vote. That is bound to be reduced in the future and it is, therefore, important that the DTI takes a more active role in that area, in partnership with the Ministry of Defence. Military and civilian development of aircraft have always run together, but now the burden of developing new products will fall increasingly on the commercial side. One way forward has already been pioneered in America, where partnership deals between companies and Government push along together developments that benefit both and have military and civilian objectives.

That can be taken a stage further. In the early 1980s, we produced an aircraft called the European aircraft prototype as a technology demonstrator for Eurofighter. We now have an opportunity in relation to the future large aircraft project. Here, I differ somewhat with the view expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood and believe that we must at least get the RAF to put a spec forward to that consortium to say what they want, so that the consortium can at least see whether its proposals meet the RAF's needs.

In that area, there is a possibility of providing a similar technology demonstrator to get industry and Governments together to see whether an aircraft to meet the needs of the different air forces in Europe for tactical and medium-range transport can be produced on this side of the Atlantic.

The DTI has a reasonable record of supporting the aerospace industry, at least until the mid-1980s. Its support in the future will become even more vital, as the industry becomes even more competitive. Without it, one of our few remaining world-class industries is likely to go slowly into decline. That has ramifications well beyond aerospace.

As the Select Committee report says, we need an overall policy framework for the industry. The DTI needs to spell out clearly its strategic thinking towards the industry. If it does that and supports the industry in the future, as it did before 1986, there is a fair chance that the aerospace industry will remain at the forefront of technology and continue to contribute handsomely both to our exports and to Exchequer revenues.

8.48 pm

Mr. Nigel Jones (Cheltenham): I welcome this opportunity to debate the crucial aerospace industry. I pay tribute to the Chairman and members of the Select Committee for producing such a readable and worthwhile report.

A few weeks ago, during the conference season, the Prime Minister made some encouraging comments about manufacturing industry. He said:

> "We want British industry to be the best . . . Manufacturing industry is one of our greatest national assets . . . Compete on a level basis with the rest of the world . . . Make pounds for the UK; don't make dollars for other people . . . Sell abroad and buy at home."

We shoul[illegible] have been encouraged by those statements. I certainly was. At last, I thought, the Government have realised the importance of manufacturing industry, and aerospace in particular, to the future of Britain.

I was encouraged by the report produced by the Select Committee into the British aerospace industry. It hit several nails on their respective heads. The industry is vital to Britain as an exporter and an employer. Aerospace is a net contributor to the balance of trade of some £2·5 billion a year. It is one of those high-value-added industries where Britain has enjoyed—and still enjoys in certain areas—the world lead.

As we have heard, Britain's aerospace industry is the third largest in the world behind the dominant United States and just behind France. However, competition is tough and becoming tougher. To survive in world markets the industry must stay ahead of the competition—and to do that requires huge amounts of investment in research and in technology acquisition.

The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, which lobbied Parliament today, points out that British manufacturers are competing to sell our aircraft in an overcrowded market. They are competing against manufacturers from Brazil, France, Italy, the United States, Canada, Korea, Spain, Germany, Holland and Sweden, all of which are in direct receipt of Government support.

Our competitors understand that competition is fierce. In October, Germany announced an eight-point strategic programme for the improvement of basic conditions for aerospace in Germany. The United States Federal Government are investing billions of dollars in aerospace and they are increasing their support. NASA's 1994 aeronautical research and development programme is up by 18 per cent. to more than $1 billion. The United States Defence Department spends $37 billion, of which more than 50 per cent. is applicable to aerospace technologies. The dual-use technology budget in 1994 is $964 million, linking the best of America's defence and commercial sectors. As we have already heard, President Clinton has announced an additional $17 billion of support for technology between 1994 and 1997.

The most worrying feature of the aerospace industry is that it is widely believed that Japan has taken the strategic decision to produce an entire aircraft by 2015. Only a fool would bet against it achieving that aim, bearing in mind its success in world markets with cars, televisions, videos, hi-fi and computers. Other competitors are also building up their aerospace industries—for example, Taiwan and Indonesia.

With the background of the Select Committee report and after hearing the Prime Minister's encouraging words, I awaited the Budget with great interest. I hoped that, at last, the Government would take responsibility for mapping out a strategy for the future support of the aerospace industry. That is important because exactly the opposite has happened during recent years. Since 1974, Government support under the civil aircraft research and demonstration programme for the aerospace industry has fallen in real terms, on 1993 figures, from £87 million per year to £20 million per year.

Yet what happened in the Budget? Nothing. There was no vision for the future, no statement of direction, no tangible support for the industry—it was as though those who spoke at the conference were different people from those who speak in this House. Frankly, that is of great concern to those who work in the industry and to those of us who represent constituencies with a long tradition of involvement in aerospace.

There was a time when Government felt and demonstrated responsibility for the future of industries in Britain. By any standard, aerospace is one of our key industries. As I have already said, it is one of the few that has a positive effect on the balance of payments—more than £2·5 billion. It also employs large numbers of skilled people in well-paid, high-value-added jobs. Sadly, during recent years the number of people employed has fallen and is continuing to fall—35,000 jobs have been lost since 1985.

Part of that reduction is due to improvements in productivity and the use of technology in the design and manufacturing process. However, part is also due to the lack of direction and Government support for an industry that is becoming increasingly competitive worldwide. The Government are not supporting our aerospace industry in the same way as the Governments of our major competitors are supporting their industries in the USA, France, Germany, Canada and, increasingly, the far east.

The Select Committee's report supported the view of the Department of Trade and Industry's aviation committee on what needs to be done to maintain the industry's technological competitiveness. That was set out by the aviation committee in the form of a national strategic technology acquisition plan—NSTAP—which the Minister accepted on 20 July. The key recommendation of the Select Committee's report was recommendation 19——

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): The hon. Gentleman said that the Minister accepted the NSTAP report on 20 July. It might be better if he corrected that statement and said that the principle was accepted—the Government have still not said how the recommendations in the report ar[illegible] be funded.

Mr. Jones: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says. In fact, the former president of the Bristol chamber of commerce, Alex Ewens, wrote in the *Western Daily Press* on 19 November:

> "The DTI has decided to adopt the principles of NSTAP, but has said nothing about how it is to be funded."

Recommendation 19 of the Select Committee report states:

> "The Government should set out in much greater detail than hitherto the overall policy framework and view of the industry's future which it intends to guide individual decisions affecting the UK aerospace industry."

That recommendation and, indeed, the whole report was welcomed by the industry.

Sir Barry Duxbury, director of the Society of British Aerospace Companies—the SBAC—the trade association for the aerospace industry, said in a news release dated 21 July 1993:

> "This report proves that parliamentarians across the political spectrum are keen to take a long-term view of manufacturing industry. It also proves that the House of Commons does want to address the important issues that will determine our country's ability to pay for its social aspirations."

Sadly, following the Government's response to the Committee's report, Sir Barry issued another SBAC release on 10 November stating:

> "I must say that the Government's response to recommendation 19 was particularly disappointing. This recommendation urged the Government to set out in much greater detail than hitherto, its overall policy framework and view of the industry's

[Mr. Jones]

> future—in other words, to spell out clearly the strategic thinking, analysis and prioritisation which should guide its policies. Yet the response implied an absence of strategic thinking."

Those were Sir Barry's words, not mine—but I agree.

Britain has some excellent aerospace companies. British Aerospace is by far the largest, Rolls-Royce make the best engines in the world, and there are leading equipment suppliers such as Smiths Industries and Dowty—which have operations in and near my constituency. Dowty supplies the landing gear for the European airbus and won the contract for the A320 in 1983. Supply began three years later in 1986, and repair and overhaul is expected to start in 1994. It is likely that that aircraft will still be flying in 2025 or even 2030.

The Dowty A320 landing gear contract demonstrates the long life of aerospace projects—in that case, 40 years. I am making the point that investment this year will not bring a payback for many years. The Government have a role to play in helping projects through launch aid at the front end of a project, in the research and development years.

The Government should put into action the report's recommendations in full, increase the limited amount of support given to British aerospace companies so that they enjoy a level playing field in competition against countries in which Government support is more extensive, and extend launch aid to the equipment sector. That last point is important because equipment suppliers have been discouraged from applying for launch aid in the past. On page 69 of volume 2 of the report, Dowty states in evidence:

> "Dowty did not apply for launch aid for its landing gear on the A330-340 in a formal way because we were consistently informed by the DTI that it would not be forthcoming."

Why not?

Aerospace is a global industry. British companies, to succeed in world markets, must innovate and stay ahead of the competition. Although we need to join with our European partners to tackle ambitious projects such as the BFLA so that British companies retain a slice of world business now and in future, and while I welcome the recent link between Dowty and Messier Bugatti, British companies can—with the right support—create wealth and jobs for Britain into the next century.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) introduced the Liberal Democrat alternative to the Budget one week before the Chancellor introduced his Budget. That of my friend mapped out hope for the future and included £400 million in support for scientific research. Part of that was earmarked for aerospace support.

Last Friday, I met Graham Lockyer, managing director of Dowty Aerospace Landing Gear. He estimates that the aerospace industry needs £100 million of support annually, which is rather more than the Government are providing this year. The industry is not asking for cash handouts or to be featherbedded, but wants a flow of orders so that it can produce a flow of supply.

I agree with the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) that the Government should make up their mind on the replacement for the Hercules transport fleet. British companies such as Westland of Yeovil and Dowty Propellers in Cheltenham have already won contracts to supply key equipment to Lockheed for the C130J, one of the options. Many British Hercules aircraft are aging after decades in service and it is not fair that our service men should be expected to make do with aircraft of old design that have done sterling service for as long as 30 years.

The aerospace industry is not just about jobs today but about job and wealth creation well into the next century. The Government are placing that future in jeopardy. All the warning lights are red, with the fierce and increasing competition from abroad, the high and increasing cost of new products, and a slowdown in orders. This year, for the first time, design engineers have been made redundant. Once design teams are lost, it is virtually impossible to put them back together—and highly expensive if one can.

Aerospace is a global business and the people who work in it are extremely mobile. If there are no jobs for them in Britain, they will go abroad. If they see no long-term future for the industry in Britain, they will go abroad for good. There are competitors who would love to recruit designers from Britain because they are the best in the world. They would be recruiting not just the skills of our people but the world-leading knowledge that they gained in our companies. That would make it even more difficult for British firms to compete.

I urge the Government to act on all 19 of the Committee's recommendations. If they fail to do so, there is a danger that our aerospace industry will contract, jobs will continue to be lost, and we shall suffer a deteriorating balance of payments. I am critical of the Chancellor's Budget. Where were the measures to create wealth for five, 10 or 15 years down the track? We must encourage those companies which are at the leading edge of technology. We must train people to become the designers and the engineers of the future, and they must know that there is a secure, well-paid career ahead of them.

We must face up to the future and invest now; otherwise the future will be bleak. If we fail to act now, I fear that the historians of the next century will write of the British Government of the 1990s: "Where was the strategy? Where was the vision?"

9.5 pm

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): I congratulate the Select Committee on Trade and Industry on a wide-ranging and deep analysis of the aerospace industry and welcome many of the Government's responses. I will pick up in particular three of the recommendations and responses which affect Jetstream aircraft. The company operates from my constituency in Prestwick and was referred to earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson).

Jetstream employs 2,600 people at Prestwick. Redundancy notices have been issued to some 460, and a further 130 site contractors are also to go. The situation perhaps reflects the realities of the marketplace and Jetstream, which designs and builds turboprop regional jet aircraft, does not try to hide behind the difficulties of the marketplace. Its preference, without a doubt, is for free markets. However, even with the GATT talks coming to what we all hope will be a successful conclusion, it is unlikely that freedom of the marketplace will be a consequence of that conclusion.

Three major projects are produced by Jetstream, to which I will initially relate my comments on recommendation 8 of the report. One of the projects is the Jetstream 31, which is a real trailblazer: it is a 19-seater aircraft, is the market leader worldwide and has taken up 36 per cent. of the 12 to 19-seat aircraft market. That has led Jetstream to develop Jetstream 41. It is a 29-seater and it was certificated in record time from the date of its announcement. Jetstream 41 has left the company's rival Dornier, which proposed a similar aircraft at the same time as British Aerospace, standing at the blocks.

Jetstream 41 offers a plane which can meet all the performance criteria of its competitors in speed, range and payload and, above all, meet them at what is recognised to be the lowest cost on the market—the lowest cost without a substantial subsidy. It has real potential. The Jetstream 41 and 31 programmes have received some Government support. Some £11 million has been given through regional selective assistance, regional development and training grants. However, there have been almost 400 sales, which has provided earnings of about $2 billion.

That means that Jetstream has paid to the Exchequer in taxes some £64 million, which, when the £11 million grant is taken into account, leaves it as a net contributor to the British economy accounting for some £53 million. That does not take account of the wealth that has been generated in Ayrshire, in Scotland generally and throughout the United Kingdom. Many companies throughout the United Kingdom assist and supply the Jetstream projects.

Recently, Jetstream failed to win an order from Sky West, an American company, for some 20 aircraft. That was despite the fact that it was recognised that the Jetstream product was liable to have the lowest cost. The competitor, Embraer of Brazil, used the Proex system of subsidy and was able to discount its aircraft by between 12 and 15 per cent. Its aircraft were thus $1 million cheaper than anything Jetstream could possibly compete with.

That brings me to recommendation 8 of the report. There is a suggestion that the United Kingdom Government should make comparisons between the levels of subsidies offered here and those offered overseas. In the example to which I referred, that would be very helpful.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, for once, I agree with everything that he has said? I hope that that does not upset him too much and does not do him too much harm back home. Does he agree that he and all Ayrshire Members made those points when they met the Minister for Industry? Does he also accept that we were all a little disappointed by the lack of urgency that the Minister brought to the point? Will the hon. Gentleman join me in hoping that the Minister for Industry has now appreciated the seriousness of the situation in Prestwick and that he will deal with these matters rather more vigorously in his reply tonight than he dealt with them at our meeting last month?

Mr. Gallie: The hon. Gentleman may agree with all that I have said today, but I will hold back a little my total agreement with him on the issue. I was slightly disappointed by some of the things that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry said to me on that occasion. However, when I spoke to him later, he gave me assurances and said that he would meet the managing director of Jetstream. He assured me that if he received additional information, the issues would be addressed positively. I have every confidence that my right hon. Friend will do that in due course. I accept that it was necessary to provide additional information.

Let us consider the facts behind the Brazilian offer in respect of Embraer. The salt is rubbed in when I discover that we have been providing technical aid to Brazil through our overseas aid programmes and through international debt write-off. Ministers must consider that aspect. I am in favour of overseas aid, but it must be provided reasonably. I do not expect it to bounce back and kick us in the teeth, as it has on this occasion. I am concerned about the fact that a further order of 20 aircraft is probably coming up. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minster will address that issue and ensure that the same conditions do not prevail the next time round.

Prestwick has recently taken on the advanced turbo-prop programme. It picked up a considerable number of problems, but the designers are coming to grips with them. Indeed, British Airways has commended those designers on the way in which they have tackled some of the long-standing problems of the ATP. The intention is to turn the ATP into the new Jetstream 61 which will compete—and I am confident will beat—the ATR 72, which has the majority market share in the 60-seater market.

The Government have provided assistance through regional aid through the Scottish Office. To date, no payments have been made, but with the successful transfer of the ATP to Prestwick, I believe that that payment is now due. When we consider the range of aircraft that Jetstream needs to build if it is to stay in that sector of the market, it is clear that there are gaps in the 50-seater and 70-seater ranges. In those respects, Jetstream needs, and is looking for, partners. At the same time, it will need assistance with launch aid, about which we have heard much tonight.

I now refer to recommendation 10. We are aware that launch aid is dependent on GATT, which suggests that a third of relevant costs can be met in launch aid provision. That reflects one third of the costs associated with the development of aircraft above the 100-seater range. One can compare the development costs and profitability of smaller aircraft. Larger aircraft are restricted to one third support payments. I query whether it would be possible, under existing arrangements, to go above one third launch aid support for aircraft beneath the 100-seater range. That would be a great benefit to Jetstream.

When we consider the potential market for aircraft in that range, we must acknowledge that any money brought forward initially by Government support for projects such as the Jetstream 61 and 51 and, some day, the 71 will be well spent if the returns are as good as they have been in respect of the Jetstream 31 and 41. I am confident that, with the knowledge, capability and design expertise in Jetstream at Prestwick, such good returns can certainly be achieved.

Recommendation 13 of the Trade and Industry Select Committee report refers to the Ministry of Defence procurement programme. I was particularly pleased to see my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement here. Not long ago, he met me and the managing director of Jetstream to consider the Department's trainer provision, currently T30s and T31s.

Mr. Brian Donohoe (Cunninghame, South): Has anything come of that meeting with the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, given that it is the wish of the Jetstream management and the work force that an order be placed by the Ministry of Defence to replace old aircraft?

Mr. Gallie: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. Ministry of Defence officials have met people

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from Jetstream at Prestwick to discuss those issues. A paper was tabled which laid down what Jetstream considered to be some long-term financial advantages. I am not aware of the final conclusions, but I should like at least to think that the Ministry of Defence and Jetstream can find a solution that will benefit them both.

On free trade, Britain cannot be unilateralist. Therefore, I again refer to my first point and ask my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry to analyse every aspect of the subsidies which operate in the international aviation market and ensure that Jetstream can compete on a level playing field.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor mentioned a 20-seater aircraft tax exemption to be applied to travellers within the United Kingdom. Given the current situation, and given the sort of aircraft that service the highlands and islands, it would be reasonable to extend that tax relief to 70-seater aircraft. That, above all, would help Jetstream with its excellent project.

My final point relates to the export credit guarantees on Jetstream 31 and 41 aircraft. If the time elements of seven and 10 years were extended to 12 years, it would be a great boost to the excellent products manufactured by Jetstream at Prestwick.

9.20 pm

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): I am only the second member of the Select Committee to participate in this debate. I echo the sentiments of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) and pay tribute to the clerks and staff of the Committee, and to the specialist advisers. Undoubtedly, they assisted us in producing a report that has been warmly welcomed by everyone connected with the aerospace industry, other than the Department of Trade and Industry.

Given the time scale I now face, I hope to comment on the Government's response to the report. It is interesting to note that not one Tory member of the Select Committee is present in the House tonight. It is also interesting to note that Scottish National party Members are not present either, although more than 8,000 manufacturing jobs in Scotland are tied up in the aerospace industry.

The British aerospace industry is vital to UK plc. It is one of the high-value industries and is a major contributor to employment in a high-skill, high-wage sector, exports and technology. More important, the industry is vital to the regions of the United Kingdom. Until last year, Rolls-Royce was the largest manufacturing employer in my constituency of East Kilbride. It has now gone down the pecking list to become the second largest manufacturing employer. It has dropped thousands of jobs over the years.

I do not have time to go into the background of Rolls-Royce, but it is no exaggeration to say that there is extreme nervousness among the work force at East Kilbride and the sister plant at Hillingdon in Glasgow. Certainly, the work force are critical of the company but they have a certain understanding of the dilemma and difficulties that it faces. However, the workers do not have confidence in the Government and the way in which they approach such a crucial industry.

If my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) had spoken in the debate, he would have referred to the situation at British Aerospace at Prestwick. I am sure that he would have made a similar comment about the Rolls-Royce workers in Glasgow and East Kilbride. Those workers have no confidence whatever in the Government. They know that the industry is doing its best and the company is fighting hard in a competitive market without the Government's support.

We have a lot to be proud of in Britain's aerospace industry, but we have more to be concerned about for the future. Engineers do not live on history alone. One message game across loud and clear in all the evidence given by aerospace manufacturers in the United Kingdom and the main suppliers—there is a need for a coherent Government strategy for the aerospace industry if the country's relative international strength in aerospace technology is to survive beyond the end of this decade and into the next century.

Every company that gave evidence to the Committee —Rolls-Royce, British Aerospace, Short Brothers, GEC, Dowty, Westland, the major trade associations, the Electronic Engineering Association and the Society of British Aerospace Companies—highlighted the growing concern about the near crisis in the industry.

There is no doubt that the industry is suffering, and will continue to suffer, because of the Government-created UK recession, the international recession and the effects of the massive and largely unpredictable downturn in defence expenditure world-wide. Uniquely among our competitors, that suffering is compounded in the United Kingdom industry by an indifferent and unsupportive Government. The Americans, French, Germans, Japanese and the emerging aerospace economies in Taiwan, Indonesia and Brazil all have the active support of their Governments. Those Governments recognise the long-term planning and investment horizons, which are an integral feature of aerospace technology, and assist their home-based companies accordingly. It is only in the United Kingdom that the view remains within Government that they should have a hands-off approach and that the market should dictate the future developments of this most strategic of industries.

The difference in strategy between, say, the United Kingdom and the United States could not be more stark. The DTI and the Government dither about what to do with the Select Committee report and the fears and worries of the British aerospace industry, while at the same time cutting the support that they give the industry. Compare that with the United States aerospace industry. One of the first steps of the incoming Clinton Government was to lay down a revised technology and investment plan, committing more than $17 billion for the period 1994 to 1997. The bulk of that will be of direct benefit to the United States aerospace industry. By comparison, our Government are cutting support to one of our crucial industries.

In its evidence to the Committee, Shorts, which I mentioned earlier, highlighted the difference in approach between this country and competitor countries. It told the Committee that it knows, from particular collaborative projects in which it has been involved, that significantly higher levels of financial assistance are available in the Netherlands, France, Germany, Spain, Canada and Japan than are available to it.

Mr. Gallie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ingram: No. The hon. Gentleman took enough time, and I am not going to give him more time.

I am sure that the chief executive of Dowty spoke for the whole United Kingdom aerospace industry when he told the Committee that the company was up against not just competitors but other Governments.

The tragedy is that the United Kingdom Government are rapidly becoming one of those Governments that the United Kingdom industry is up against. It is for that reason that the Committee laid down its 19 recommendations. The report was unanimous. There was a Conservative majority on the Committee and 19 recommendations set out what the Committee thought was necessary for the future of the United Kingdom aerospace industry.

The recommendations fell into two main categories. The first concerned the need for public money to be allocated to the industry. That public investment should be targeted in two key areas—implementation of the national strategic technology acquisition plan, which my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central spoke of in detail, and an improved allocation of launch aid for specific projects.

The other key area dealt with the need for a coherent strategy. I shall make two brief points about NSTAP and launch aid. NSTAP is not an over-ambitious concept, nor is it greedy in its demand for public funds. It is calling for £1 billion to be invested in this strategic industry over 10 years. I see the grocer on the Government Front Bench smiling. The Minister does not understand how important investment in those industries is. That request for investment would be matched by the industry itself. It must be set against the $17 billion which was mentioned earlier, and which has been laid down for a four-year period in the United States.

Given the time constraints on me, I shall conclude by saying that I wanted to mention in detail the letters that Rolls-Royce sent to members of the Committee and to hon. Members who are interested in the industry. However, I draw the Minister's attention to a letter that refers to the importance of the recommendations in relation to the NSTAP report and to launch aid. Rolls-Royce is not a company with its hands out, greedily dipping into the taxpayer's pocket. It contributed greatly to the well-being of the country. If the Minister has not already read that letter, it would be well worth him taking the time to do so.

Another comment was made about the Select Committee's report. Recommendation 19 set out a request, which was not over-radical, for a coherent strategy for the industry. The response from the Minister and the DTI was nothing short of scandalous. It is worth repeating a quote about that response. It is little wonder that Sir Barry Duxbury of the Society of British Aerospace Companies retorted:

> "Yet the response implied an absence of strategic thinking."

That absence has major implications for tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs. If the Government do not decide soon what they will do, we shall not have an industry left that is able to compete with the best in the rest of the world. We have only a short time scale in which to do that. I shall listen carefully to the Minister's reply to the Select Committee report.

9.30 pm

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I congratulate the Chairman and members of the Committee on their excellent report. The maintenance of a successful United Kingdom aerospace industry is of even greater importance to Northern Ireland than it is to Great Britain, although that importance has been outlined by hon. Members with constituency interests on the mainland.

Short's of Belfast is the oldest aircraft manufacturing company in the world. It was founded by the three Short brothers at the beginning of the century. It was in Government ownership from 1943 until it was privatised in 1989 and then acquired by Bombardier. Since privatisation, almost £200 million has been invested in a programme of re-equipping and modernisation. That programme is nearing completion. Annual sales have doubled. The company has returned to profitability and, as Northern Ireland's largest employer, with more than 7,000 employees and approximately 3,000 jobs among local suppliers, its growth reflects Short's success.

The company manufactures the Short's Tucano military trainer under licence and designs and manufactures aircraft components and structures for Boeing, Rolls-Royce, British Aerospace, Fokker, Lear Jet, Canadair and others. Most of Short's business is based on international collaboration with other Bombardier aerospace companies, including a partnership with Fokker and Deutsche Aerospace on the Fokker 100 aircrft, joint ventures with Hurel-Dubois for engine nacelles and with Thompson in missiles. The design and manufacture of guided weapons systems for very short-range air defence remains a profitable aspect of Short's business.

Since privatisation, the company has made rapid progress as a result of focused investment and radically improved manufacturing processes. Its competitiveness and capability within the aerospace industry has never been better. The company is in a sound position to cope with the recession in the commercial aircraft industry and the decline in military orders, but today's strength could be threatened in the long term unless there is closer co-operation between the Government and the British aerospace industry as a whole in the immediate future.

The United Kingdom industry is crying out for a national plan to maintain the United Kingdom's technological advantage. Adequate levels of Government support for research and development, launch aid and other investments is essential to safeguard the industry in the future. The investment programme at Short's, the process improvements, freedom to harness the skills, effort and enthusiasm of the work force and competitiveness in a commercial environment have made Short's the best cost producer in the Bombardier aerospace empire. Since privatisation, the company is putting more and more business into Northern Ireland through its local support development progamme.

I have some questions for the Minister. Have the Department of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Defence got the same level of commitment as the United Kingdom aerospace industry to maintaining that industry at the leading edge and in a position of strength in world markets? Have the DTI, the MOD and the Treasury reached an agreement yet with the United Kingdom aerospace industry on the long-term future plans for that industry? Do the Government accept that there should be a national technology acquisition plan? What proposals does the DTI have to support and encourage the United Kingdom aerospace industry to continue to invest, even through recession, in new project development and new

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technology acquisition to prevent our international competitors from achieving advantage through their on-going investment programmes?

9.35 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) and his Committee on producing the unanimous report. Those of us who have sat through the whole debate have seen that unanimity reflected in every comment. It will not be unique that the only discordant voices will be from the Government Benches, when all the arguments made by the Minister's hon. Friends and [illegible] hon. Friends will be ignored and the Government's line that it should all be left to market forces will be repeated.

My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) made two important points, about the GATT negotations and about the aerospace industry. I am sure that all hon. Members feel that we need transparency in the aerospace industry—particularly in view of the American subsidies—or the European industry will be placed at a considerable disadvantage. I hope that the Government, through the European Union, will take a strong line on that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blackley also mentioned the skills needed in the aerospace industry and those that have already been developed. A key aspect of this important industry is not just its contribution to the balance of payments or that it is a high-tech industry, but that it is one of the most highly skilled industries in the country, if not the highest. Some 40 per cent. of the country's skilled and technical personnel are employed in the aerospace or aerospace-related industry. We cannot afford to lose that skilled manpower and investment, and my hon. Friend was right to draw that to our attention.

The hon. Member for Ayre (Mr. Gallie) made a cogent case for public intervetion and mentioned the spin-off that it has for the public and private sectors. It is a rare occasion, but his contribution is worth another look. I suggest that he reads it again, because he will find that, instead of somebody who strongly believes in the market, he is sombody who believes strongly in public intervention.

The hon. Member for Ayr made a very strong case for Jetstream showed his concern for it. His concern is shared by my hon. Friends the Members for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) and for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Donohoe). They also support the Committee's recommendation in relation to launch aid and the need for public expenditure in that respect.

Two key issues came out of the debate. The first was defence procurement and the extent to which the aerospace industry relies on it. In paragraph 108 of the Select Committee's report, an unnamed witness from GEC made comments which strongly sum up the arguments in favour of some system of defence diversification:

> "if we are not careful, almost a classic recipe for eventual run-down and decline of the aerospace industry, because the Ministry of Defence is, in aerospace terms, the main procurer/buyer without having the responsibility for the health of the industry. The DTI, of course, has responsibility for the health but has not got the clout to actually do anything about it."

That summarises the problem between our commitment to defence and the rundown in defence expenditure. The hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) made an interesting contribution about defence procurement and the role for the Government, but, along with every other speaker, he recognised the important point that defence expenditure will decline in the future.

When one compares the comments made to the Select Committee by a representative of GEC with the response from the Minister, it is clear that there is a great gulf between the attitude expressed by one of our leading companies and that of the Government. The Minister said that matters should simply be left to the market. He said it was up to individual companies to sort out their own futures.

No one would accuse GEC of being a socialist organisation or of being anti-market. It is clear, however, that that company has recognised something that the Government are either too blind or too stupid to see, because it appreciates that the Government have a role to play if we are to keep the skills and technology that are tied up in the aerospace industry. President Clinton and other Heads of Government have recognised that, but our Government believe that matters should simply be left to the market.

I hope that, even at this late hour, the Minister for Industry will recognise that the Government should make a different response to the calls from industry and that they should recognise the importance of skills and technology. At the end of the debate, perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will say to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central and all those who supported him in the Select Committee and in the House tonight, that the Government accept their responsibility to help those companies that rely on defence orders to diversify their skills and technologies into new civilian-based activities.

The first issue to consider is defence procurement and its future. The second issue is the role of the Government and their responsibilities. My hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) was right to say that our defence industry competes not only against other foreign industries, but against their Governments. The key issue that we must recognise is that, as my hon. Friend said, this is a global industry in which the players are not simply companies, because in every other country the players are companies and Governments working together.

The key passage in the Select Committee report is contained in four paragraphs on pages 38 and 39 that discuss the role of Government support. It is worth reminding ourselves that that report is an all-party document and that its recommendations are unanimous. Each of them suggests to the Government that there must be greater public support for various activities relating to the aerospace industry. The reasons set out in those four paragraphs are understood by everyone except the Minister. Everyone else is aware that the British aerospace industry, in common with every other aerospace industry, needs long-term investment in research and development. The financial market cannot satisfy those needs, so the answer must be for the Government to adopt a more proactive role. Labour and Conservative members of the Select Committee recognised the need for additional expenditure.

Apart from funding, hon. Members have also identified another problem that confronts British industry and British aerospace industries in particular. Those industries suffer from one other crucial weakness: they simply do not know where the Government are going strategically. There is no clear definition of the relationship between Government and industry.

I know that that may come as a surprise to you, Madam Speaker. I also know that you read widely, and I am sure that you read the publication of the President of the Board of Trade on politics and industry, which appeared when he was going around the rubber chicken circuit, running his campaign against the then Prime Minister. The right hon. Gentleman said in that work that the aerospace industry was the key industry that Government had to support and with which they should define a proper role.

That is the view of the President of the Board of Trade. Unfortunately, he did not seem to have gone from one office to another in the Department of Trade and Industry to explain that role to the Minister of State who is now responsible. It is so clear and frustrating and comes out in the evidence and conclusions of the Select Committee report, that British industrialists do not know what the Government expect or what they can expect of the Government. We often hear the phrase that we need a level playing field. The Government cannot define the playing field because they feel that they have no responsibility in that direction. We and the Select Committee want the Government to play a clear role in defining their purpose and function in relation to the aerospace industry.

Many questions have been raised, which the Minister would like to answer. What I should like to hear from the Minister—crucial and sadly lacking in any contribution that he makes to this or any other debate—is agreement that we need a strategic view and a vision of partnership between Government and industry and a recognition that that would help and assist an important industry such as British Aerospace. The Committee report has set that out and it is now up to Ministers to live up to that challenge. I fear that they will fail yet again.

9.45 pm

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): I shall begin with three lots of congratulations. First, I congratulate and thank the Select Committee on Trade and Industry on the painstaking and thorough work in its report on the aerospace industry. In the comments that the Committee made on the Government's response, I was pleased to see that we have made "a useful beginning" in translating its recommendations into action. I know that Select Committees are not always so generous to the Government, and for a moment in tonight's debate I thought that that generosity was slipping away. I also congratulate all hon. Members on both sides of the House who have spoken. I hope that what they said has reaffirmed the importance that the House attaches to the industry.

Thirdly, I congratulate the industry itself. In 1992, in the midst of one of the worst downturns in the civil and military aerospace industry since the war, United Kingdom companies continued to perform well with sales of over £10 billion, exports worth £7 billion and a positive balance of trade of well over £2 billion, and was one of the major sources of employment with more than 137,000 employees.

As the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) said, it is something that we are really good at. Plenty of companies in the sector are good examples of world leaders—British Aerospace in military technology and the design of large and advanced wings, Rolls-Royce plc across a whole range of civil and military engines, GEC, Westland and, as the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) mentioned, Short's, a company that I have visited on more than one occasion and one that has transformed to become among the world leaders in its field.

However, as hon. Members have said, there are problems. There have been job losses and the industry has recently suffered. I share the concern that has been stressed about those who have lost their jobs. Nevertheless, those losses must be placed in context. No person or business is entirely immune to market conditions. That even includes the mighty Boeing company, which recently announced production cuts that will lead to job losses of 3,000 now and of 27,000 by the middle of next year.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Will the Minister say whether the airbus issue has been withdrawn from the GATT talks tonight? Will he tell the House what the latest situation is, as I have a big constituency say in that decision?

Mr. Sainsbury: I know of the hon. Gentleman's constituency interest. I shall come to the GATT situation later. I have been in the House for three years and I do not know how up to date I will be—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry, I meant three hours: the situation is changing hourly, not just yearly.

Hon. Members will know of many other job losses throughout the world in the industry—times are hard. However, I do not believe that they will remain so for ever or even for long. In those circumstances, obviously the industry must ensure that it emerges from the recession lean, fit and ready to take on the challenges and opportunities of the longer-term growth in the market.

The primary responsibility lies with the industry to restructure, forge international alliances, plan for the future, benchmark itself against its leading competitors and ensure that it operates at peak efficiency. Governments can help by getting the economic climate right, emphasising the need for competitiveness and establishing sensible rules governing world trade such as GATT. Ultimately it is for the industry to ensure its own future by effective management.

There has been a lot of talk today about the overall policy framework. Indeed, much of the Select Committee's work has been to look at what the Government's role is or should be. In its recommendation 19, the Committee asked the Government to set out our overall policy framework in more detail. If the Government are to have a sensible understanding with the aerospace industry of where our and their priorities lies there must be adequate communication between us. Helping United Kingdom business to compete in world markets is our shared objective. Therefore, we shall continue our close dialogue with companies, trade associations and the people of the industry. Within that framework, industry can make clear to us its priorities.

However, we do not believe that it would be sensible for the Government to make a once and for all strategic statement. After all, the Government are not the key player.

Mr. Caborn: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Sainsbury: No. I must press on. Time is limited.

The Government have a responsibility to set a climate in which industry can prosper by their economic and fiscal policies, by establishing a free and open trade regime and,

[Mr. Sainsbury]

in industries such as aerospace where the market finds it difficult to respond to all the industry's needs, by taking specific measures such as launch aid and the civil aircraft research and demonstration programme. It is for industry to take the lead in ensuring that it can win in world markets.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) and several other hon. Members referred to the national strategic technology acquisition plan. The Committee's report placed a great deal of weight on it. The plan was produced by the aviation committee—a useful committee set up to advise the Government. The document is extremely useful and to some extent groundbreaking, as I hope that I made clear last July when I adopted the technological priorities which it contains on behalf of my Department.

By producing the NSTAP when it did, the aeronautics industry has led the way in carrying through the approach to technology foresight and the prioritisation of research and technology which was set out in the Government's science and engineering technology White Paper "Realising our Potential". That is not to say that NSTAP is a simple and self-sufficient list of instructions which one needs only to follow closely to guarantee immediate technological enlightenment.

Although the plan is a detailed and thorough document, a considerable amount of work is needed if it is to be applied in practice. First, the generic categories that it represents are to be broken down into more specific areas of direct application. Secondly, those categories need to be mapped on to the research effort that is already going on, especially in industry, my Department, the Ministry of Defence, the Civil Aviation Authority, the Science and Engineering Research Council, academia and Europe.

Until we are clear about the range of current activity, we cannot identify the gaps and overlaps that may be limiting the effectiveness of our efforts in research and technology acquisition. Such painstaking work is an essential prerequisite in assessing whether extra effort is needed.

In order to achieve this, a working group involving industry, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Defence, SERC and the Office of Science and Technology is carrying out pilot studies which are intended to refine the analysis in the NSTAP. That involves taking three category 1 technologies, assessing industry's needs in the light of commercial opportunities, relative priorities and benefits to the United Kingdom, and matching the results against existing industry and public sector programmes. Those studies will take some months, after which we can judge the best way to proceed.

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Sainsbury: I cannot give way, as time is limited, if the hon. Gentleman will excuse me.

That is not to say that NSTAP has only had an influence in the world of theory and not in the real world. The priorities set out in the plan have served as a guide in the selection of the project to be supported under the second CARAD programme. Those priorities are also helping to define the areas that should be emphasised under the European Community framework 4 programme.

By its very nature, research and technology acquisition does not normally allow for a precise identification of the appropriate level of resource for any given project. If I may explain by example; we might be seeking to identify an alloy with certain properties. We could have one team in one lab working on the research part time, or several teams in several laboratories working full time. One cannot know in advance whether the first or the second team will arrive at the right answer. The pharmaceutical industry is a good example of that.

However, in CARAD we are not dealing with just one project but a range. My Department's second and third year CARAD programme was rigorously assessed to ensure a clear focus on the priorities that have been identified by the industry. It must be for Government to determine the priorities between the various demands of industry and the economy as a whole and, therefore, the resources to be allocated to CARAD.

We take fully into account the importance of the industry, the range of priorities that have been identified, the importance of maintaining our technological competitiveness and the very substantial resources being devoted to research and development for the aerospace industry by that industry, the Ministry of Defence and other publicly funded science and technology programmes in Whitehall, the science base and Europe.

It is against that background that I have to tell the House that I do not believe that any reliable or precise estimate can be made of the right level of public support for research and technology acquisition. It is a matter of judgment in the light of all the circumstances and subject to regular review as those circumstances change. Indeed, the very process of review, involving close liaison between my Department, the industry and other organisations, is building the partnership that we need to bring the NSTAP priorities to fruition and hence to influence the research priorities in industry, Whitehall, defence, the science base and Europe.

In the limited time available I do not intend to comment directly on the Government's role as a customer. That is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. However, as hon. Members will have seen, my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement has been present and has noted what has been said.

Some hon. Members have spoken—notably the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett)—as if the Government did nothing for the industry. So I make no apology for running once again through the support that the industry already enjoys, since it is the envy of many other equally significant sectors.

Since 1979, we have made available more than £1·5 billion in launch aid, regional development grants and support for research and development programmes. The Export Credits Guarantee Department has provided £735 million in export credit guarantees during the past three years. Launch aid is unique to the aerospace industry, which is the only sector with its own dedicated DTI research budget. The House should recognise the considerable scale of support that the industry has had and continues to enjoy.

The GATT Uruguay round has been mentioned and it is reaching what seems to be a nail-biting conclusion. We have been actively working, through the EC and directly, to press for more equitable and comprehensive disciplines on the trade in civil aircraft, their engines and equipment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) mentioned Jetstream. I know that he takes a great interest in that company and I look forward to meeting him and the managing director later this week. Jetstream has made it clear that job losses were necessary to improve productivity, reduce costs and reflect present demand. Prestwick has benefited from previous Government assistance and substantial regional selective assistance is on offer from the Scottish Office for future development. Jetstream's current problems arise from the weakness in the market and the world-wide overcapacity and not from the lack of Government support. They are seeking a more international, collaborative partner to put their business on a sounder footing, and we are supporting the company when asked to do so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ayr mentioned the subsidies received by others. We must act, within international rules, to challenge subsidies offered to overseas competitors. That does not always bring quick results. Jetstream met my Department last week to discuss its evidence and we are continuing to discuss how best to pursue the matter.

At the start of my speech I paid tribute to the industry. It has received considerable support from the Government and we shall continue to support it. It is one of our leading exports; it provides employment throughout the country; and it stands at the leading edge of technology. We should celebrate its success, and I am pleased to do so tonight.

I apologise to those hon. Members who have made points to which I have not responded. I shall read the debate and I hope to respond to them in writing. I apologise for the shortness of time and I am grateful to those hon. Members who contributed to the debate.

It being Ten o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, and the Question necessary to dispose of the proceedings was deferred, pursuant to paragraph (4) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of estimates).*

MADAM SPEAKER, *pursuant to paragraph (5) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of estimates), put the deferred Questions on Supplementary Estimates, 1993-94 (Class II, Vote 2 and Class IV, Vote 2).*

Class II, Vote 2

Question put,

That a supplementary sum not exceeding £98,121,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31 March 1994 for expenditure by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on grants and subscriptions etc. to certain international organisations, special payments and assistance, scholarships, military aid and sundry other grants and services:——

The House divided: Ayes 309, Noes 54.

Division No. 26] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian

Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith

Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Ainger, Nick
Bayley, Hugh
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Callaghan, Jim
Cann, Jamie
Coffey, Ann
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek

Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jowell, Tessa
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
McKelvey, William
McMaster, Gordon
Maxton, John
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Morgan, Rhodri

Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Hara, Edward
Paisley, Rev Ian
Prescott, John
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Skinner, Dennis

Spearing, Nigel
Vaz, Keith
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Michael Clapham.

Question agreed to.

Class IV, Vote 2

Question put,

That a supplementary sum not exceeding £1,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to complete or defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31 March 1994 for expenditure by the Department of Trade and Industry on regional development grants, exchange risk and other losses, selective assistance to individual industries and firms, United Kingdom contributions arising from its commitments under the International Natural Rubber Agreement, a strategic mineral stockpile, support for the aerospace and shipbuilding industries, assistance to redundant steel and coal workers, for expenditure related to petroleum licensing and royalty, for other payments and for loans to trading funds.

The House divided: Ayes 286, Noes 72.

Division No. 27] **[10.14 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew

Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger

French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Andrew Mackay.

NOES

Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Boyes, Roland
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Cann, Jamie
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Coffey, Ann
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hinchliffe, David
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCartney, Ian
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Marlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Miller, Andrew
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Hara, Edward
Paisley, Rev Ian
Rendel, David
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Salmond, Alex
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Tyler, Paul
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Mr. Michael Clapham.

Question agreed to.

MADAM SPEAKER *then put forthwith the Questions which she was directed to put, pursuant to paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 53 (Questions on voting of estimates, &c.).*

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, 1993-94

Question put,

That a further supplementary sum, not exceeding £2,061,483,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to complete or defray the charges for Defence and Civil Services which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1994, as set out in House of Commons Paper No. 2 of Session 1993-94.

The House divided: Ayes 292, Noes 53.

Division No. 28] **[10.27 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David

Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick, and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Boyes, Roland
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Callaghan, Jim
Cann, Jamie
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Coffey, Ann
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Flynn, Paul
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Hain, Peter
Hinchliffe, David

Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Litherland, Robert
McCartney, Ian
McKelvey, William
McMaster, Gordon
Marlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Hara, Edward
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Walley, Joan
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Terry Lewis.

Question agreed to.

Estimates, 1994-95 (Vote on Account)

Question put,

That a sum not exceeding £92,463,143,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund, on account, for or towards defraying the charges for Defence and Civil Services for the year ending on 31st March 1995 as set out in House of Commons Papers Nos. 3, 4 and 5 of Session 1993-94.

The House divided: Ayes 293, Noes 62.

Division No. 29] **[10.39 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacKay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Michael Brown.

NOES

Ainger, Nick
Armstrong, Hilary
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Callaghan, Jim
Cann, Jamie
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Coffey, Ann
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Hain, Peter
Hanson, David
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Lewis, Terry
McCartney, Ian
McKelvey, William
McMaster, Gordon
Marlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Hara, Edward
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'k'ds E)*
Walley, Joan
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Robert Litherland.

Question agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the foregoing Resolutions by the Chairman of Ways and Means, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Michael Portillo, Mr. Stephen Dorrell, Sir John Cope and Mr. Anthony Nelson.

CONSOLIDATED FUND BILL

Mr. Stephen Dorrell accordingly presented a Bill to apply certain funds out of the Consolidated Fund to the service of the years ending on 31 March 1994 and 1995: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 7.]

Statutory Sick Pay Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

10.53 pm

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I beg to move,

> That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Statutory Sick Pay Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses incurred in consequences of the Act by a Minister of the Crown.

The resolution is in a form that will be familiar to the House, so I shall not weary hon. Members with a lengthy explanation of it. Sufficent to say that the Statutory Sick Pay Bill abolishes the right of employers to recover 80 per cent. of statutory sick pay paid to their employees from their remittances of national insurance contributions. It also requires employers to pay statutory sick pay to working women who fall sick and become incapable of work before reaching the age of 65. Both proposals will result in increased expenditure by the Government in their role as an employer. Hence the need for a money resolution, which I commend to the House.

10.25 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I am conscious of the fact that I rise at quite a late hour to initiate what I imagine will be a short debate on the resolution.

It is a tribute to the co-operation extended in the House and the speed with which we do our business that we have managed to dispose of four votes in a smidgen over 50 minutes. That does not suggest tardiness by my right hon. and hon. Friends.

I am also aware that the Committee of Selection—I am not sure in what particular human form—is waiting in the wings with some quite important motions. Therefore, it behoves us not to hold up the House unduly. I want to raise a number of issues with the Minister, however, and I know that the right hon. Gentleman, being a courteous man, will want to respond and explain the exact significance of the money resolution.

We find ourselves in a somewhat odd position, because we are debating the money resolution before we have the guillotine, the Second Reading or any other proceedings. Although my memory goes back 20 years in the House, my naivety or comparative inexperience means that I am used to debating the money resolution after the Second Reading. The more cynical among us remember occasions in which the money resolution has been used as an overflow debate for those who did not get called in the main show. Their contributions may have stretched the rules of procedure to the limit, but they were able to put some of their arguments.

People who are wiser in the ways of the House than I am, and to whose knowledge I defer, tell me that it is not without precedent to discuss the money resolution before the Second Reading. To discuss it before the guillotine motion, however, is rather odd, but then, as I am sure that you have noted, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are dealing with an unusual situation. We are, for example, specially empowered by the House as a result of a motion that we discussed on Friday to put down amendments for consideration in Committee, before the guillotine or the Second Reading. It is in that wrong-way-round world that we now find ourselves discussing the money resolution.

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

When the Minister no doubt courteously replies, he might deal briefly with whether it is normal to have such an order of events, or whether we have put the cart before the House. That is one of a number of metaphors that I intend to mix in my comparatively short speech.

The Minister was good enough to give the House a potted description of the Bill. I am conscious that we are not debating its merit now, but, as the right hon. Gentleman said, it deals with substantial sums. Those employers who are responsible for 85 per cent. of the work force will have to find £750 million. Some offset for those employers is proposed in other legislation covering reduced employers' national insurance contributions. Whether matters will be made neutral as a result is a matter for debate.

As the Minister also said, we will, at a later date, discuss the rather interesting peculiarity by which the concept of retirement age is replaced with the definition of 65 years. As the right hon. Gentleman said, that means that women over 60 years, but not yet aged 65, will be able to draw statutory sick pay and their state retirement pension. The Minister is more expert than I and he will correct me if I am wrong, but, as I understand it, the rules on overlapping benefits will not apply. It will therefore be possible for a woman between the age of 60 and 65 to receive both statutory sick pay and the state retirement pension. Otherwise, I hastily concede, the peculiarity will exist only until the year 2020. But that, as they say, is not tomorrow. It is an interesting situation which I am sure that we shall debate later.

Although substantial sums of money are at stake, we are told clearly in the explanatory and financial memorandum that the effect of the Bill on public service manpower is nil. It says:

> "The Bill is expected to have no effect on public sector manpower."

For all that, we are considering a motion which invites us to consider expenses incurred as a consequence of the Act by a Minister of the Crown. I do not suppose that that means expenses incurred in a personal sense. I should have thought that that was a narrow interpretation of the motion. We are talking about the administration expenses within the Minister's Department. I presume that it has that rather wider meaning.

I should like the Minister to say a word or two about exactly what the expenses are. After all, we know that the Bill will bring about a reduction in public spending, or perhaps have a neutral effect, if we take into account the offset and widen it to take in the secondary legislation that affects the employers' contribution. As we have been told that the Bill will have no effect on manpower—or personnel power—and as the Bill is intended to produce a reduction in public expenditure, which suggests a reduction in the work load, or at best will have a neutral effect, I am not clear where the additional administrative expenses arise. I put this as a serious point to the Minister. He owes us some explanation, because there is no reduction in manpower.

It would not be unreasonable to expect a reduction in staff responsibilities, so why do we require the money resolution? After all, there will not be the substantial—I am sure that it must be substantial—administrative coming and going and expense which is at present the consequence of paying the 80 per cent. of sick pay reclaimed by the majority of employers. Clearly, that must involve a great deal of paperwork. It must involve the monitoring, processsing and satisfying of claims. If all that is to be swept away, that is a big plus which presumably would result in a reduction in the administration expenses for which the Minister is responsible. It is certainly not clear to me where the additonal expenses, which not only offset the reductions but overtake them and produce a net gain in expenses, come from.

I want to be fair. Other features of the Bill might give rise to some additional expense, at least in the short term. We know, for example, that the definition of the small employer has been changed and that the sum involved in national insurance contributions will rise from £16,000 to £20,000. That may bring in a few more employers who formerly were not categorised as small employers, but now will be. I shall be interested to know whether the Minister can give us an estimate of how many employers will be dragged into that category as a result of the change.

Even if we assume that the change is significant—at present only 15 per cent. of the work force is employed by employers in that category—I do not see how it can overtake the very large cut in administrative expenses that I would expect from the loss of the responsibility to pay the 80 per cent., which is the main thrust of the legislation.

Mr. David Willetts (Havant): Does the hon. Member accept that, in his zeal to prove that the money resolution is unnecessary, he has proved that the substantive Bill is extremely sensible?

Mr. Dewar: That is extremely ingenious. The hon. Member, whose constituency I cannot remember—[HON. MEMBERS: "Havant."] Thank you. The hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) is noted for his ingenuity, which has stood him in good stead in many debates. He is right; in broad terms, I would welcome a reduction in administrative expenditure. However, I would not do so when it is bought at the expense of damage to the competitiveness of British industry and to the position of those people who have been evicted from invalidity benefit, have failed to qualify for incapacity benefit and who may find their position in the job market prejudiced.

Those are not matters that I can canvass now, although I have been tempted by the hon. Member for Havant. However, if he is telling me that the only argument in favour of the Bill—the decisive argument in his mind—is the fact that there is a small reduction in administrative expenses, which might mean that we do not need a money resolution, that is not the test that I would apply. There are much more serious arguments and, in very short order, we shall be able to continue those later this week, unfortunately much restricted by the guillotine.

My final argument in this passage of my speech is that even if one takes the retirement age, translated into the 65 cut-off point for men and women, that could be seen as a simplification—perhaps after an initial period. Again, I would have expected administrative savings, so it reinforces and buttresses my argument about why we need this resolution, which is taking up the time of the House.

I hope that the Minister of State will offer an explanation. Perhaps a money resolution is an automatic process; perhaps it is a sort of Pavlovian reaction within the Department or among the parliamentary draftsmen; or perhaps it is there as a sort of safety net. After all, we know that under present management the Department of Social Security is very fond of safety nets and looks almost longingly towards any such concept.

I do not think that that is good enough for the House. To mix metaphors—as I threaten to do—if it is a belt and braces situation, in which the money resolution exists just in case, we should not be troubled or bothered with it. The onus falls squarely on the Minister of State to explain away the substantial administrative savings, which seem likely to result from this jettisoning of a major state responsibility, which is to help British industry to remain competitive. The Minister has to explain that away and tell us from where the increase will come that will more than offset the reduction in expenditure that may result.

I recognise that the Minister of State is not a Treasury Minister, but he is obviously expert in such matters, and is no doubt well briefed. I am asking him to complete my education—*[Laughter.]*—on this narrow subject. I recognise that we are all capable of improvement over a wide field—*[Interruption.]* Let me explain, as it is an important question and it illustrates my puzzlement. No doubt the Minister of State can deal with it quickly.

As I understand it there will not be a money resolution on the Social Security (Contributions) Bill, which is running in tandem with this Bill. Perhaps there is a simple explanation for that, but I do not understand it, because that Bill will raise a substantial sum for the Treasury. However, that is not the point, and I entirely accept that. I should have thought that administrative expenses would be incurred by the change in the system, if only because there will be more paperwork and changes in the flow of money coming in. I should have thought that some sort of administrative consequences would be inevitable from that Bill. Yet we obviously do not need a money resolution there.

I hope that I have argued reasonably succinctly about the likely savings on the administrative expenses side. If we can do without a money resolution in the Social Security (Contributions) Bill, I do not see why we must be burdened in this way in the Statutory Sick Pay Bill.

The Minister can no doubt explain my final point because, again, it is a "side-way entrance" to the argument about the money resolution. It concerns the position of Northern Ireland. Although I recognise that Northern Ireland has always had a different system and has been seen as a different entity, clause 4(3) of the Statutory Sick Pay Bill says:

> "There shall be paid out of money provided by Parliament any expenses incurred by a Minister of the Crown in consequence of this Act."

Basically, that is what we are also authorising in the money resolution. There seems to be a duplication, but I suppose that that is how the system works. However, clause 4(4) says:

> "Section 3 and this section extend to Northern Ireland",

but provided in brackets is the important exception, "except subsection (3)".

So any talk of money being provided by Parliament to cover Ministers' expenses will apply on mainland Britain but not in Northern Ireland. I presume that that is because an equivalent to the money resolution applies to Northern Ireland. If administrative expenses occur on mainland Britain and are covered by a money resolution, parallel expenses will inevitably flow from the same changes being introduced in Northern Ireland. I understand that there is no money resolution for Northern Ireland. Indeed, it is specifically excluded from the arrangements that we are discussing by the exclusion in clause 4(4).

When the Minister replies, I hope that he can advise me on the arrangement in Northern Ireland, because those expenses will obviously arise. I presume that they will have to be met by money provided by Parliament, but not under the current arrangements and certainly not by the Bill. Why does no money resolution cover Ireland? Where is the alternative provision? We are then entitled to ask why we need a money resolution for mainland Britain.

I hope that those are reasonably understandable points. They have raised logical and interlinking questions in my mind. As I do not wish unnecessarily to prolong the debate, I am happy to leave it at that point and listen, in a minute or two, to the explanation which the Minister of State will provide.

11.12 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I should like to follow the excellent example set by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) by raising just one or two questions that reinforce some of the pertinent questions that he raised.

I cannot, for the life of me, understand why we are in this position. There may have been a breakdown in the negotiations between the two major parties through the usual channels, to which I am not a party. I freely offer myself as a bona fide go-between. Being a nice, natural, trustworthy character, I might be able to sort out the problem and everybody might get home for Christmas in better order.

I am pleased to see that the Leader of the House is present. The hon. Member for Garscadden started by making one or two perfectly pertinent procedural points, with potential precedents attached to them. If the Government start willy nilly, without real justification, interfering with the clear understanding that money resolutions follow Second Readings, they will encourage other people to adopt the same tactics in the future. That is not in the best interests of the House. The Minister of State owes us an explanation about why the Government have seen fit to introduce this money resolution before the Bill's Second Reading.

I know that, in general, money resolutions have fallen into desuetude in terms of the real purpose for which they were originally intended, with the honourable exception of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and one or two others who specialise in the important task. I pay tribute to them because huge sums of money are voted through in money resolutions—not on this Bill, perhaps, but certainly on others.

The House should pay proper attention to money resolutions and the debates on them are of much better quality if they follow Second Reading. For all I know, different hon. Members will be in the Chamber for Second Reading. It is a worrying sign if the usual rules and established precedents and traditions of the House are discarded without valid reason. Of course, I have read in the press of the procedural differences between the two major parties. I cannot understand why the money resolution has been tabled now.

I want to refer to the merits of the money resolution. It is a restricted motion because clause 4(3) of the Bill states:

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

> "There shall be paid out of money provided by Parliament any expenses incurred by a Minister of the Crown in consequence of this Act."

That is a very restricted statement on which to base a money resolution.

The hon. Member for Garscadden was right to press the Minister on his explanation for introducing the money resolution today. As I understood the Minister, he said that the only additional expenses that would be incurred would be in the Government's role as an employer. The right hon. Gentleman must give us a little more to go on than that. I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Garscadden and it appears that all that clause 1 does is abolish a right.

Mr. Scott *rose*——

Mr. Kirkwood: I am about to be enlightened.

Mr. Scott: All that we are discussing tonight is the narrow matter of a money resolution. The Government require money to meet their duties under the Bill. The actual thrust of the Bill will be discussed later in the week. Tonight, we are limited to discussing the money resolution. The hon. Gentleman is at risk of going beyond the scope of that.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am prepared to take guidance on procedure from the Chair, but I am not prepared to take it from the Treasury Bench. I shall repeat my question because I think that it is a valid money resolution question —on what is the money to be spent? Clause 1 simply abolishes a right and entitlement under the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992. How on earth can that incur administrative expenses? I just do not understand. There may be something hidden in the depths of clause 2, which is an enabling clause. The House should consider carefully giving Ministers power to table regulations on such matters.

Although it may be a matter for substantive debate on Second Reading, the Minister knows that those who speak on behalf of small businesses are unhappy about this sort of legislation. If the Minister is saying that clause 2(1) gives Ministers the power to introduce the sort of changes relating to a new small businesses scheme that we have been hearing about in Budget speeches and so on, it is disgraceful that that should be done by secondary legislation under clause 2(1).

Even if it is true that the Government are introducing a new administrative scheme for small businesses, together with all the other changes that we have heard about in Budget speeches, how on earth will that cost extra money? As the hon. Member for Garscadden said, it should cost less because it saves money—and amen to that. Had the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) seen fit to stay for the Minister's reply to the debate, he might have raised a reasonable question about whether it is right or wrong to save money. Like others, I am in favour of saving money.

The Minister's explanation did not persuade me that he has a case for tabling the money resolution today. I object to the enabling powers in clause 2 if the intention is to introduce substantial changes such as those to which I referred. It is not even clear to me whether the resolutions that would be brought forward by way of regulation, which might cost money, would be by the negative or the affirmative procedure. The Minister would do the House a service if he gave the answer.

I am not sure that the money resolution is necessary in any case. Ministers have the ability under national insurance fund and other social security powers to introduce such expenditure without an additional money resolution. No case for one has been made.

Will the additional funding come through departmental expenditure? Will it show up in departmental estimates? Where will right hon. and hon. Members find the increased expenditure that the money resolution presages? It is not clear to me why there are any increases in the first place.

There is no proper justification for this measure. The people who will be affected by the Statutory Sick Pay Bill are afraid of part of its content, and the Minister has not come close to persuading me that the money resolution is proper, appropriate or necessary.

11.20 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The usual procedure for money resolutions has been observed; the Minister moved the resolution as perfunctorily as he possibly could. The House will not let him get away with that tonight, because the resolution is linked with a Bill that, under a resolution yet to be tabled, will be dealt with in some three hours from start to finish—or six hours from start to finish, including the guillotine resolution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. That does not have much to do with administrative expenses, does it?

Mr. Cryer: Yes, it does.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not in my judgment.

Mr. Cryer: One problem is that the Deputy Speaker's judgment is always accepted as superior—and I accept it as such. I was merely pointing out that the 45 minutes allocated to a money resolution is usually ignored, but it is being used on this occasion because of the limited time that will be allowed to debate the Bill on the Floor of the House and because the House feels that it is being robbed.

Those 45 minutes should be made use of on every occasion. It is important to obtain an explanation from the Minister in this instance, because there will be little opportunity to obtain one otherwise.

The money resolution allows the Minister to be reimbursed

> "for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Statutory Sick Pay Bill".

We know that the Bill will abolish the reimbursement of 80 per cent. of sick pay to a number of employers but not all. To compensate, national insurance contributions will be reduced.

The Bill's explanatory and financial memorandum states that the saving in annual public expenditure will be

> "about £695 million in 1994-95, rising to £720 million in 1995-96 and £750 million in 1996-97."

Do those figures include or exclude the £100 million cost to Government revenue through the reduction in national insurance contributions? If they are reduced, there will be a loss of revenue. Is that part of the authority that the Minister thinks is required by the money resolution?

The resolution covers "any Act", but the delegated legislation is not on the face of the Bill. We know that the Minister will bring forward delegated legislation because on 1 December, the Secretary of State for Social Security stated:

"So far, we have been helping employers whose national insurance bill was £16,000 or less a year. I am raising that limit to £20,000."

That means that the numbers of small firms, as defined by the national insurance contributions, will be widened. The Secretary of State went on to say:

"So far, we have been reimbursing 100 per cent. of statutory sick pay for absences of longer than six weeks. I shall start giving 100 per cent. help after four weeks. That will help an extra 50,000 employers, at a cost of £25 million."—[*Official Report*, 1 December 1993; Vol. 233, c. 1038.]

Is that the extent of the delegated powers which the Minister has in mind? He is seeking the authority of the House in the money resolution for any Act, which includes Acts which are carried out by means of the delegated powers which the Minister hopes will be approved by the House. The Bill dealing with statutory sick pay does not provide details of the extension of the reimbursement for small firms which the Minister is to give.

Frankly, we should not allow open-ended money resolutions to pass through the House without raising questions. The extent and the degree to which we give delegated powers to Ministers in Bill after Bill is wrong. It is not unreasonable, and it is directly connected with the money resolution, to ask questions of the Minister before we hand over those powers to him. How will he use the delegated powers which are contained in the Bill as they affect the money resolution?

At the moment, the information that we have from the Secretary of State is that the arrangements which he is to bring in for small firms will cost about £25 million. That presumably is £25 million which has been authorised by the money resolution. Is that the full extent, or is that figure to increase in future years?

Why was not that information included in the financial effects of the Bill? The Bill was printed on 1 December, but the statement by the Secretary of State was on 30 November. If the information given by the Secretary of State has relevance to the financial effects of the Bill, why was not it included? We are dealing with a money section now. Why was not that information included in the explanatory and financial memorandum?

What is the memorandum for? It is designed to help hon. Members in their understanding of the effects of the Bill. As it is always linked to money resolutions, the memorandum enables hon. Members to have some knowledge of the Minister's ideas when presenting the Bill and obtaining the necessary financial authority through the money resolution. I would ask the Minister why the points made by the Secretary of State were not included in the Bill.

These are relevant questions, and I hope that the Minister, who keeps frowning, will give a reasonable explanation to the House. The three hon. Members who have spoken in the debate have raised pertinent questions. I hope that the Minister will not say, as some do, that he thinks that it is clear in the Bill that the money resolution is wanted and that the House can take it or leave it.

We have only 45 minutes and I want to give the Minister time to reply. We have not got much time for the rest of the Bill. The fact is that we are taking the money resolution first because of the desperation of the Government to get the Bill through. Ordinarily, we would be dealing with it later, but the Government are running out of time before the Christmas recess. In those circumstances, it behoves the Minister to give the fullest explanation he can, because there will not be much time when the Bill is debated under the guillotine.

11.28 pm

Mr. Scott: A brave attempt has been made to press the Government on the reasons for this money resolution. I will attempt to cover the points which have been raised during the short debate.

I want to start with the latter point raised by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). Under the heading, *"Financial effects of the Bill"*, the Bill makes it absolutely clear that clause 1 will reduce annual public expenditure by the various amounts set out in the explanatory and financial memorandum. It makes it clear that

"The savings will be offset by reduction of employers' national insurance contributions."

The key reason why we need a money resolution for the Bill does not involve the general impact of the Bill upon employers outside Government. It is to provide the Government with the money they will need to fulfil their responsibilities as an employer under the terms of the Bill.

As the House will be aware, clause 1 will amend the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992

"so as to abolish the right of employers to recover the 80 per cent. of statutory sick pay paid to employees."

In addition, as I explained earlier, it extends entitlement to SSP to working women who fall sick and become incapable of work after attaining state retirement pension age of 60 until the age of 65. That change is necessary because abolishing reimbursement to SSP turns that into a form of pay rather than a social security benefit. It thus falls outside the scope for the pension age derogation from the equal treatment directive.

The provisions of the Statutory Sick Pay Bill and the Social Security (Contributions) Bill interact. The latter Bill is being introduced at the same time as the SSP provisions to offset the impact of the abolition of the reimbursement of statutory sick pay. It has been made clear that, overall, the impact will be to reduce the burden on business by £100 million more than business is having to expend to meet SSP without any reimbursement at all. In other words, the reduction in national insurance contributions will exceed the extra cost of business by well over £100 million. Business as a whole will not be out of pocket.

I estimate that the impact on the Government of the Statutory Sick Pay Bill and the Social Security (Contributions) Bill, which we will be discussing later this week, will be broadly neutral. However, in terms of the narrow effect of the Statutory Sick Pay Bill, it is necessary to have this money resolution so that the Government can meet their responsibilities in terms of the SSP element. They will also benefit, in the same way as employers outside will, from the national insurance contributions provisions that will apply outside as well as inside Government.

Mr. Cryer: Will the Minister answer my point about extending the compensation to small firms? The definition of small firm is to be raised from those paying £16,000 a year in NI contributions to those paying £20,000, and the Secretary of State said that the additional cost of providing 100 per cent. reimbursement after four weeks would be

[Mr. Cryer]

about £25 million. Is that also covered by the money resolution? Will that be the limit? Will it be applied under delegated powers?

Mr. Scott: It is of course included in the package being considered by the House this week and it is included in the sums that I have discussed. We have deliberately tilted the balance of the package to give extra help to smaller companies, particularly those employing people on lower earnings. Therefore, any extra burdens that occur are likely to fall on larger employers with higher paid employees. I believe that, for a variety of reasons, the House would expect us to tilt the balance in that direction.

Again, we are going outside the relevant scope and getting into the merits of the legislation that we will discuss later this week. Today, we are concerned with the narrow point that we need the money provided by the resolution so that Departments, in their role as employers, can meet their obligations. We shall be able to conduct the rest of the arguments about the legislation, albeit under a guillotine, later this week.

Mr. Dewar: I shall confine myself to the narrow point that the Minister raises and make sure that I understand it. Is he saying that it is not a case of additional administrative costs for administering the system, that it refers to the additional expense incurred by the Government as an employer, and that there will be women civil servants between the ages of 60 and 65 working after 60—I do not know how many there will be in the civil service, but let us assume that there are some—who will be entitled to statutory sick pay which previously was not available to them?

Is there also another expense arising from the 80 per cent. change? In a sense, that is a little illogical. After all, the Government were reimbursing the employer. It seems rather odd to have the fiction that the Government were receiving reimbursement as employer from themselves as a Government. That is a circular argument and not a genuine increase in expense. Is it only the other argument that the Minister is founding his case on?

Mr. Scott: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, the national insurance fund is contributed to by Departments in their role as employers, in the same way that any other employer has a relationship with the national insurance fund. Departments have the same responsibilities as other employers. The hon. Gentleman is right that it is simply to meet the responsibilities of Departments in their role as employers—not the cost of the number of people administering the scheme, but to cope with the abolition of their right to recover the 80 per cent. and the extra costs of women between 60 and 65.

Mr. Dewar: My intervention will take only a couple of minutes—*[Interruption.]* Someone has woken up. I ask the Minister to deal with a Northern Ireland point. It is a genuine curiosity on my part. Exactly the same matter arises in Northern Ireland, but I do not know what the authority for the initial expenditure is. There must be a parallel resolution for the money resolution that we are being invited to pass.

Mr. Scott: For a brief period some years ago, I was Minister for Finance in Northern Ireland. I anticipate that, as the exclusion was at the request of the Northern Ireland Department of Health and Social Services, appropriate provision will be made through Order in Council in due course. I could be wrong about that, but, as I recall my experience as Finance Minister in Northern Ireland, it is likely to be the answer.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 229, Noes 78.

Division No. 30] **[11.37 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick

McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Cann, Jamie
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cryer, Bob
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCartney, Ian
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Mudie, George
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Rendel, David
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Watson, Mike

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Terry Lewis and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Statutory Sick Pay Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses incurred in consequence of the Act by a Minister of the Crown.

ENVIRONMENT

Ordered,

That Mr. Kevin Barron and Mr. Nick Raynsford be discharged from the Environment Committee and Mr. Robert Ainsworth and Mr. John Denham be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

HOME AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That Mr. Mike O'Brien be discharged from the Home Affairs Committee and Mr. Stephen Byers be added to the Committee. —*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Ordered,

That Mr. Bryan Davies be discharged from the National Heritage Committee and Mr. Bruce Grocott be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Ordered,

That Mr. Adam Ingram be discharged from the Trade and Industry Committee and Mr. Ken Purchase be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

TREASURY AND CIVIL SERVICE

Ordered,

That Mr. John Garrett be discharged from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee and Mr. Mike O'Brien be added to the Committee.—*Sir Fergus Montgomery, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Policing (Derbyshire)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

11.48 pm

Mrs. Angela Knight (Erewash): I am grateful for this opportunity to bring to the attention of the House the matter of policing in Derbyshire, which is of great importance to my constituents and to the residents of the county. I thank the Minister for being here to reply, and I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), for High Peak (Mr. Hendry), for Derby, North (Mr. Knight), for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) and for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) for being here to support me.

The Derbyshire police force is in a uniquely difficult position. For the second year in succession it has not been granted its certificate of efficiency, and it is essential now that there is a positive future for the force, for its sake and particularly for the residents of the county. The policemen and policewomen of Derbyshire are doing an excellent job fighting crime in the county, but the force has suffered for many years from a lack of adequate funding by Derbyshire county council.

The sequence of events that has resulted in the police force losing its certificate has been documented in a series of reports by Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary. In his report of the 1990 inspection of the Derbyshire force the inspector stated:

> "The County Council's corporate strategy does not permit any realistic growth in police spending in real terms and this has meant a virtual standstill in developing the Constabulary and its resources for the last 8 years . . . the consequences of Derbyshire . . . are evident."

Those were his exact words. He went on to say:

> "The bureaucratic requirements of the County Council and the Police Committee are a major obstacle to the efficient management of the Force."

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Stop reading.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. If the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) wishes to intervene and ask the hon. Lady to give way, that is one thing; otherwise, I should be grateful if he would keep his thoughts to himself.

Mr. Hoyle: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for any hon. Member to read his or her speech?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The use of copious notes is quite acceptable, particularly on the Adjournment motion.

Mrs. Knight: The report concluded that the constabulary was

> "in several significant respects, on the brink of inefficiency."

It stated:

> "unless immediate and positive action is put in hand to improve the position, there must be a real risk of the Derbyshire Constabulary being adjudged inefficient".

Those were the words of the inspector in 1990. He then made a series of recommendations. The police force addressed these recommendations with considerable success, but the police authority dragged its feet: it refused to allow the chief constable greater freedom to manage the force—something that had been allowed in other forces for many years.

In the summer of the following year, 1991, a further inspection was made——

Mr. Hoyle: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that it is a new point of order.

Mr. Hoyle: Yes, it is Mr. Deputy Speaker. What is the difference between using copious notes and reading a speech?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not this evening. Mrs. Knight.

Mrs. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The subject is important—for Derbyshire and for other places in the country.

In 1991 the inspector found a shortfall of police on duty on the streets. He also found a low level of morale and a high rate of sickness. Despite—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Hoyle: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Could you bring to order those Conservative Members who are asking me to leave the Chamber because I am bringing to your attention the conduct of an hon. Member. I shall ask you to name the hon. Member if that hon. Member continues to point to me. Is it right for an hon. Member to ask another hon. Member to leave the chamber?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is only one hon. Member who can do that—me, as the occupant of the Chair. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to listen to the debate, he should do so, and the same applies to the Conservative Members sitting behind the hon. Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight).

Mrs. Knight: In January 1992, the inspector returned to Derbyshire. Despite all the previous warnings that he had given, he found that the force was considerably under strength—by 125 officers. He found that in that year there were fewer officers than there had been in 1981. The ratio of police per head of population in Derbyshire was considerably worse than the national average. Crime was rising, the police force was doing a good job despite its difficulties, but its resources were scant because of the many years it had been kept short of funds by Derbyshire county council.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Knight: I will not give way.

The inspector spoke to the chairman of the police authority. He learned that the Derbyshire constabulary had not even been allowed to submit a budget to the police authority for consideration. After considerable persuasion, the Labour chairman of the police authority told the chief constable that he would allow him to submit a budget that year but that he was not prepared to support a budget that was set at the standard spending assessment, despite an earlier request by the county council to the Department of the Environment to increase the SSA for policing purposes. The chief constable bid for £76 million. The county council reduced the amount. The police force did not get its certificate of efficiency.

Mr. Skinner: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Knight: I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman could have asked for this Adjournment debate. He could have asked me before if he wished to intervene. More importantly, he could have asked his Labour colleagues on the county council to ensure that the police force did not get into its present difficulties.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In view of the nature of this debate about Derbyshire, and the fact that I am a Derbyshire Member of Parliament, is it in order for an hon. Member to acknowledge that when the Derbyshire county council asked for an extra 112 police officers the Government refused?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not a matter for the Chair.

Mrs. Knight: In all his reports, the inspector has rightly and properly excluded the police officers and their civilian colleagues from criticism. Instead, he declared that they were working far beyond the level that might reasonably be expected in the circumstances. It was not their fault; the fault clearly lay at the door of the county council.

Despite the difficulties, the force has had many successes. There are many things to the credit of the police officers. There is dedication to duty in all ranks of the service; the force was early into civilianisation so that more police officers could be used on policing duties; there are child protection units; the special constabulary is fully part of the force; there are crime prevention panels; and the force has good relations with the community and with schools. Those are excellent things that the force has done. I have the highest praise for those with whom I have contact—the present superintendent and the previous one, the chief inspectors and inspectors, and other policemen and policewomen and civilians of the Erewash division.

In 1992, the inspector set the Derbyshire police force six targets: to fill police and civilian vacancies and recruit up to its establishment by April this year; to resume promotions and train staff; to provide for police overtime to the metropolitan average; to undertake essential repairs; to improve the vehicle fleet; and to resource the scientific support for the force in Derbyshire. Many gains and improvements have been made. Efforts have been made at all levels.

The budget situation has improved, giving the police forces its first real growth for nearly 10 years. The Home Office has treated the force sympathetically with regard to capital. The establishment is now for 1,850 officers, but it is not yet up to that strength. Last winter, the chief constable said that he required £86 million in 1993 to maintain the momentum. The police authority only recommended slightly under £84 million. The county council reduced the figure to £80·2 million. That is why the force is still under strength. No wonder the force has its difficulties—it was £6 million short of its required budget. The six targets have not yet been fully reached and the certificate of efficiency was not granted again last month.

Not surprisingly, many members of the force feel that the community is judging them harshly—that they are not efficient. Although the inspector has praised the members of the force on many occasions for their dedication—and rightly so—questions are being asked and criticisms are being made about a situation which has allowed police officers to operate in those circumstances and which has allowed a deterioration in the quality of the service to the public. All too often, the needs of the Derbyshire police force and the Derbyshire public are not being met.

The chief constable responded to this year's report in a document entitled "Policing in Derbyshire—Meeting the Challenge". There is a challenge that must be met. The police service in Derbyshire and the residents need to know about their future.

Shortly after my election to the House, I spoke about the benefits of establishing a police authority separate from the county council. I look forward to the day when that happens in Derbyshire. I know that such a change will be in the Bill when it comes before Parliament. I hope that any parts of the Bill that it will be possible to anticipate early will be anticipated for the benefit of Derbyshire. The force is below strength, but it is starting to recruit again and the noble Lord Ferrers said on 16 November that he was hoping that it would be able to recruit to within 2 per cent. of its establishment.

Requests to increase the establishment of the police force have, surprisingly, not been made in every year over the past few years. This year, however, such a request was supported by the police authority. It would have had the advantage of increasing the police element of the SSA. When a force is under its existing establishment level, however, it is not altogether surprising if the establishment number is not increased. Yet Derbyshire police force finds itself in a unique situation, and one that is not of its own making. It is a special case, and it will be an advantage to all of us in the county if the numbers of policemen and policewomen are increased. Increasing the establishment numbers is one way, but accelerating civilianisation is another.

If the proposals that the chief constable recently made to the police authority are approved, that could result in a further 80 policemen and policewomen being released for policing duties next year. However, such a move requires the county council to approve a budget of £88 million, and there are real concerns that the budget will not be approved at that level. I ask the Home Office to do all that it can to ensure that that prudent proposal by the chief constable proceeds.

Additional capital approvals were made by the Home Office as recently as last month. If that were repeated again, it would also relieve some revenue cash for more policing. Looking to the county council has become an increasingly fruitless exercise. As a consequence, the residents of Derbyshire are looking to the Home Office to see what it can do to help to ensure that the police force gets the resources that it needs. The proposed changes to police funding, including cash-limited budgets, will make next year's budget particularly important. I trust that the Home Office formula for allocating budgets will take account of, and cater for, forces such as Derbyshire that have been continually under-resourced.

It is a fine police force, but that police force and 1 million residents have been neglected by the county council. Policemen and policewomen have been left to do a difficult job in increasingly impossible circumstances. The Derbyshire police force needs to see a future that is clear of the political controls that have bedeviled it. That will allow it to give the county the policing that it wants to give, and that the residents of the county deserve and have every right to expect.

12.2 am

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) on the way in which she introduced the debate. In my constituency, as in hers and those of my other colleagues who represent Derbyshire constituencies, the fight against

[Mr. Charles Hendry]

crime is the top priority. Our constituents would therefore welcome the powerful way in which she spoke. I endorse what she said.

The removal of the certificate of efficiency for a second year is no reflection on the work of the police. They do a tremendous job for all our constituents, and we owe them a great debt of gratitude. A few weeks ago, I spent the night with the police in Glossop—not, I hasten to add, in one of their cells, but going out with them on patrol. I found a force acting as we would wish our police to work. The policemen and policewomen were courteous, efficient, hard working and dedicated. Over these difficult years, they have put in many hours of overtime, very often unpaid. They have worked long hours in difficult circumstances because they have wanted to put first the safety of the people of Derbyshire.

The problems that we face in Derbyshire in our policing go back, as my hon. Friend said, for some years. She has pointed out clearly how, over the past year, £86 million was requested, and £83 million was then endorsed by the police authority but the county council allocated only £80 million.

It was the county council that left our police force £6 million short. It was the county council, through the hostility that it expressed in previous years from the top towards the police, which led people not to apply to that police force.

Nothing shows as starkly the situation that the police in Derbyshire face as the figures produced last week on staffing levels in local authorities. They reveal that there has been some improvement in the past year in the number of those employed by our police force. They show that, of the 31 county councils, Derbyshire is fourth in terms of the increase in the number of its full-time employees. They also show that we lie fifth in terms of the increase in the number of part-time employees.

The starkest contrast is that provided by the comparison between the number of police in Derbyshire and the number of county council employees. Derbyshire police is thirteenth in the list of employers, whereas Derbyshire county council is eighth. The police force is the tenth largest employer of part-time employees, whereas the county council is the fourth largest employer of such workers in the country.

Those figures show that, over the years, the county council has systematically chosen to stuff county hall with bureaucrats and its friends. It has even employed the brother of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who had previously been sacked by it. Such is the way in which the council has sought to look after its own political interests at the expense of policing in Derbyshire. That is the crime that has been committed for many years in Derbyshire and our constituents have suffered.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) also wishes to speak, so I shall draw my remarks to a conclusion. In the local newspaper, the *Buxton Advertiser*, Councillor Eric Swain challenged me to answer the charge, "Who is to blame?" for the policing in Derbyshire. The answer is the county council, which has chosen to back other priorities than the police. That policy has undermined our police. I hope that that is clear enough for Councillor Swain to understand, because he and his colleagues chose those priorities.

In a couple of years, when the chief constable is able to decide how he spends the resources and on the appropriate staffing levels—a welcome change—that wretched, dreadful, miserable county council will have been abolished. On behalf of my constituents, I am pleased to support my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is an Adjournment debate a debate, or is it merely a presentation of one particular point of view, without any opportunity for the normal cross debate that occurs in the——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Barnes: Opposition Members would then be able to express an opinion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand the point of order. The hon. Gentleman has attended many Adjournment debates and he knows full well that, whichever hon. Member is successful in the ballot, it is for that person to choose the nature of the debate and to decide who may or may not take part in it.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Given that the hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry) referred to me, would it be in order for me to have a chance to speak, because with three Tories in a row making speeches, and a Tory Minister present to reply, the debate is rigged?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not need to repeat that it is for the hon. Member for Erewash, who was lucky in the ballot, to decide who may participate in the debate.

12.8 am

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) on winning her place in the ballot and on the clear way in which she presented her case. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry) on the points that he raised.

It was on 22 January 1991, almost three years ago, that I raised the same issue on the Adjournment. Since then, huge efforts have been made in Derbyshire. I should like to pay particular tribute to the police officers and the civilians who work in the force who have made valiant efforts to meet the strictures that were sensibly imposed by the inspector of constabulary, Mr. Dear.

Considerable success and changes have been achieved, especially on recruitment, training and re-equipping. There have also been some changes in attitudes. Everything that my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash said was true, but I detect a shift in attitudes, particularly since Mr. Bookbinder, the former leader of the council, has left politics altogether and since the recent gaoling of the deputy leader of the county council, Mr. Shaun Stafford. Once the senior people go, attitudes change.

In my view—in this I may differ a little from my hon. Friends—the refusal to grant the efficiency certificate this time may be failing to take some of the changes into account. The decision runs the danger of being damaging. A continual refusal to grant the certificate becomes part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

My hon. Friends are right in saying that, if Derbyshire police are to return to full efficiency, they must have more officers. Mr. Dear said that himself. But the force cannot even recruit up to its establishment because it is at the upper level of its budget and the budget, at £80·2 million, is exactly, according to the Home Office's standard spending assessment, what it ought to be. We are stuck. The Home Office's own inspector is now more critical of the Home Office than of Derbyshire police.

I ask Home Office Ministers and the Treasury to take the matter seriously—rather more seriously, perhaps, than some Labour Members here tonight. I simply do not believe that a solution is beyond the grasp of our Government. We look forward to the changes in the pattern of police financing and management which are promised to us in the police Bill, but those measures are not likely to come into effect for some 18 months. Meanwhile, we must have more police officers in Derbyshire. I plead with my hon. Friend the Minister to take the matter seriously and do something about it.

12.11 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) on her excellent speech and on her stalwart support for the cause of policing in Derbyshire, in which she has been joined in the Chamber by my hon. Friends the Members for High Peak (Mr. Hendry), for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), and for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) and my ministerial colleagues my hon. Friends the Members for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) and for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin).

We have heard some eloquent praise of the good work done by Derbyshire police. I join in that praise. The basic problems that Derbyshire police have faced are not the result of a failure on the part of the police. In many ways, and in different circumstances, the Derbyshire police have coped and are coping extremely well. The report by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary makes that clear. It has also been made clear by the Minister of State, Lord Ferrers, and by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary on various occasions.

I also agree with my hon. Friends that Derbyshire's problems are not caused by standard spending assessments.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Wardle: No; I want to make some progress.

The council has done its best to hide behind the SSAs. As the council well knows, and as the House well knows, SSAs are merely a guide. The council seems to be content to budget to spend well above its SSAs on just about every other major council service except the police. SSAs cannot take account each year of past adverse spending choices by the county council.

On a previous occasion, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) spoke about SSAs. In a debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South, he said:

> "Should not the Government ensure that the SSAs for many items, but particularly those relating to the police are increased?"—[*Official Report*, 11 November 1991; Vol. 198, c. 880.]

The hard fact is that Derbyshire county council has underspent its SSAs year after year. In 1991 it underspent by 15·8 per cent. The next year it fell short by 17·2 per cent. The year after that it budgeted below its SSA by 4·3 per cent. and in the current year it has done so by 2·6 per cent. There we have the nub of the problem.

What has made things worse has been a cumbersome and unnecessary system——

Mr. Barnes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Wardle: No; I would like to make some progress.

A cumbersome and unnecessary system of bureaucratic council control has sapped morale year after year. The Labour Members present tonight seek to cover that up by their interventions and some of the points that they have made. It has prevented police force managers from doing the job that has been required. It is true that during the past couple of years there have been some relaxations, but unnecessary controls remain in place even today.

My hon. Friend the Member for Erewash was also right to point out that Derbyshire's problems are clearly not a result of ungenerous treatment. This year, for example, an extra £4·5 million capital allocation has been made available to it. When Derbyshire has made no bid for any increase in the complement of police officers—as was the case in five of the past 11 years—we cannot help. As my hon. Friends and the House will know, under the present system, a bid for more money has to be expressed in terms of additional police posts. Yet, during the periods 1984-87 and 1988-90, Derbyshire made no bid for additional posts whatsoever.

Mr. Skinner: It did—112.

Mr. Wardle: As the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has reminded us, this year Derbyshire belatedly made a bid. He will also be aware that this year, in the climate of sensible financial constraint, there have been no other bids for additional police. The existing problem is simply the result of a failure to bid for additional police posts. If Derbyshire had kept up with the national average of all police forces, excluding the Metropolitan police, it would have had an additional 51 posts, with the additional funding that that implies.

Mr. Barnes: If there is a problem and there are insufficient police officers in Derbyshire, why has the present request not been responded to? Why do not all hon. Members who represent Derbyshire—including Conservative Members—agree to see the Minister as part of a joint delegation to discuss funding, irrespective of their attitude to how the problem has arisen and whether it lies with the Government or the county council? Hon. Members will have different views on how the problem has arisen, but, as the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) said, we have a chance to resolve it. Why can we not have a joint deputation to discuss that?

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Gentleman persistently ducks the fact that in past years Derbyshire has underspent its SSA for police and has overspent in other areas. For example, last year it overspent on personal social services by 21 per cent., while underspending on the police in spite of the fact that the problem was clear for everyone in the House and in Derbyshire to see. It is no use the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) trying to cover up for mistakes that are all too obvious.

I shall seek to write to my hon. Friend with details of the programme that will remedy the situation in which Derbyshire still finds itself. I know that she will bear in mind that the reforms that are to be introduced in the police Bill, which will begin in another place in the new year, will greatly ease the position of the chief constable of

[Mr. Wardle]

Derbyshire, and all chief constables, because they will be able to allocate their resources as they see fit between officers and equipment and will be able to meet the requirements of Her Majesty's inspectorate.

I shall also write to my hon. Friend about the steps that my right hon. and noble Friend has agreed with Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary and the chief constable of Derbyshire—

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock on Monday evening, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at eighteen minutes past Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Tuesday 14 December 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords]*

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the British Waterways Bill *[Lords]* may, notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders or practice of this House, proceed with the Bill in the present Session and the Petition for the Bill shall be deemed to have been deposited and all Standing Orders applicable thereto shall be deemed to have been complied with;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the present Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the last Session;

That as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read for the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the last Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill, together with any minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on the Bill, shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the present session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the last Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the last Session.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION

Higher Education

1. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to encourage universities and other institutes of higher education to accept candidates with qualifications other than A-levels.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): The Government have successfully sought to increase and widen participation in higher education. A range of entry routes is now available including GCE A-levels and AS examinations, advanced general national vocational qualifications and their precursors and access courses. The Government encourage higher education institutions to give all candidates for admission equal consideration, whatever their entry route.

Mr. Fabricant: Does my hon. Friend accept that while sixth formers now have more choice of examinations than ever before for entry into higher education, universities still press for A-levels? Does he agree that in the United States, where I studied, in France, in Germany and in Japan, people who want to go to university are not forced at the age of 15 or 16 to concentrate on just two or three subjects? Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be advantageous to people aged 15 and 16 if they were able to study a far broader range of subjects?

Mr. Boswell: I am interested in the comments of my hon. Friend, but I do not think that the position is quite as he states it. For example, about 10 per cent. of entrants to degree courses hold the B Tech qualification alone, and entries to engineering courses include 20 per cent. of students who have come from so-called non-conventional routes. We do not control the universities or their admission policies, although we can issue encouragement to them and we have played our part by developing high-quality vocational and access pathways as alternatives to the A-level route.

Mr. Rooker: What actions are the Government taking in respect of professional institutions that are required to validate and accredit degrees from universities and to accept the quality of the output of degrees, as, in the past year, one institution removed its accreditation from three universities for an engineering course—not because of the quality of output of graduates but because of the qualifications that the students attained before going to university? That issue must be tackled by Ministers from the other side by seeking to put pressure on professional institutions to accept quality of output whatever the input.

Mr. Boswell: The hon. Gentleman raises a characteristically thoughtful point and we are certainly in consultation with the Engineering Council and the providers to look at that problem.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Have not A-levels become not so much a gold standard as a golden calf? Does my right hon. Friend accept that for our cleverest young people A-levels represent an absurdly narrow educational experience while for those less than the cleverest struggling for two years to secure, say, a D or an E grade is like stumbling around in an academic tunnel? Will my right hon. Friend continue to encourage schools and colleges to find better ways to combine breadth with rigour?

Mr. Boswell: The issue is to get all players—not just higher education institutions but employers, parents, teacher and students—to look for appropriate courses and pathways for the students involved. I agree that for some people who embark on A-level courses it may be much better to take part in one of the high-level vocational courses now on offer. I am delighted that such courses are now accepted and practised by some 80,000 people on the general national vocational qualification route. That provides an important pathway to the future that will involve at least a quarter of our young people in three years' time.

Mr. Bryan Davies: Actions speak louder than words. Have not the Government decisions ensured that whatever qualifications our young people obtain in their examinations in the coming year, opportunities for access to higher education have been reduced by Government funding cuts and all our students will find it tougher to get into higher education next year than they have this year?

Mr. Boswell: I was about to, and I still will, welcome the hon. Gentleman to the Labour Front Bench, but he will have to do better than that. British higher education has the largest graduate output as a percentage of young people in Europe. It has the highest graduate participation we have ever had in this country, and that percentage participation will be sustained on the back of the most generous settlement achieved by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in the public expenditure survey for the coming year.

Assisted Places

2. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils benefit from the assisted places scheme.

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): In the academic year 1992-93, the latest year for which information is complete, 28,674 pupils held assisted places in England. I am not responsible for Wales.

Mr. Clappison: Is my right hon. Friend aware that among those 28,000 pupils are 234 boys at Haberdashers' Aske's school in my constituency? Is he aware how deeply the parents of those boys appreciate the educational opportunity offered by those places, which they could not otherwise afford and which could be filled many times over by full fee-paying parents? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the scheme should continue and should not be denied, as Opposition Members would have it?

Mr. Patten: Haberdashers' Aske's is a fine school with high standards and I congratulate my hon. Friend's constituents on having such a school. The Labour party and the Liberal Democrats want to abolish the assisted places scheme. They also want to abolish grammar schools, performance tables, charitable relief for public schools and, above all else, grant-maintained schools, where today half a million children are being educated. The Labour party and the Liberal Democrats simply want to abolish excellence.

Mr. Steinberg: Will the Secretary of State explain why he thinks that the Government should subsidise private education from state funds when the state is strapped for resources in the first place? Is it not just a way of putting state money into private education, as the results achieved by children are no better than they would have achieved in the state sector?

Mr. Patten: There speaks the authentic neanderthal voice of the National Union of Teachers. After the public expenditure settlement a couple of weeks ago, I find the hon. Gentleman's remarks extraordinary. It is important, particularly in areas where there is little choice, for the Government to ensure that children and their parents have a choice. That is why we are committed to the assisted places scheme and will maintain and expand it according to the plans that I have already announced.

Mr. Dunn: Was not the assisted places scheme introduced over 12 years ago against the direct wishes of the vested interests represented on the Opposition Benches? For children from disadvantaged families in our inner cities it was the best opportunity for a decent education that they could ever have or hope for. Will my right hon. Friend continue to expand the scheme in as many ways as he can achieve?

Mr. Patten: I want to ensure that every hon. Member is aware that it is the Government's policy to ensure that every child has as good a start in life as the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who went to a grammar school and was educated at Oxford university. If the assisted places scheme helps others to achieve the same opportunities as the hon. Member for Bolsover, we want to make it available for everybody.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Madam Speaker: No. 3—Mr. Banks.

Stratford School

3. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he intends to take in the light of the examination results at Stratford grant-maintained school.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Robin Squire): It is for the governors of the school to take whatever steps are necessary to improve the school's academic performance.

Mr. Banks: I was tempted to give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Is the Minister aware that before Stratford school opted out, its exam results were above average in the London borough of Newham, and that since it achieved grant-maintained status it has been below average? The Office for Standards in Education has moved in to inspect it because it is perceived to have failed. Under the legislation, there is no provision for an education association to be imposed to replace those governors. What does the Minister intend to do about Stratford school? Will he simply throw more money at it? Is he aware that the school is touting for pupils in the area? It is a total mess as a result of interference on ideological grounds by his wretched Government playing party politics with the educational needs of the kids in my constituency.

Mr. Squire: Even at a time of charitable Christmas good will to the hon. Gentleman, I find comments about political interference from such a source rather rich. He is right to say that we are awaiting the result of the inspection report. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will wish to study that report before determining the next steps to take. The hon. Gentleman is also right to say that the school's examination results in the past year were disappointing, but it would be unusual if we were to take excessive action on the basis of one year's examination results—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I adjudge that there is now complete agreement across the Floor of the Chamber about the excellence of schools and how we should be raising standards. I entirely welcome that. Let there be no doubt that if the hon. Gentleman's question is motivated by a desire to raise standards at that school, he will find the same desire on this side of the Chamber. Powers are available, in extremis, to the Secretary of State to cope with the problems that the hon. Gentleman has identified.

Grant-maintained Schools

4. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools have applied for grant-maintained status; and what measures he is taking to speed up the process.

Mr. Patten: One thousand and thirty schools have voted to apply for grant-maintained status, and there are more schools with ballots pending.

Measures in the Education Act 1992 to speed up and ease the transition to grant-maintained status include the need for only one governors' resolution before holding a ballot and a shorter timetable for the subsequent stages of acquiring grant-maintained status.

From 1 January 1994, every LEA-maintained school will be required to consider grant-maintained status and report to parents on the outcome of its consideration every year in future.

Mr. Evans: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Will he confirm that the 10 schools at the bottom of the league table are not grant maintained but controlled by Labour authorities? Will he also confirm that the lot opposite do not like competition at any level because when they compete every four years they get stuffed out of sight, and they will continue to get stuffed out of sight while they have rag, tag and bobtail policies?

Mr. Patten: That was a characteristically sub fusc question from my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans). I confirm that what he said is absolutely right, both about the schools at the bottom of the performance table—we must try to help them or we shall have to close them down—and about the local education authorities. The 10 worst performing schools are controlled by the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that in the war years, when people had to fight to get to those places, my parents were proud that I won a county minor scholarship to Tupton Hall? I was surrounded by people who had been sent there because they had paid. Is the Minister aware that when I went to Oxford I went to the working-class Ruskin college? Is he also aware that, unlike him and many others on the Government Front Bench, I did not go to public schools and, unlike him, was not educated beyond my intelligence?

Mr. Patten: As a matter of fact, neither did I. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman should look up the facts and see what sort of school I went to. It was then a grammar school, of which I was proud. It is now a comprehensive school and I hope that it will shortly go grant maintained. I am proud of the education that I got there, as the hon. Gentleman is doubtless proud of the very good education that he got at Tupton Hall grammar school. I am sure that his parents were rightly proud of him, although if they were here I doubt whether they would be proud of his question this afternoon, which showed all the intellectual coherence of Mr. Blobby.

Mr. Oppenheim: Will my right hon. Friend, in his customary warm-hearted way, extend his congratulations to Geoff Lennox, who was first chairman and then director of education on left-wing Derbyshire county council, and who dedicated his career to fighting the opting out of schools and the contracting out of services? He has proved that it is never too late to learn—by joining a private sector company dedicated to selling contracted-out services to opted-out schools.

Mr. Patten: Doubtless the experience of working with Derbyshire finally persuaded Mr. Lennox to show common sense. All over the country there is a good and fruitful partnership between state and private sectors. I congratulate my hon. Friend's constituent on his wise choice of future career.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Is it not true that, despite all the Government's efforts to push schools into grant-maintained status, only a small percentage of schools in England and Wales are grant maintained? Is it not also true that, in the past three months, two thirds fewer schools have voted for GM status than in the same three months last year, and that twice as many are now voting not to opt out? Is it not further true that the vast majority of schools have seen through the con trick of GM status and want to remain with local education authorities which are, in the main, Labour controlled? Would it not make more sense to divert the excessive resources in GM schools to all state schools?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman is not as well informed as he should be. Since the beginning of the balloting on grant-maintained status, month after month—including the past three months—eight out of every 10 schools have voted yes, and only two against. The hon. Gentleman should concentrate on the considerable educational benefits of grant-maintained schools. The published results in the performance tables last month showed their excellent performance, and I predict that by the time of the next election—and Labour's fifth defeat in a row—about two thirds of the secondary schools in this country will be grant maintained. This will be an irreversible change.

Mr. Pawsey: Will my right hon. Friend join me in condemning local authorities that oppose grant-maintained status not for educational reasons but for political reasons? Will he join me in condemning authorities that do not put the children first and whose first responsibility is to themselves and their own jobs and empires? Will my right hon. Friend go on to say what action he intends to take to promote GM status, not just through governing bodies but through the parents who want it?

Mr. Patten: I think that parents and others are only too well involved. After all, there are the proud parents of the 500,000 children being educated in GM schools. An enraged group of governors and teachers from Lincolnshire came to see me this morning to complain about the attitude of Lincolnshire local education authority to GM schools. They complained in particular about the new and cruel form of 11-plus on which the LEA is insisting—causing maximum stress for the children and having to be taken on Saturday mornings instead of during the school week so that the children being tested for grammar school entry in Lincolnshire do not even notice. New authorities formed by new types of political control in counties such as Lincolnshire should think carefully before putting children under stress in this way.

Swimming

5. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what measures have been taken to increase the number of children leaving primary schools who can swim.

Mr. Robin Squire: The national curriculum for physical education requires that all pupils should by the age of 11 be able to swim unaided at least 25 metres and demonstrate an understanding of water safety. This requirement becomes effective from August next year.

Ms Hoey: Is the Minister aware that there is great concern not just in the Amateur Swimming Association but among all people who care about young people being able to swim and a fear that there may be some going back on that commitment in Sir Ron Dearing's review of the national curriculum? Will the Minister give a commitment that swimming will remain part of the national curriculum and say what concrete measures will be taken to ensure that all primary schools can afford to get their children to swimming pools, which causes great difficulties in inner-city areas? What resources will be put in and will he ensure that they will be available when needed?

Mr. Squire: The hon. Lady is right to emphasise the importance of swimming. That is why it features in the national curriculum, as it has done since 1992, along with other physical education requirements. There has been significant funding of the national curriculum in recent years. We believe that it should be possible for the minority of schools that do not currently have access to swimming pools to find additional funding from their existing resources.

Mr. Hawkins: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the tragedies in Britain is that small children still die from drowning? It is extremely encouraging that almost 70 per cent. of primary schools now have swimming pools on site and more than 80 per cent. provide swimming training.

Mr. Squire: I agree absolutely with my hon. Friend —*[Interruption.]* It sounds as though my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) has struck a chord. I endorse what he said and remind Opposition Members, who may have overlooked the report, that in late 1989 a survey showed that more than 80 per cent. of primary schools had access to swimming facilities of one sort or another. I concur with my hon. Friend's views on the importance of the subject, as I said in answer to the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey).

Tertiary Education

6. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give the global amounts paid for tertiary education in England and Wales for the past three years for eligible students from the European Union; and if he will give the figures for individual countries.

Mr. Boswell: In 1991-92, total spending by the Department on higher education was in excess of £5,000 million. The amount attributable to students from other European Community member states studying in England and Wales is estimated on the basis of average unit costs at approximately £105 million. The numbers from individual member states are given in Department for Education statistical bulletins available in the Library. British nationals studying elsewhere in the European Community enjoy reciprocal rights.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Do they enjoy reciprocal arrangements in all other European Community countries? Is it not a fact that we carry a fair part of the European budget and also subsidise the education of students from some of those countries to the detriment of our own budgetary requirements?

Mr. Boswell: I can confirm that we are obliged, under the Gravier judgment of 1985 by the European Court of Justice, to provide nationals of other European Community member states with access to higher education on the same terms as nationals of the host state. The United Kingdom has implemented that judgment at some cost to its Exchequer. Other EC member states have an obligation to comply with it.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: While welcoming the fact that European students find our institutions so excellent that they wish to come here, may I ask my hon. Friend to ensure that they do not do so at the expense of our mature students? Will he consider the case of one of my constituents, who is over 50 and has been made redundant? He had a 14-year-old child, and he and his wife worked out that they could just, by the skin of their teeth, afford to go to university. When they heard that there was to be a cut of 10 per cent. in the grant and the husband was not eligible for a loan, they realised that that would put an end to his career. Could mature students who are over 50 be included in the loan system now that the grants are to be cut?

Mr. Boswell: My hon. Friend ingeniously introduces an additional issue related to the student support package. It has never been our practice to extend the loan scheme to the over-50s, on the ground that they have a comparatively short career ahead of them to repay their loans. However, I note the point that my hon. Friend made. From the student numbers that we have been able to put through our system and from the fast expansion in the number of mature students—about 150 per cent. in the past eight years—I can assure my hon. Friend that there is ample access to higher education in Britain for Britain's mature and other students, as well as those that we take from other European Community countries.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Rather than moaning about the number of foreign students coming to British institutions, should we not encourage our young people to study in institutions in other countries, particularly Community countries? Is not one barrier to that process the fact that we still teach languages in our schools so incompetently that many young people do not feel able to take advantage of such educational facilities? What steps do the Government intend to take to improve that vital part of our young people's education?

Mr. Boswell: It is rather interesting to hear the hon. Gentleman attacking teachers for their incompetence in delivering modern language teaching. I have not heard much of that in the past. The Government have introduced a requirement under the national curriculum for the teaching of a modern foreign language. We are actively exploring with our European partners the possibility of changes in the higher education programmes of the Community—for example, the Lingua programme—for the purpose of exploring the objective that we share, which is to encourage a proper, reciprocal, two-way flow of students. That involves Europeans wishing to study in the United Kingdom and equally our students wishing to study in European institutions.

School Buses (Seat Belts)

7. **Mr. Roger Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to advise local education authorities to ensure that children travelling on school buses are wearing seat belts.

Mr. Boswell: In 1991, the Department endorsed a report by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents on school transport safety and arranged for its distribution to all LEAs and schools. The report included a code of good practice, which recommends that children should always wear belts where fitted on school buses and minibuses.

Mr. Evans: As my hon. Friend's advice currently extends only to those buses already fitted with seat belts, does he think that it should be extended further? Does he acknowledge the force of the BUSC campaign, which began in my constituency? Will he advise LEAs to restrict contracts for bus operators to those that guarantee that every one of their buses will be fitted with seat belts and that children will be made to wear them?

Mr. Boswell: My hon. Friend should be aware that it is for LEAs to decide their own policies in these matters. He should also be aware that a high proportion of school buses and coaches—indeed, coaches generally—are not currently fitted with seat belts. In addition, the overall requirements of the construction and use of motor vehicles are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. Nevertheless, I shall certainly listen to what BUSC has to say and reflect on it in the light of recent events.

Mr. Battle: Is the Minister aware that only last week there was a tragic accident in Leeds involving a school bus that was taking the children of St. Michaels school on a day trip? The common practice of having three children to two seats was in operation on that bus. Will the Department urgently issue a code of guidance to schools on that practice? Some of us think that three children to two seats is a budget-saving measure rather than a measure to ensure the safety of our children.

Mr. Boswell: About 850,000 of our children either travel on school buses or receive other help with school transport and, sadly, accidents happen from time to time. They are of very different natures and we consider all the circumstances surrounding them.

The working party that prepared the RoSPA report on school transport safety found no evidence that the three-to-two concession had caused any accidents. If the hon. Gentleman has any evidence to the contrary, perhaps he will bring it to my attention.

Grant-maintained Schools

8. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many primary schools have achieved grant-maintained status.

Mr. Robin Squire: Some 182 primary schools are now grant maintained or self-governing. A further 93 schools have been approved for self-governing status and we look forward to welcoming them to the sector in January and April next year. There has been a fivefold increase in the number of self-governing primary schools operating since last year's general election and the number continues to grow.

Mr. Gill: Does my hon. Friend agree that if parents genuinely want education to cease being used as a political football they would do well to opt for grant-maintained status? Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to confirm that those schools that have taken grant-maintained status enjoy better motivation of both teachers and pupils? By voting for grant-maintained status, parents would reap a very handsome dividend.

Mr. Squire: My hon. Friend is right on every point. A report of the independent inspectorate, Ofsted, earlier this year highlighted improved teacher morale and pupil attendance in grant-maintained schools, and recent exam results show that, comparing comprehensives with comprehensives, grant-maintained schools have significantly better results than local education authority schools.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Why do not Ministers come clean about the trend away from, not towards, grant-maintained schools? Why does not the Minister confirm that only the other day in his constituency a school voted against grant-maintained status; that, as was said earlier, the number of ballots taking place is going down and not up; that the number of no votes is going up and not down; and that parents have now rumbled the fact that, as Stratford shows, grant-maintained status provides neither a better education nor a better way for Ministers to deal with any problems that exist? Ministers should come clean and say that parents have seen what Ministers are still blind to—grant-maintained status does not guarantee education opportunity.

Mr. Squire: Any suggestion that Ministers should come clean from the party that runs Tower Hamlets is a bit rich. As to the hon. Gentleman's comments on individual grant-maintained schools, or non-grant-maintained schools in the case of one vote in my constituency, the words "straws" and "clutching" come to mind. The underlying position remains that, month in, month out, a significant majority of voters vote yes. One's heart goes out at times to parents and governors who are struggling against the organised opposition of Opposition Members and their parties. When they finally have the chance to vote, they vote for freedom, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) said.

Dame Angela Rumbold: Will my hon. Friend reassure parents and some teachers in primary schools in my constituency that the malevolent operation of Labour-controlled Merton council to prevent some primary schools from opting out will be controlled in some way or another?

Mr. Squire: I immediately assure my right hon. Friend that, from 1 January, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will have enhanced powers, in particular to tackle abuses that might occur in the balloting procedure and to cover information going to parents when they vote, which he will not hesitate to use in the appropriate circumstances.

Mr. Enright: If grant-maintained status is so attractive, why will not the Government allow schools to vote to opt out of grant-maintained status?

Mr. Squire: That is an entirely theoretical question. In all my journeys around the country visiting grant-maintained schools and talking to their heads I have not found one head who would even consider the option of returning to local education authority control.

Testing

9. **Mr. Milligan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps are being taken to remove unnecessary bureaucracy in the testing arrangements under the national curriculum following the publication of the Dearing report.

Mr. Patten: We have accepted the Dearing report in full. Testing and marking time for the tests has been halved and there will far less form filling for teachers. The 1994 tests will be much slimmer, but they will remain as fair and as demanding as possible.

Mr. Milligan: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that answer. He will be aware that in my constituency, as elsewhere in the country, there was genuine concern among responsible teachers about the complexity of the original tests, but is he also aware that those same teachers are now delighted that the tests are being slimmed down and will be properly piloted? Will he ensure that teachers continue to be properly consulted and that he brooks no opposition from trade unions, some of which were opposed to any testing at all?

Mr. Patten: I thank my hon. Friend for what he said. He is right about the useful consultations on testing that have gone on and will continue. He will be aware, as I am, that in some counties, including, I believe, Hampshire, it was the local education authority that decided to put complicated tick lists, as they are known in the trade, into schools, which made tasks unnecessarily complicated. They were never laid down by the Government. The School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, in its handling of its responsibilities since 1 October, has been a model of efficiency. No teacher, deputy head teacher, head teacher or governor could possibly complain that they have not had promptly all the material that they need.

Primary School Standards

10. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the progress of his measures to improve standards in primary schools.

Mr. Patten: The national curriculum and testing continue to secure higher standards in primary schools. That is confirmed in the first annual report published by Professor Sutherland, Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools last week, and in a report published by Ofsted today on testing. Both of those highlight the clear improvements brought about by present educational policies. But there is still room for improvement and we are continuing to work to raise standards in all our schools and to encourage higher-quality teaching for all our children at the level that the best already achieve.

Mr. Martin: Does my right hon. Friend accept that most sensible people want to be assured that children in our primary schools are properly taught to read and write and to grasp the basic principles of arithmetic? In what specific ways do Government reforms carry these vital objectives forward?

Mr. Patten: They do so in two important ways: by the introduction of the national curriculum and by the introduction of regular testing. In addition, as report after report from the independent inspectorate, Ofsted, shows, teacher expectations need to be as high as possible. In the best of our 20,000 primary schools in England—and England has many good primary schools—teacher expectations are extremely high. All the academic evidence points to the need for enhanced teacher expectation. Children enjoy a challenge and the greater the challenge, the better they perform.

Mr. Litherland: One way to improve primary education is to give adequate funding for proper repairs to schools. Does the Minister accept that it is totally unfair to ask teachers to teach our children in the deplorable conditions that are experienced in inner-city Manchester?

Mr. Patten: I do not want to stir up yet another local education authority, but I have to say that the way in which Manchester local education authority has conducted its repair programme over the years is not necessarily a paragon of virtue to hold up to metropolitan authorities. Adequate funds have flowed to Manchester over the years; the question is why they have not been properly used.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Bearing in mind the fact that standards in primary schools, as in all types of schools, greatly depend on the quality of teaching and teacher training, may I ask my right hon. Friend to accept the congratulations of the country and of hon. Members in all parts of the House on the fact that we are at last tackling the improvement and reform of teacher training? Will he also take up the question of establishing a staff college for head and senior teachers as a back-up for the reform of teacher training?

Mr. Patten: With the benefit of 20:20 hindsight, I wish that we had started our programme of vital education reforms 15 years ago with the reform of teacher training. That is when we should have started, but 15 years later we are getting going on it. My hon. Friend raises an important matter that has been put to me by head teachers who are more articulate and more sensible in discussing these matters than Opposition Members. The concept of a staff college for head teachers, deputy head teachers and aspiring heads and deputy heads is worth considering in discussions between the teaching profession and me. Anything that we can do to enhance the professional standing of teaching is good.

Nursery Education

11. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the Government's response to the recommendation of the National Commission for Education on nursery education for three and four-year-olds.

Mr. Robin Squire: The national commission proposal for free state nursery education for all three and four-year-olds conflicts with our policy of choice and diversity of provision which best meets the varied needs of children and their parents. It is also unrealistic in resource terms.

Mr. Chisholm: Is the Minister prepared to listen to research evidence rather than prejudice for a change? All the evidence shows that three and four-year-olds benefit socially and educationally from nursery provision. Does he accept that we are at the bottom of the European league for such provision and that there is good nursery education only under Labour local authorities such as Lothian, in whose area all four-year-olds receive free nursery education? How is the situation to be improved, given that the public expenditure round has been the worst for 14 years, with cuts targeted particularly on local authorities?

Mr. Squire: The Government are always willing to consider research conducted on that and many other subjects, but the research does not entirely substantiate what the hon. Gentleman said. It certainly confirms the advantage of pre-school experience, but not quite as strongly as the hon. Gentleman suggested. In response to his comments on political parties, I gently point out to him that Wandsworth council, which is under Conservative control and will remain so for many years, opts for 100 per cent. availability of nursery education.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will my hon. Friend pay tribute to the many parents in the Pre-School Playgroups Association, which provides such wonderful experience for our children, and will he condemn the fact that, although the Liberal Democrats constantly tell us how much they care about education, only one of them had bothered to turn up for education questions before the television cameras came on?

Mr. Squire: My hon. Friend makes the point about the Liberal Democrats more clearly than I could. I join him in paying tribute to the work of the Pre-School Playgroups Association. I had the pleasure of attending its annual conference recently and it is a first-class body of women and men, which does tremendous work across the country. If one or two local education authorities included the PPA in provision for under-fives, I suspect that they would have more choice. That is the sort of thing that we want to see happening everywhere.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Etherington:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 14 December.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Etherington: Will the Prime Minister explain to the House how, at a time of national financial restraint, he can justify the expenditure of £15 million of taxpayers' money by him and his Cabinet colleagues on entertainment? I understand that that fund is appropriately known as the drinks cabinet. Does the right hon. Gentleman think that that expenditure is little less than a scandal, when public service workers are being told that they face an indefinite wage freeze and does not it provide yet again that under his Administration there is one law for the powerful and another for the powerless?

The Prime Minister: At least the hon. Gentleman may be remembered for having made the worst pre-Christmas joke of the year. I happen to have the figures for No. 10 in front of me and I can tell him that expenditure on official hospitality at No. 10 was 27 per cent. lower than in previous years.

Mr. Pickles: Is my right hon. Friend aware that all the upper schools in my constituency have opted out of local authority control—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I cannot hear the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Pickles: Is my right hon. Friend aware that all the upper schools in my constituency have opted out of local authority control and that one of them—the Anglo-European school, which has an international reputation —is under threat from Essex county council because of a decision by the Liberal Democrat and Labour coalition to withdraw discretionary fares? That school has been the jewel in the crown of Essex. It has a high reputation for language training, and represents—*[Interruption.]* Will my right hon. Friend join me in saying—*[Interruption.]* Will my right hon. Friend join me in condemning this——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have heard the hon. Gentleman now. Thank you.

The Prime Minister: I share my hon. Friend's pleasure in the number of schools that have become grant maintained, which now exceeds 1,000. I have not heard about the specific problem concerning a particular school in Essex, under the control of the Liberal Democrats, and I am sorry if there appears to be discrimination against the school.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister agree that it is disgraceful that the sums of money being spent in the health service on increased bureaucracy, huge salaries and perks for managers and glossy public relations seem totally out of control?

The Prime Minister: I do not share the right hon. and learned Gentleman's suggestion that the expenditure is out of control. I do not believe that it is. The amount of expenditure on administration in the health service is very tightly examined and very tightly controlled. What I can tell the right hon. and learned Gentleman is that when I examined the control over health expenditure some years ago, as Chief Secretary, there was virtually no reasonable control over expenditure. It is necessary to have such control and I believe that it is right that we should have it.

Mr. John Smith: Has the Prime Minister looked at the affairs of the National Health Service Supplies Authority? If there is control, why did it waste hundreds of thousands of pounds on changing a single word in its name—£5,500 for a new logo, £61,000 for artwork, £67,000 on publications, £40,000 to replace signs and £20,000 to repaint the vans? That is £200,000 of which not a penny was spent on patient care. What kind of control is that?

The Prime Minister: Administrative costs in the health service are about 2 per cent. of total costs. There are very few companies that could match that. There has been no time in our history when so many resources were devoted to patient care within the health service.

Mr. John Smith: Is the Prime Minister reluctant to condemn the example that I gave him because the chairman of the National Health Service Supplies Authority is Sir Robin Buchanan, a former Tory councillor and, until recently, the chairman of Wessex regional health authority, in which the grotesque mismanagement of public funds was exposed by the Public Accounts Committee?

The Prime Minister: What the right hon. and learned Gentleman utterly neglects to mention is the fact that there is more money in the health service and more patients are being treated in the health service than ever before. He may seek to throw sand in the eyes on other matters, but that is the reality of the health reforms and no sensible person would wish to reverse them.

Sir Peter Emery: Does my right hon. Friend accept the view of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and of parliamentary delegations in Moscow monitoring the elections that the elections were full, free and fair? Will he make it clear that a Parliament or a Government, whether democratically elected or not, which show antagonism to Britain or the west, cannot expect to have economic aid poured in? Will he also make it clear that any move to annex nations that are now free and border on Commonwealth of Independent States countries must obtain the condemnation of the whole world?

The Prime Minister: We have not yet received the formal report from the observers of the elections, but the preliminary indications are that the elections were conducted freely and fairly. I look forward to the official reports in due course. It is, of course, too soon to say what the Russian Parliament will look like. There are a lot of results on a first-past-the-post basis that still have to come in. We shall have to examine that and examine the implications for British policy thereafter. It is undoubted that both the United Kingdom and the international community have recognised the independence of countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union. We have recognised that and we expect their sovereignty to be respected.

Q2. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 14 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Banks: As we have been talking about wasting public money, will the Prime Minister tell us why he spent £292,000 on decorating No. 10 Downing street and improving the catering facilities? We thought that he had an outside caterer. Does he think that it is obscene that he should be spending that amount of taxpayer's money when, within yards of Downing street, thousands of people are living in cardboard boxes and in shop doorways? Is not it rather strange that a simple Brixton boy has become the Imelda Marcos of Downing street?

The Prime Minister: I seem to recall that the hon. Gentleman, as chairman of the Greater London council, used to arrive in the House of Commons in a chauffeur-driven car, paid for by the ratepayers. I also seem to remember that that same south London boy blew ratepayers' money on a giant binge to celebrate the end of the GLC as well as on parties, fireworks and river trips. He even spent it on silver medallions for his GLC colleagues.

The money that the hon. Gentleman referred to being spent on Downing street—a public building—was used largely to repair the kitchens and other parts of the public aspect of the building.

Q3. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 14 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Riddick: With recent events in mind, does my right hon. Friend share my confidence that the Government will get their parliamentary business through this Session, bearing in mind the figures recently made public showing that out of the 200 Members with the best voting records, 191 were Conservatives and only six were Labour Members? Surely those figures show that the campaign of so-called non-co-operation is the hypocritical sham that we know it to be.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend understates the problem, as is his wont. Sham is precisely the right word. We know that the Labour party has broken off relations because it made a total mess of tabling an amendment on value added tax. It is now trying to hide the shambles that it made.

The idea that the Government are not allowing enough time to discuss budgetary measures is total and absolute nonsense. The Budget debate was extended by a day this year, and what happened? Hardly any Opposition Members turned up for that debate. I am not remotely surprised that only six Members out of the 200 with good voting records are Labour Members.

As for guillotines, I recall that five were introduced in a day by Mr, Michael Foot and the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) voted for them.

Q4. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 14 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Griffiths: Has the Prime Minister had time to read the excellent research conducated in America and Britain, which shows that the best and most cost-effective investment in education is that in nursery education? Will he prove the *Daily Express* right, for once, and commit his Government to providing nursery places for all three and four-year-olds? That would be a much better way of spending money than wasting it on Downing street, fripperies in the health service and paying off retired Cabinet Ministers.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman may look, for example, at a Conservative education authority such as Wandsworth, which provides nursery education. He should also bear it in mind that, on other occasions, he and his colleagues have asked for diversity of choice to be given to education authorities about how they spend their money.

Mr. Viggers: Will my right hon. Friend join me in applauding the progress towards fair and democratic government in much of central and eastern Europe? Does he agree that NATO must continue to develop the links and resources to ensure that that progress is safeguarded?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend about that. The future of NATO and its role from here onwards is an important subject to be discussed at the NATO summit in mid-January.

Q5. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 14 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cunningham: Is the Prime Minister aware that widespread concern will be felt throughout the country and particularly in Coventry about the £1 billion error which the Chief Secretary to the Treasury admitted yesterday? Does that mean more cuts in benefit for low-income groups? Is the Prime Minister also aware of the concern felt by many about the breathtaking incompetence of the Government, as demonstrated by their admittance of that £1 billion error?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman would do better to go back and read the evidence that was taken and then frame his question in a more accurate way.

The reality of what the Chief Secretary said yesterday makes no difference in practice. All social security—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Gentlemen would be wise to listen. The point about the £1 billion was not that it was in error, but simply that it was scored in the wrong place.

Q6. **Sir John Hannam:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 14 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave a few moments ago.

Sir John Hannam: When my right hon. Friend was in Brussels at the weekend, did he have the opportunity of exchanging views with the other European leaders about the state of their economies, particularly the levels of inflation, interest rates and economic growth—all areas in which my right hon. Friend is leading the way?

The Prime Minister: We had the opportunity of discussing the position across Europe. The fact is that, across Europe, the European Commission is forecasting a fall in GDP of around 0·5 per cent. In Germany, it is expected to fall by 2·25 per cent. in the current year and in France by 1 per cent. Industrial production is down in a number of countries. It is, of course, now rather different here: we have the lowest rates of interest in the Community; our inflation has been below the Community average for two years; unemployment is falling consistently in this country while it is rising elsewhere; and we have the fastest growth rate among European Community countries this year and by far the highest forecast for growth next year.

Local Government Finance (Wales)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. John Redwood): With your permission, Madam Speaker. I should like to make a statement on my proposals for local government finance in Wales for 1994-95. I have asked for the figures to be available in the Vote Office now for Members, and copies of this statement will be placed there at the end of my remarks.

I propose to set total standard spending at £2,704·8 million, an increase of 4·2 per cent. over 1993-94. Aggregate external finance will be at £2,419·2 million, an increase of 3·3 per cent. Both figures include care in the community.

Councils will receive revenue support grant of £1,740·1 million, business rates of £464 million and other revenue grants of £215·1 million. I am consulting local authorities on my proposals, and will advise the House of my final decision in the new year.

This settlement should be considered in the light of the low level of inflation—the latest retail prices increase is 1·4 per cent. and pay is rising by 1·5 per cent. in the public sector—and the Government's view that future pay increases should be met from savings arising from increased efficiency and improved performance.

My Department has today written to each local authority in Wales telling in its provisional standard spending assessment and provisional capping principles for 1994-95.

I hope that Welsh local authorities will budget wisely. It is important to ensure that local taxpayers are not faced with unreasonable bills. I therefore propose the following capping principles for 1994-95.

The first is that any increase of more than 1·75 per cent. over the 1993-94 budget requirement will be considered an excessive increase if it gives rise to a budget requirements over the authority's SSA.

Secondly, any increase of more than 1·25 per cent. over the 1993-94 budget requirement will be considered an excessive increase if it gives rise to a budget requirement over 5 per cent. above the authority's SSA.

Thirdly, any increase of more than 0·75 per cent. over the 1993-94 budget requirement will be considered an excessive increase if it gives rise to a budget requirement over 10 per cent. above the authority's SSA.

Fourthly, any budget requirement more than 12·5 per cent. above the SSA will be considered excessive subject to certain conditions.

An authority that sets a budget at or below its SSA will not, of course, be capped. Of necessity, my capping principles are provisional. I will take account of all appropriate considerations in making my decisions. Final SSAs will be announced in the new year.

I have decided to issue £503 million of capital grants and credit approvals for 1994-95. That represents a 4 per cent. increase on the current year. Given the low level of inflation, it will permit a good level of local authority capital investment.

Basic credit approvals for 1994-95 will amount to nearly £189 million, a 9·6 per cent. increase on 1993-94. That will give authorities more scope to set their own priorities for capital spending to meet local needs.

I have increased provision for educational capital by nearly 12 per cent. to a total of £42·5 million. I have increased provision for environmental and economic development by more than 39 per cent., to a total of £37·6 million. That, among other things, should help local authorities in finding their portion of the costs of European regional development fund-backed projects.

I have allocated £49·8 million for capital projects in the strategic development scheme. I will be announcing next week the local strategies and projects that I will approve under that figure.

I have increased housing provision modestly to £265·7 million. Mandatory home renovation grants go up from £145·6 million to £149·1 million and discretionary disabled facilities grants from £26·3 million to £27·9 million.

Total provision for transport amounts to £94 million. The transport grant settlement of £63 million will provide assistance for 30 schemes in total. It will enable county councils to start four major schemes: the third Dee Crossing, the Rhuddlan bypass, the second phase of the A4067 Swansea valley dualling, and the Bridgend cross valley link. I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will welcome those proposals.

I shall also provide support towards the preparation costs of four new schemes that have been conditionally accepted for transport grant: the Newport southern distributor road, the Porth and Lower Rhondda Fach relief road, the initial phase of the A485 Ceredigion link road, and the East Moors dualling of the peripheral distributor road in South Glamorgan.

I have placed full details of my proposed capping principles, provisional standard spending assessments, and credit approvals for capital spending in the Vote Office and the Library.

I shall provide over £144 million of revenue and more than £15·5 million of capital to the Further Education Funding Council. That is an increase of 11·2 per cent. over the current year. I shall also provide nearly £200 million of revenue funding and almost £23 million of capital funding for the Higher Education Funding Council.

That, in conjunction with the substantial increase in local authority educational capital, shows the Government's commitment to a higher quality educational system, and to teaching and training more students and working from better buildings. In addition, I shall provide an extra £6·6 million for people with disabilities to pay for a range of new projects next year, of which £6·3 million will be spent by local authorities.

Local government in Wales will also wish to welcome gross Housing for Wales expenditure of £121·3 million next year, ensuring that the Housing for Wales's core programme will provide 3,800 extra homes next year, compared with 3,650 this year. That is a welcome increase in the number of new and improved homes.

I intend to use the extra money for Wales in the general settlement to reinforce our priorities of better education and health care, to complete the crucial investments in the future of Wales and to assist its economic recovery. I commend the proposals to the House.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement, although there is nothing in it that will give any comfort to local government or to Wales.

Why is the Secretary of State so obsessed with maintaining secrecy about the details of the settlement? My hon. Friends may know—they may not be too disappointed when they do know—that the Secretary of

State has leaders of Welsh local government, who were told a couple of hours ago of the details of the statement, incarcerated in the Welsh Office in Cardiff. Why does the Secretary of State want to prevent hon. Members having before them the views and analyses of local government in their constituencies while he gives his report?

Why is the Secretary of State making such a mockery of the process of consultation that he is bound, by statute, to conduct? Nothing illustrates that better than his meeting dwith the county councils on 2 December to discuss the tier split. At 5 pm on that day, his Parliamentary Private Secretary undertook to give serious and detailed consideration to the case, and letters were delivered at 8.30 am the following morning, announcing that he had dismissed their representations. Why are such decisions taken before proper consultation is held?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that there is widespread dismay in local government at the further cuts in jobs and services that he is announcing today? Does he understand that that, coming on top of the wasteful and expensive reorganisation of local government that he is imposing—which no one in Wales wants—this will impose further burdens on council tax payers?

The Secretary of State is claiming an increase in spending. Why is he engaging in that sleight of hand when he is supposed to believe that cuts in public spending are good for Britain and the economy? Excluding care in the community, the SSA increase is nearly 1 per cent. below this year's actual budget and will inevitably mean further job losses. Does he realise that last year's settlement, which his predecessor hailed as "generous", resulted in 2,500 job losses in Wales, more than 2,000 of which were among teachers, lecturers and others involved in education?

If the Government's message is "back to basics", how will education be improved when school transport is cut, education welfare officers sacked and teachers made redundant? How will "back to basics" be achieved when the South Wales police authority cannot manage to police royal visits, and when chief constables are queuing up to tell the Secretary of State that they cannot do their job properly within the resources allowed?

The new capping criteria are arbitrary and complex, and designed to choke off local initiatives and flexibility. Was it the Secretary of State's wish that Wales should be brought into line with England, or did he succumb to Treasury pressure? Because the increase in external finance is less than the increase in spending, will that not mean a minimum increase of 15 per cent. for council tax payers in Wales?

Has the Secretary of State heard from local authorities in Wales that provision of care in the community is in a state of crisis due to a chronic lack of underfunding? *[Interruption.]* The £86 million quoted by the Secretary of State includes £37 million already promised. The new money for next year, £48 million, is only half of the amount estimated by local authorities to be the minimum requirement. That is on top of this year's underfunding of £20 million.

Is the Secretary of State aware that, since his predecessor's statement a year ago, Shelter Cymru estimates that homelessness in Wales has gone up by 10 per cent.? The Parliamentary Secretary may share a joke with the Secretary of State for Wales about this matter, but I do not think that the increasing numbers of people who wander aimlessly on the streets of Wales because they are suffering from mental illness is anything to joke about.

After the massive cuts of last year, capital spending has been savaged yet again. Despite the Secretary of State's sleight of hand, capital expenditure by local authorities is down from £620 million last year to £503 million, a cut of 15 per cent. That will mean a loss of jobs, services and opportunities. The Government's policies are worlds away from their rhetoric.

We were promised quality in public services; the reality is savage cuts. We were promised a commitment to stability and economic growth; the statement will cost jobs. We were promised an open and democratic system of government; this system continues the process whereby more than £1 billion of public money will be transferred from democratic local government to undemocratic quangos.

The Secretary of State is widening the gulf between the people of Wales and the Government, and he and his colleagues will ultimately pay a heavy price for their failures.

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) would have been the first to complain if I had given the statement to others outside before extending the courtesy of telling the House. That is why, as is traditional, leaders of local government were invited to the Welsh Office to read the statement, but not to broadcast it before hon. Members had heard it from my own lips in the House. The hon. Gentleman should withdraw that point. He and his hon. Friends always want to hear the news first, which is reasonable in a parliamentary democracy.

Of course I am now engaged in consultation on the proposals, as I have explained. There will be time aplenty for local authorities to consider them, and to give me the benefit of their views in writing over the next few weeks following my statement.

The hon. Gentleman sides with the counties on the tier split. Is he aware that the districts are very much in favour of the system that was hammered out between county and district over many years, and want it to continue this year? Perhaps he would like to explain to all the Labour leaders of districts in Wales why he is campaigning against them for the partial county view of the tier split.

As the split works out this year, it does not switch much money from country to district. I think it a fair settlement. I have chaired two meetings in which I have tried to establish a common view between counties and districts, but they were unable to reach such a view. We have therefore decided to continue with the original system that was agreed between them in previous years.

The hon. Gentleman says, wrongly, that no one wants our reorganisation. I suggest that he tell that to his friends in the Labour party in the big towns and cities, and in the historic Welsh shires, which are very keen for self-government and unitary status to be granted to them.

The hon. Gentleman juggles with figures that he little understands, and says misleading things. The truth is that the Welsh Office budget is up £320 million next year compared with this year; the truth is that total standard spending for local authorities—a big figure—is up by £100 million. Against a background of very low inflation and better control of public-sector pay than for many a long year, I consider that a good settlement. Well-run local

[Mr. Redwood]

authorities will be able to deliver the goods and improve their services, and will not need to sack people, because they will have the money to do the job.

The hon. Gentleman criticises education authorities, and says that they will deliberately savage the services they offer, because he thinks that they will be unable to manage. I have more confidence in those authorities than does the hon. Gentleman; I believe that they can manage with the money that I am proposing to Parliament, and that, if they get their priorities right, they can raise standards in the way we want, and balance the books.

The hon. Gentleman suggests that the minimum increase in council tax will be 15 per cent. as a result of the settlement. That is simply untrue; I am sure that some local authorities in Wales will manage to deliver a good range of services without terrifying the taxpayers to that extent. Just in case there are any problems, however, I have the provisional capping in mind, lest authorities overspend and do their budgeting badly.

The hon. Gentleman went on to criticise what he described as a "chronic lack of underfunding" in care in the community. I think that that was why my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State was amused. I assume that the hon. Gentleman miscued his phrase.

If he meant that he was worried about a chronic lack of funding, I rebut his allegation very strongly. A large sum —£86 million—has been allowed for care in the community. I am very pleased with the way in which most local authorities are tackling the issue of care in the community in Wales: I see much good work as I go around the country. They will have extra money next year with which to get on with the job, and I wish them every success.

As for housing, the hon. Gentleman should read the statement again. As a result of today's announcement, 3,800 extra and improved houses are to be provided next year, on top of what the local authorities will be doing. I believe that that is a manful way of tackling the task, and I commend the proposals to the House.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I must keep in mind the business before the House, and strike a balance. I hope that hon. Members will co-operate by asking brisk questions, which produce brisk answers, so that I can do my best to call all who wish to be called.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that my constituents in Rhuddlan will be dancing in the streets following his announcement that the town is to have a bypass? That bypass will not only relieve traffic congestion in the town itself and ease access to Glan Clwyd hospital, but facilitate the excellent work being done to develop Rhyl further as a tourist resort.

Mr. Redwood: I am delighted that my hon. Friend welcomes the news.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The Secretary of State will be aware that those with mortgages have benefited substantially in the recent past as a result of interest rate reductions. Is it fair for those who must pay council rents to expect a rent increase of some 7·5 per cent. as a result of the reduction in Government subsidy?

Mr. Redwood: Those who are in need and on low incomes will be taken care of through the benefits system. We believe that others should pay a realistic rent for their housing.

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): My right hon. Friend referred to £86 million being provided for community care in Wales next year. How much of an increase is that?

Mr. Redwood: From memory, it is £38 million this year, and it will be £86 million next year as the range of services increases.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Will the Secretary of State appreciate that, after listening to him, I was left with the thought that the old concept of local government had become almost meaningless? Is it not all about the diktat of central Government allied to quangos? Is it not time that we got back to the old principle of local power, local autonomy and local decision-making?

Mr. Redwood: Today's announcement grants permission for £2,700 million to be spent by local authorities, which gives them enormous choice and control over cash and people and other resources. I would have hoped that the hon. Gentleman would welcome that. It dwarfs the resources going through most of the non-departmental bodies under the Welsh Office, and rightly so, because it means that local people have a direct interest in making decisions and spending money on behalf of their local communities. Ninety per cent. of the money comes from central Government sources, but is given, in the main, in a block grant to maximise that local choice.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the formula that is used for the division of the increased resources that he has announced for local government will be according to the formula that was set by the local authorities in co-operation, as has traditionally been the case?

Has my right hon. Friend reached a conclusion regarding Housing for Wales's expenditure in relation to the grant rate? He will be aware of the concern that has been expressed on both sides of the House about a potential reduction in the amount of public finance and an increase in the amount of private finance that housing associations will have to find. Has my right hon. Friend reached a conclusion on that issue?

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend is quite right. It is an agreed formula—something that I welcome and that England would be well advised to follow, judging from the Welsh experience. We are proposing a grant rate of 62 per cent. I believe that we can build more from the public moneys available because, now that the market is improving and the private finances are a little more confident, we can expect them to make a proportionately larger contribution.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Does the Secretary of State recall the bizarre incident in the past year on the day of the local government elections, when the previous Secretary of State threatened to take Gwent county council to court because of its Budget? As a result, enormous expense was incurred by the county council, a great deal of energy was expended and, afterwards, the Welsh Office withdrew its threat.

Will the right hon. Gentleman give an undertaking that Gwent county council will be compensated for any cost that it suffered because of that, and also that Newport borough council will be compensated for the decision to impose costs on it because of its Browning Ferris decision? Will he give an undertaking that the Welsh Office will not engage in more crude, futile, political stunts?

Mr. Redwood: It was not a political stunt. The case was well judged by the Welsh Office. Unfortunately, the courts were not able to resolve it in a sensible time for the current budgetary year, which was the only reason why I agreed to its withdrawal. Were the county council to budget next year in a way in which we thought was wrong, of course we would wish to take action.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Will the Secretary of State assure us that, in no part of Wales, anyone who is entitled to a house renovation grant—disabled people especially—will be refused because of lack of resources? Will he say which roads scheme will help Trawsfynydd area in the wake of the rundown of the nuclear power station?

Mr. Redwood: Local authority roads are a matter for the priorities of local authority, and the hon. Gentleman should talk to them about that matter. I have made an increase in the money available for house renovation, especially for those who are disabled. That will represent a welcome extension in the number receiving the benefit, which he and I would like to see them get. I cannot make an absolute promise, because I do not know yet entirely how the pattern of demand will work out. My intention is that we should meet that demand as best we can, and I have therefore increased the amount of money to do so.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The Secretary of State twice regurgitated the figure for housing starts, saying that it was increasing from 3,600 to 3,800 for the whole of Wales. Why does he not put it in context and accept that there are more people on the housing lists in the Rhondda than the number of starts that he is approving today?

Mr. Redwood: I am pleased, as is the hon. Gentleman, that many people on the housing list are currently housed and are seeking better accommodation, which will mean changing accommodation. It does not mean that we need to build the number of houses to equal the number of people on all the housing waiting lists in Wales. I believe that this programme, coupled with private sector programmes and other initiatives, will be a sizeable improvement in the position, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome it.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): In the name of care in the community, Mid Glamorgan area health authority is closing down wards and is proposing to shut down Mardy hospital in Merthyr Tydfil. At the same time, everybody in the community knows that the care is not there, particularly for the elderly.

Since it is mostly the elderly in our communities who tend to take care of the elderly, will the Secretary of State take a good look at this again and discover what is going on? The majority of people do not feel that there is a care in the community system that is capable of meeting the needs, especially given the loss of vital hospital beds, particularly respite beds for the elderly.

Mr. Redwood: I share with the hon. Gentleman the wish that Merthyr hospital should be better run, and we have changed the management comparatively recently to try to achieve that aim. Care in the community is a local Government policy, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will work with his local authority to obtain the best value for the substantial increases in money that I have announced today and which I will be making available. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will also welcome the important road scheme for his area.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Will the Secretary of State admit that an increase in standing spending assessment in Taff Ely of a mere £342,000 in the coming year will pay for, at the most, 20 house improvement grants when there are thousands of people in that borough seeking more suitable and better accommodation, including many disabled people who cannot even have the money to allow them to take wheelchairs into the toilet? Why will the Secretary of State continue to condemn such people to that sort of life when he has an opportunity to make their lives much better?

Mr. Redwood: That is a bit rich when I announced a special £6·6 million package for the disabled on top of the general support grant that has been announced. The hon. Gentleman's local authority will receive a 2·4 per cent. increase in its SSA under these proposals, which is well ahead of inflation and pay increases.

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn and Hatfield): Will the Secretary of State confirm that record amounts of money have been spent in Wales? Does not that prove that we are the party of hot money and that lot over there are the party of hot air?

Mr. Redwood: I am delighted to welcome my hon. Friend to Welsh questions. I can assure the House that he and I had not colluded on that question, but I agree with its sentiments entirely.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Will the Secretary of State admit that he has delivered his usual diet of slippery statistics and smooth talk? The fact is that, yet again, there will be a reduction in the budget of West Glamorgan county, which will hit, for example, students seeking discretionary awards. Why does he not have any compassion for the skilled young people who want to do better with their lives by obtaining student places, but who are unable to do so because of the cuts that he has confirmed today?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman has not studied the figures. The total SSA for West Glamorgan will be up 5·2 per cent. on the basis that I have outlined. I have announced today major increases in higher and further education budgets and in capital for education through local authorities, because I am serious about improving educational standards, and it will not be for lack of money that we do not succeed.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The River Dee crossing announcement will be welcomed. It is a £60 million scheme, which will provide hundreds of jobs for local unemployed construction workers. Will it be complete by 1997, bearing in mind the distress and traffic jams that have been created because of the 10-year delay in its construction? Now that the Secretary of State has done the decent and honourable thing for Deeside, will he bear in mind the fact that we do not need the massive improvement in the road section at Aston Hill?

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful for the advice on the hon. Gentleman's third point. On his first question, I am advised that it is a £55 million scheme. The answer to his second question will in part depend on the local authority's decisions on phasing.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): Does the Secretary of State accept that, although he has announced an apparent increase in capital expenditure for all county councils, compared with two years ago it still represents a significant cut? For instance, two years ago Dyfed county council received a basic credit approval of more than £13 million, and the Secretary of State has just announced that it is £11·2 million. Does he recognise that that is a massive cut in two years, which prevents county councils throughout Wales from improving and building the new schools and other properties that are required, particularly for community care?

Mr. Redwood: It is an increase on the current year, and it is given in a way that increases local discretion to choose schemes.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): How many people in Wales are homeless, and how many additional houses will be built as a result of the statement?

Mr. Redwood: I do not know how many people are homeless. That is not the same statistic as the one that hon. Members often trot out. It is important not to confuse homelessness, when people have no roof over their heads, with unsatisfactory housing, when people would like to change the house or flat in which they live. There is often confusion on that point.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I thank the Secretary of State for the additional £6 million-plus for the disabled and the almost 6 per cent. increase in the disabled facilities grant under the housing budget. But despite that increase, on the evidence of my borough of Ogwr, those increases will not be sufficient. Once he has given that money to the local authorities, will he carry out a survey to find out how many people are waiting for disabled facilities to be provided in their homes? That remains a scandal.

Mr. Redwood: I took advice before choosing the amount of money, and the amount I chose was based on advice about what could be spent on decent schemes. If evidence comes to light in the next few months that more could be spent on good schemes for the disabled, I shall look again at that figure. In the meantime, however, I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's welcome. I intend to do well by the disabled; that is the purpose of the £6·6 million.

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): Does the Secretary of State admit that it is shameful that he is unaware that there are 10,000 homeless people and at least 80,000 people waiting for council houses in Wales? The settlement will do absolutely nothing to improve their position. Will he admit that the people of Wales see no sense in cutting services that are essential to the quality of their lives while he is preparing to spend millions of pounds on a so-called reform of local government that no one in Wales wants?

Mr. Redwood: The reform of local government will not incur heavy expenditure in the ensuing year that we are discussing. The aim will be to produce savings if there are transitional costs. The main cost would be shedding people, which would lead to revenue savings if councils chose to do that when we reach that stage.

On the homeless, the hon. Gentleman falls into exactly the same trap as I outlined in an earlier reply. The 10,000 people will not be without a roof over their heads tonight. They would like, and many of them need, better housing. The number of people without a roof is tiny, and my hon. Friends and I are attempting to tackle that problem, because it is unacceptable.

Sir Robin Buchanan

4.3 pm

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. During Prime Minister's Questions, the Leader of the Opposition attacked Sir Robin Buchanan in his capacity as chairman of the Wessex health authority. Those of us whose constituencies are within the Wessex regional health authority area know that there was a scandal involving the Wessex——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, who is a long-standing Member of the House, but I cannot allow Question Time to be prolonged in this way. If he has a point of order that I can deal with, I shall try my best to do so. Will he raise a point of order that concerns me as Speaker?

Mr. Viggers: This is a fair point of order, Madam Speaker.

An attack was made on Sir Robin Buchanan, and those of us in the Wessex regional health authority area know him to be one who has given distinguished public service. I should like the record to show——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but the hon. Gentleman is attempting to prolong questions and to debate the matter. It is not a point of order for me as Speaker.

Statutory Sick Pay Bill and Social Security (Contributions) Bill

(Allocation of Time)

4.4 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move,

That the following provisions shall apply to the proceedings on the Statutory Sick Pay Bill and the Social Security (Contributions) Bill:

Second Reading, Committee, Report and Third Reading: Statutory Sick Pay Bill

1.—(1) The proceedings on Second Reading, in Committee and on consideration and Third Reading of the Statutory Sick Pay Bill shall be completed at the sitting on 15th December.

(2) The proceedings on Second Reading shall be brought to a conclusion three hours after their commencement, and the proceedings in Committee and on consideration and Third Reading shall be brought to a conclusion six hours after the commencement of proceedings on Second Reading.

(3) When the Bill has been read a second time it shall, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills), stand committed to a Committee of the whole House without any question being put and the Speaker shall forthwith leave the chair whether or not notice of an Instruction has been given.

(4) On the conclusion of the proceedings in Committee the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question and, if he reports the Bill with amendments, the House shall proceed to consider the Bill as amended without any Question being put.

(5) No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which proceedings in Committee or on consideration of the Bill are taken.

Second Reading, Committee, Report and Third Reading: Social Security

(Contributions) Bill

2.—(1) The proceedings on Second Reading, in Committee and on consideration and Third Reading of the Social Security (Contributions) Bill shall be completed at the sitting on 16th December.

(2) The proceedings on Second Reading shall be brought to a conclusion three hours after their commencement, and the proceedings in Committee and on consideration and Third Reading shall be brought to a conclusion six hours after the commencement of proceedings on Second Reading.

(3) When the Bill has been read a second time it shall notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills), stand committed to a Committee of the whole House without any question being put and the Speaker shall forthwith leave the chair whether or not notice of an Instruction has been given.

(4) On the conclusion of the proceedings in Committee the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question and, if he reports the Bill with amendments the House shall proceed to consider the Bill as amended without any Question being put.

(5) No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which proceedings in Committee or on consideration of the Bill are taken.

Conclusion of proceedings

3.—(1) This paragraph applies in relation to any proceedings on either Bill which are to be brought to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 or 2.

(2) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Speaker or Chairman shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(a) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed;

(c) the Question on any amendment moved or Motion made by a Minister of the Crown;

[Mr. Tony Newton]

(d) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded.

(3) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (2) shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(4) If on 15th or 16th December a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) stands over to Seven o'clock and proceedings to which this Order applies have begun before that time—

(a) that Motion shall stand over until the conclusion of any proceedings which, under this Order, are to be brought to a conclusion at or before that time; and

(b) the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings which, under this Order, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Business Committee

4. Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) shall not apply to this Order.

Dilatory Motions

5. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings on either Bill shall be made except by a Minister of the Crown, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra Time

6. Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to proceedings on the Statutory Sick Pay Bill at the sitting on 15th December and to proceedings on the Social Security (Contributions) Bill at the sitting on 16th December.

Supplemental orders

7.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for varying or supplementing the provisions of this order shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to those proceedings.

(2) If at any sitting the House is adjourned, or if any sitting is suspended, before the time at which any proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion under this Order, no notice shall be required of a Motion made at the next sitting by a Minister of the crown for varying or supplementing the provisions of this order.

Saving

8. Nothing in this Order shall prevent any proceedings to which this Order applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by this Order.

Recommittal

9.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of, recommittal.

(2) No debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit either Bill to which this Order applies (whether as a whole or otherwise), and the Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Before discussing the two Bills and the reason for proposing the motion, I should first describe, simply and clearly, what it provides for, since there was some doubt about that last night—although I accept that those who expressed that doubt had not then had the opportunity to study the motion.

For each Bill, the motion provides for six hours of debate, divided between three hours on Second Reading and three hours for remaining stages. Overall, therefore, each Bill has broadly the equivalent of a full normal parliamentary day.

Additionally, although this is not in the motion, we have separately provided time for the money resolution required for the SSP Bill—last night—and for the Ways and Means resolution required for the contributions Bill, which is down for discussion on Wednesday evening. That has the effect both of avoiding procedural confusion after Second Reading and of providing additional time for discussion of matters arising from the two Bills.

Although I of course accept that the context is one that the Opposition do not like, to put it mildly, we sought to ease the problems that the House would otherwise have faced in relation to amendments by means of a motion —somewhat unexpectedly debated, but, I am happy to say, agreed to without dissent, on Friday—to allow the tabling of amendments to either or both in advance of Second Reading.

The content and the purpose of the two Bills will be dealt with more fully by my right hon. Friends when they speak on Second Reading. I shall therefore confine myself to a brief outline.

The principal purpose of the contributions Bill is contained in clause 1, which increases national insurance contributions payable by employees by 1 per cent. from April 1994. That proposal was originally made in the Budget presented by my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) in March; but clearly the revenue involved, about £1·9 billion, is an important ingredient in the more recent Budget judgment of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke). It ensures for the forthcoming year the financial soundness of the national insurance fund, from which all state retirement pensions and many other benefits are paid.

This is overwhelmingly the main point of the Bill. The other two clauses, apart from commencement provisions and the like, are simply designed to establish with greater certainty two points which already represent the general understanding and which have not been challenged—yet some doubt about them has arisen.

Clause 2 establishes that certainty in respect of the allocations made to the NHS from the national insurance fund—nothing new about those allocations—and clause 3 establishes with certainty that, just as payments towards personal pensions are not allowed as a deduction by employees from their income on which class 1 contributions are calculated, they are not allowed either as a deduction by the self-employed from the profits on which class 4 contributions are calculated. In both cases, these provisions do no more than establish more firmly what has always been intended and understood.

The second Bill is the Statutory Sick Pay Bill. Here, the main purpose is to implement one of the key expenditure proposals of the Budget—the abolition of the arrangements under which 80 per cent. of the cost of statutory sick pay is reimbursed to employers. This is part of a package, the other elements of which do not require legislation but will be implemented in other ways.

The package will include a major reduction in employers' national insurance contributions, will extend and improve the 100 per cent. reimbursement arrangements for small employers after a period, and will bring about overall a net reduction of about £100 million in the costs of British industry, even after allowing for the SSP changes.

No employee's entitlement is in any way reduced. Indeed, as a result of another element in the package, the abolition of the lower rate of SSP in April 1995, about 50,000 less well paid people will gain increased entitlements to SSP. From April 1995, they will receive it at the higher rate, which will then be the only rate.

The Bill also contains one other provision of limited but beneficial effect; it extends statutory sick pay entitlement to women who work past the age of 60, the age at which their entitlement currently ceases. It will now be available to them until they are 65, thus bringing about a modest but useful extension of equal treatment and, indeed, entailing additional spending of about £10 million.

Against that background, let me make five key points to the House. First, the two Bills represent two important elements in my right hon. and learned Friend's Budget, involving on the one hand significant amounts of revenue and, on the other, significant amounts of expenditure. They are therefore important elements in a policy—which is overwhelmingly supported, I think, by Conservative Members, if not by the Opposition—to improve public finances and to ensure that the recovery now taking place continues and is sustained. The Bills need now to be put in place in a sensible and orderly way.

Secondly, the Bills are not long and complicated. Although related to wider and more complex changes, some of which I touched on, essentially they are directed to two clear and straightforward, although not uncontroversial, propositions. The first is that employees' contributions should go up by 1 per cent.; the second is that 80 per cent. refunds of SSP should be ended.

As I have observed once or twice before, there has already been much opportunity to debate those propositions. Taking account of two Budget debates and a Queen's Speech debate, which covered the contributions Bill, the contributions proposals could have been debated for a total of 15 days. I accept that less time has been available to debate SSP, but we have just had a substantial Budget debate, which was extended by one day at the request of the Opposition specifically to embrace the fact that public expenditure was involved. The SSP proposal is a public expenditure proposal in the Budget, for which the debate was extended by a day.

Thirdly, the two Bills are tied closely together. It would plainly not be sensible to try to carry out the rest of the annual uprating of national insurance contributions in April with a large element of it legally unsettled. Equally plainly, it would not be sensible to make the SSP change without at the same time making the national insurance changes that go with it. They need to be dealt with alongside each other.

Fourthly, I accept that it is not impossible for such changes to be carried out at times other than April, but it is overwhelmingly for the convenience of business to make them, along with all the other changes in payroll systems and the like that occur at this time, at the beginning of the financial year in April.

Fifthly, and crucially, to achieve that, and to make those necessary changes in a way that does not cause unnecessary cost and inconvenience to industry, the House needs to carry the Bills before the forthcoming recess. I can perhaps best show that by working back from the intended date of implementation—6 April.

To meet that date, the Department of Social Security, the Contributions Agency and other parts of the DSS need to issue the necessary contributions tables and other instructions to some 1·2 million employers in February. Affirmative orders must be laid beforehand in early February, with proper time for consideration by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments and by both Houses. There will be several further opportunities for debate on the detail of the measures.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): When was a similar Bill last guillotined in this way?

Mr. Newton: The nearest comparison that I can make is with the Community Charges (General Reduction) Bill two or three years ago. [HON. MEMBERS: "Before Second Reading?"] Yes, before Second Reading; I think that is right.

In another respect, we face entirely new circumstances this year. It is the first unified Budget for a considerable time. *[Interruption.]* The unification of the Budget has been widely supported on both sides of the House. It took place on 30 November and included expenditure proposals alongside tax proposals, which require primary legislation but which do not have the same special procedures that tax legislation requires. That has therefore made it necessary to act in the way that I am seeking to persuade the House to accept.

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): On what previous occasions at this stage of the parliamentary Session—only four weeks into it—have two important Bills of such magnitude been subjected to a guillotine motion? It is common to guillotine Bills at the back end of a Session, but not at this stage. On what previous occasion has such a guillotine motion been proposed?

Mr. Newton: I had just completed my argument to answer that question. The sort of question that the hon. Gentleman has just asked me might make more sense if we were talking about an education Bill or others that I can think of, but it is not relevant to today's circumstances.

The two proposals are an integral part of the Budget announced on 30 November, with which a range of measures was needed to ensure that the proposals could be carried through coherently by 6 April. I am stating the procedures required of the House of Commons and the other place to enable that process to be carried out in a way that allows British industry to implement the proposals in a sensible and convenient way.

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): Does the Leader of the House anticipate that it will become an annual event for measures arising from the Budget that have to be passed by April? If not, what does he intend to do in future years?

Mr. Newton: I shall give the hon. Gentleman an entirely serious reply, as I have sought to do with previous questions. As I have said on a number of occasions—not least when occasionally responding to my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), the Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure, as well as to questions from other parts of the House—in the wake of our experience with the unified Budget procedures this year, we shall need to consider whether there are further lessons to be drawn.

Some of those lessons could not have become apparent until we had undergone that experience. It may well be that the problem that could arise in relation to expenditure proposals flowing from the Budget, and in the time scale that we are talking about, could require further thinking. That additional consideration would not necessarily be on the same long established lines for dealing with tax proposals, such as the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968, but could require further thought on how such matters could be most appropriately handled.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Is it not true that, as a result of moving things too quickly, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury—God bless him—has had to admit to a £1 billion error which, had he been more careful and examined the expenditure in more detail, could have been uncovered? Will not a similar error be made now if we do not look at the Bill properly?

Mr. Newton: First, I imagine that the hon. Gentleman, who assiduously attends our proceedings, will have heard what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said about the story on which the hon. Gentleman's question was based. Secondly, I do not accept that there is a parallel with the proceedings on which I am encouraging the House to embark.

A range of affirmative and negative orders—I am concentrating on the affirmative ones—will need to be laid in early February, allowing proper time for consideration by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments and a proper opportunity for debate by both Houses. We shall seek to provide that. Before that process, which must start in early February, the other place must deal with the two Bills after Parliament resumes in mid-January. If people think fairly and objectively about that, they will see that there is a need for the House to proceed with the measures this week, which is the reason for the motion.

From recollection, I believe that it has been customary to conclude such speeches with what is sometimes called knockabout, with references to the number of guillotines moved by one's predecessors of different political persuasions. I could make a number of such references, but I think that the case that I have made is clear and compelling and will command the support of my right hon. and hon. Friends. I am content to rest my case on that, and to commend the motion to the House.

4.19 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Today's debate is a classic example of the warning contained in "Erskine May" about guillotining motions. They are a potential risk to democracy because they are capable of being used

> "in such a way as to upset the balance, generally so carefully preserved, between the claims of business"—

that is, the business of this place—

> "and the rights of debate."

During the 20 years since I was elected to the House, I cannot recall a better example of the relevance of that warning. We are discussing the guillotining of two Bills that will affect every member of the British work force and every British company. One Bill will penalise all members of the British work force because it will increae the tax take from their salaries, while the other Bill will penalise—or so it would appear—all British companies because it will increase their costs and the bureaucracy that they face.

We are having a debate on a guillotine motion because the Government do not want to talk about the issues; they simply want to use their parliamentary majority to get them out of the way.

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that only today I had a letter from the PMT bus company in Stoke-on-Trent clearly stating that, as a result of the Government's proposals, it is likely that there will be an increase in bus fares? Surely we should have the opportunity to scrutinise the Bills properly, rather than pushing each through in one day.

Mrs. Beckett: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. It is precisely the purpose of scrutiny of legislation that such points should emerge from people outside this place. Parliament exists to scrutinise legislation; that is why we are here. In particular, this place exists and our greatest duties—for hon. Members on both sides of the House—stem directly from the need to scrutinise the tax raising and expenditure of Government. It is extraordinary that any Government should suggest curtailing scrutiny in the way that is proposed today. Not only are we asked to guillotine two Bills in one day, but each will have only one day's debate in this place.

The first of the Bills raises national insurance contributions for every working person by 1 per cent. That will raise £2 billion—two thousand million pounds—every penny out of the pay packets of the British work force. It actually raises £300 million a year more than a penny increase in income tax would have raised. No one could argue that those are not substantial sums or that they are not of considerable importance.

The second Bill—the Statutory Sick Pay Bill—transfers the administration of SSP from the Government to private industry. That transfer will mean savings for the Government of £750 million—again, a substantial sum. The Government claim that employers will be fully compensated for that transfer by the cuts being made elsewhere in national insurance contributions. That is part of the Government's case for curtailing debate.

Frankly, the House should doubt whether that is the case—as does British business, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) identified. I shall come a little later to the reasons why that doubt is considerable—reasons based on the proposals being put before the House, rather than simply on the straightforward presumption that a Government who are behaving in such a hole-in-the-corner way are a Government with something to hide, as appears to be the case.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Is not it one of the ironies of such an extraordinary piece of arrogant behaviour that the Government have succeeded in highlighting the very facts that they would rather the electorate did not know about?

Mrs. Beckett: I am indebted to my hon. Friend. She is entirely right. Speaking as someone who, in common with others in the Chamber, has spent some five years trying to get the public to take an interest in social security matters, often of immense importance to them, I certainly take the view that, if it had not been for the Government's incompetence as well as their disregard of the proceedings of the House, people would be much less aware of what is going on.

Usually, when we have debates because the Government have chosen to guillotine our proceedings, the Lord President spends much time claiming that time is being wasted in Committee and that great discussion has already been undertaken. He sought to claim credit today for his forbearance but, of course, he cannot make that claim today because we have not had a minute of debate on this legislation. Last week, he fell back on the claim that, with regard to the Social Security (Contributions) Bill, the increase was announced in the Budget a year ago, so there was no need to debate the detail.

That, in itself, is a dubious claim. First, the Bill contains somewhat minor and technical provisions with regard to the health service and personal pensions, to which the Lord President drew attention, but those clauses are there because preceeding legislation is either wrong or unclear. We scrutinise legislation so that, irrespective of what the Government intend, they can get the legislation right.

Secondly, as anyone who is suffering from the ministrations of the Child Support Agency can tell the Government, the devil is often in the detail. All hon. Members approve of the idea that people should contribute towards the upkeep of their children; very few people approve of the way that it is being done. That again, I repeat, is what this place is for, irrespective of the party that hon. Members represent.

Ms Walley: We are now having to sort out many issues simply because the Government have failed to get legislation right in the first place. My right hon. Friend has just mentioned specific legislation. Will she also bear in mind the way in which the Government have completely failed properly to scrutinise the European directive on the transfer of undertakings? Shall we not end up in exactly the same position with the legislation that we are about to scrutinise simply because the Government are not prepared to get it right and are not prepared to bring it to the House for proper scrutiny?

Mrs. Beckett: My hon. Friend is again entirely right.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Does not the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) underline the need for the House to spend time scrutinising European legislation rather than debating humdrum bits of legislation that have the broad support of the House? Was not the European directive on the transfer of undertakings brought forward under the previous Labour Government? If we had a system for the proper scrutiny of draft European legislation, would not we be able to deal with the problem raised by the hon. Lady? Do not we need to spend more time scrutinising the vast quantity of European legislation and less time talking up bogus divisions between the two sides of the House in order to conceal the ever-encroaching nature of the EC?

Mrs. Beckett: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He can be assured that his words will go down in history, at least on the Opposition Benches, and he can expect to have frequently quoted back at him, and frequently quoted back at his right hon. and hon. Friends, his words about humdrum legislation, which merely affects every member of the British work force and takes money out of their pay packets. That was a most revealing observation. The hon. Gentleman has clearly betrayed the fact that an increasing number of Conservative Members have no idea that this place is for the scrutiny of legislation of all kinds.

This place exists not only for us to have an opportunity to ask our questions and to probe; as my hon. Friend has made clear, it is for those outside this place who will be affected by the legislation, those members of the British work force and every British company that will be affected by the Statutory Sick Pay Bill. It exists so that they can scrutinise the legislation, ask their questions and perhaps, if they are extraordinarily lucky, even have them answered. It is not only our freedoms that are being curtailed by this procedure; their right as citizens to know that Parliament has examined legislation which will so seriously affect them is also being curtailed.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): A few minutes ago, the right hon. Lady called the Child Support Agency in her aid. She was right to think that many Conservative Members are just as worried as she is about some of the ways in which the policy has turned into reality. Does she accept that the legislation to set up the Child Support Agency was not guillotined, which demonstrates that a guillotine does not necessarily prevent scrutiny? Even without a guillotine, we do not necessarily get it right.

Mrs. Beckett: The hon. Gentleman makes an interesting point, but I am not sure that it will work out in the way that he intended. Certainly, even with the scrutiny that is available, Parliament sometimes overlooks things or fails to get sufficient straight answers from the Government. How much worse, therefore, is it likely to be when we are allowed such a minuscule amount of time?

Furthermore, I hope that the hon. Gentleman intends to stay for the rest of this part of the debate. I assure him that I shall be able to point out to him something that Parliament has already missed in the proposals.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): If the matter is so strikingly in need of scrutiny, can the right hon. Lady enlighten us as to why the Leader of the Opposition made no mention of it in his response to the Budget and gave it no scrutiny?

Mrs. Beckett: It is essential in the reply to a Budget speech to deal with the broad sweep of the debate. My right hon. and learned Friend mentioned some of these issues.

Mr. Clappison: Did he mention statutory sick pay?

Mrs. Beckett: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman asked that question. If he would like to stay to hear a little more of my speech, he will find out one of the difficulties that lie behind the statutory sick pay proposal and one of the reasons why the guillotine motion is before the House today.

The Lord President justified the guillotine on the Social Security (Contributions) Bill by advancing the notion that, as the proposal has been around for a year, there was no need to scrutinise it. That is the complete opposite of the position on statutory sick pay. That proposal has been around only since 30 November. No one has had time to scrutinise it. What is more, as I have already said, the way in which it was described was seriously misleading. The Government have claimed that there is nothing untoward or almost nothing unusual about their method of proceeding.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Humdrum.

Mrs. Beckett: Humdrum, as my hon. Friend says.

There is only one precedent that we have been able to discover—the Lord President also identified it—of a Bill being guillotined before it had even received Second Reading. That precedent is instructive. The precedent is the Community Charges (General Reduction) Act 1991. It has similarities with the Bill that we are debating today in that the Government clearly were not anxious to spend much time debating the issue. The Bill dealt with the most embarrassing policy, up to now, that the Government have pursued in their years in office—the policy of the poll tax. The Government wanted to spend as little time as possible

[Mrs. Beckett]

dwelling on the impact of the poll tax. That is the similarity with the guillotine that we are discussing. That is where the similarity ends.

The Act followed hot on the heels of a Budget in which the Conservative party increased VAT to 17·5 per cent. It was, in fact, the counterbalance to the cut in poll tax of £140, paid for by an increase to 17·5 per cent. in VAT. The Budget statement in which VAT was increased was made on 19 March. The Bill was produced on 26 March and debated in one day. We opposed the guillotining of that Bill because we thought that it was not the right way in which to dispose of such vast sums of money. We were right to recognise the dangers of that precedent. At least that Bill was the means whereby the Chancellor put back into people's pockets the money that he had taken out a few days before in the Budget.

There is no such excuse for the provisions that we are discussing today. They are a straightforward increase in deductions from people's take-home pay made in direct contravention of what was promised by the Conservative party and the Prime Minister before the general election campaign.

Let me remind the Lord President that one reason why the Social Security (Contributions) Bill is before us is that a change of this magnitude in the Government's tax-raising powers requires primary legislation. I have no doubt whatever that if the change did not require primary legislation, the Government would scuttle the matter through in whatever hole and corner way they could find. The remark of the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) that some of the legislation is humdrum confirms that view. The Government cannot get out of presenting the legislation to the House, but they have chosen to allow it to be debated as briefly as possible, allowing the princely total of less than six hours' debate for all stages of the Bill before it goes to another place.

I shall now deal with statutory sick pay. The Lord President's argument on the Statutory Sick Pay falls on the fact that we have known about it for less than two weeks. When the Government curtailed the previous arrangement on statutory sick pay of 100 per cent. reimbursement by reducing it to 80 per cent., the Lord President said:

> "It is entirely proper that we should come to the House with primary legislation to effect that change . . . that is the . . . legislation that we are debating."—[*Official Report*, 28 November, 1990; Vol. 181, c. 917.]

The right hon. Gentleman drew attention to the fact that the change was so significant that it had to be scrutinised properly. But that was a less sweeping step than the one in the Bill: it simply reduced the reimbursement from 100 to 80 per cent.

At the time, we were suspicious of the Government's further intentions and in debate we drew attention to that concern. Anxiety about the Government's intentions runs through the history of statutory sick pay. When it was introduced, the Government said that it would apply for periods of only six weeks and that it would be wrong to go further because of the danger of putting burdens on British business. Within a year they had gone further by increasing the period over which it applied from six weeks to six months.

That, too, was a less sweeping change than the one in the Bill. Not only was that legislation referred to by the Leader of the House in the way that I described but, despite being of lesser purport, it was discussed for more than 50 hours in the Chamber and in Committee.

On 1 March, the permanent secretary to the Department appeared before the Public Accounts Committee. There was again some suspicion about the Government's motive. No doubt some Conservative Members will think that it was unworthy. The permanent secretary was asked whether the Government had any plans to go ahead with further reductions and further burdens on British business. He replied:

> "No, there are no plans by Ministers at the moment to do that. Obviously, that is something they keep under review."

He was further pressed by the Committee and said:

> "What you expect or what you do not expect is something you must deduce. We keep it under review."

In line with a recent television programme, he should have said, "You might think that; I could not possibly comment."

The Government claim that the change is of no importance because there will be no losers. That is their basic argument about curtailing the debate and, plainly, it has been swallowed by some of their Back Benchers. They say that, because there will be no losers, the Bill can go ahead without full scrutiny.

Plainly, that argument is not accepted by the Institute of Directors, which is normally a friend of the Government. At the weekend, the institute suggested that the proposals would have a damaging effect on British business. It is not accepted by the Confederation of British Industry which, in the short time available, has written to hon. Members expressing concern about the principle of the changes which, it says,

> "poses fundamental questions about who should bear the cost of social security provision".

The CBI note says that it hopes that those questions will be explored—in the debates that the Government are now curtailing. It also says that, because of the overall Budget package and the Chancellor's reassurance, it does not necessarily wish to oppose the Bill, although it seeks various assurances from the Government.

I wonder whether the CBI is right about being reassured. Of course, this is exactly the kind of issue that it is right and proper to explore in Committee. That is the purpose of a Committee, but it appears that, at least in some respects, the Chancellor may have been economical with the truth in his reassurance in the Budget speech to which the CBI refers. The Government say that large companies will be compensated for the change by the reduction in national insurance contributions that will occur in other ways.

Later in the Budget speech, the Chancellor said:

> "for well managed companies with low sickness rates, there will be a net reduction in the cost of employing people. Other companies will have a much sharper incentive to improve their management of sick leave and to take a greater interest in the health of their own employees."

If there is no cost to business, where does that incentive, never mind a "sharper incentive", come from? The whole point, for the Government, is that there will be a cost unless companies themselves take other steps, which are not identified. Judging from the CBI survey of the management of sick leave, produced a little while ago, no such policies have been identified by anyone. Given the Government's track record, the fact that they cannot give us any breakdown of where the balance of the proposals for financial compensation in the Bill lies—to what extent the cut will compensate for statutory sick pay and to what extent it will contribute, as the Government suggested, to job creation schemes—raises doubts. The Government's imprecision gives us real concern.

What about small companies? The Chancellor continued his Budget speech by saying:

"the current special exemptions"—

for small companies—

"will be extended. At present, those with national insurance bills of less than £16,000 a year are fully reimbursed after the first six weeks of each . . . claim. I propose to increase that threshold to £20,000, to bring more companies into the scheme, and to provide full reimbursement after only four weeks. Two thirds of all employers will therefore continue to get help."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1993; Vol. 233, c. 926.]

That undoubtedly created the impression that there would be no cost to small companies—indeed, that they might benefit. Unfortunately, it appears that that is not true.

The Chancellor mentioned improvements that he said he was making, but in preparing for today's debate our inquiries have elicited the information that there will be increased costs for small companies. At present, 80 per cent. of the costs of small companies are reimbursed for the first six weeks, and after that they receive 100 per cent. of their costs. The time limit is being lowered to four weeks, but until four weeks have passed small companies will get nothing. I repeat: they will get not one penny—not one halfpenny—of compensation for the first four weeks. Only then will they receive 100 per cent. compensation. No doubt it is merely an unfortunate coincidence that, as all the surveys confirm, the vast majority of periods of sick leave are shorter than four weeks.

There is no reference to those facts in the Bill or in the notes on clauses. They emerged only during our inquiries in preparation for the debate. With only six hours available for all stages of the Bill, the facts might not have emerged at all during the debates. I assume that hon. Members would have concentrated their scrutiny of the legislation on what they thought were the difficult points, not on aspects that the Chancellor's words had led them to assume would not raise any problems.

We now know that there will be a cost—probably a substantial cost—for small businesses, and that it will be enshrined in regulations, which, as everyone in the House knows, cannot be amended. Yet hon. Members on both sides of the House would not have drawn that implication from the Chancellor's words. That not only highlights the need for scrutiny of legislation but shows us all why the guillotine motion is before us.

Tory Back Benchers are fond of posing as the champions of small business. There have been references in the press today—clearly, the result of briefings by Conservative Members—about the reassurance given to disgruntled Tory Back Benchers. Now we know what they were disgruntled about; they were being conned into voting for the Government, assuming that small businesses would be compensated. Now they know what is happening, and they can decide whether to vote for it.

Ms Walley: While my right hon. Friend has been speaking, has she noticed that some Conservative Members, especially the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), seem not to have known the facts? Can the Government have kept the information away from their Back Benchers?

Mrs. Beckett: Judging by the expressions on the faces opposite, I believe that my hon. Friend is right, and that the information was kept from Conservative Members. That demonstrates, more perfectly than any words of mine could, why scrutiny of legislation is required in this place, why that is the purpose for which the House exists and the dangers to which hon. Members lay themselves open by behaving in such a cavalier fashion towards the House.

The proposal to guillotine the Bills in such a manner is shoddy and disreputable. During the debates on the Queen's Speech we referred to the insolence of office that shines through everything that the Government do. The problem both in the House and in the country is that the Administration believe that they can do anything that they like, and they do not even want to be bothered to come to the House to defend it. It is clear that deceit, incompetence and cowardice are the hallmarks of the Government.

4.45 pm

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I was not surprised to hear the speech by the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett); such speeches are de rigueur for a debate on a timetable motion. I welcome the proposal to allocate time on the two Bills. Indeed, I believe that that should be a standard procedure for all legislation and I am sorry that that aspect of the Jopling proposals seems to have been lost in the mists of time. Hon. Members on both sides of the House sometimes refer to the importance of freedom of speech in this place, but after a few years here I have come to the conclusion that much of that is a facade. In reality, debate has to be curtailed if minds are to be concentrated. One of the features of timetabled debates is a better quality of discussion; more succinct arguments are addressed to particular amendments and to the particular concerns of the Bill.

The right hon. Member for Derby, South did herself a disservice—not to mention causing offence to my hon. Friends and myself—by suggesting that Conservative Members were not aware of the absence of any help for the first four weeks. I am perfectly well aware of that and it is mentioned in much of the documentation that we have been sent by various organisations. It is indeed one of the matters that needs to be raised in the debate.

I remind myself that we are considering timetables for two Bills—the Social Security (Contributions) Bill as well as the Statutory Sick Pay Bill. We have heard the sham anger from the Labour party, which before the general election planned to remove the upper earnings limit altogether. That would have meant a massive increase in national insurance contributions. The Labour party derides restraints on the time allowed for debate, yet if it had had its way many such issues would not even come before the House, because Labour would have handed the powers over to the European Community and the House would not have had the power to debate them.

The anger is a sham, coming from the party that has handed social policy-making to a commission, an outside body. That body is now—believe it or not—coming up with one or two sensible ideas, such as questioning the universality of child benefit. I wonder whether that idea will quickly be buried deep in the holes of Walworth road.

Mr. Enright: Does the hon. Gentleman seriously suggest that, because one pursues a certain European policy, the House cannot debate such matters? If so, he fundamentally misunderstands how the Community works —and, indeed, how the House works.

Mr. Paice: Outside the Chamber the hon. Gentleman and I are hon. Friends and he knows from our lengthy discussions that there is a difference between debate and constructive debate. We can debate European measures until the cows come home, but we cannot necessarily amend them. If the Labour party had signed up to the social chapter, as it was pledged to do, legislation relating to many issues would be agreed by majority voting in the Council of Ministers. We could debate their decisions for as long as we liked, but, after such scrutiny, we would have no power to change them. That very point was stressed by the right hon. Member for Derby, South.

Mr. Terry Rooney (Bradford, North): Can the hon. Gentleman tell the House whether the Single European Act or the social chapter has been more damaging to the concept of subsidiarity?

Mr. Paice: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that the social chapter has not even come into existence——

Mr. Rooney: Yes, it has. The hon. Gentleman does not even know that.

Mr. Paice: It is highly questionable to argue that subsidiarity is damaging the country. The hon. Gentleman failed to mention that the Labour party did all that it possibly could to obstruct the progress of the concept of subsidiarity by obstructing the passage of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill—the Maastricht Bill—through the House. If the Labour party had had its way, subsidiarity would not be an option, because of its obstruction of the Maastricht Bill.

The debate relates to the time allocated to two important, but small Bills. Those Bills will be considered after the House has had six days of debate on the Budget and, in the case of the social security contributions, five days of debate on the March Budget, when the 1 per cent, increase in national insurance contributions was proposed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont).

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): Does my hon. Friend recall that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security came to the House the day after the Chancellor's Budget speech to announce the full details and implementation of the changes relating to social security? That was an opportunity for every hon. Member to take apart the proposals.

Mr. Paice: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. A statement offers another opportunity to hon. Members to question a Minister on whatever issue.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the hon. Gentleman telling us that he is not aware of the difference between the questions put after a statement and the examination of a Bill?

Mr. Paice: Of course I am well aware of that difference, but a statement offers a further opportunity to hon. Members to understand exactly what is proposed. That information helps hon. Members to form their arguments on a particular matters. The ability to obtain information also counters the point made by the right hon. Member for Derby, South, who suggested that Conservative Members are unaware of the full implications of the Statutory Sick Pay Bill. That is utter nonsense.

The timetable motion allocates a full day for the consideration of each of the Bills. In addition, today's debate offers another three hours in which hon. Members can, as is the tradition, speak about the Bill's contents.

Mr. Dewar: That is wrong.

Mr. Paice: That is the tradition behind timetable motions.

We are talking about one Bill with three substantive clauses and another with two substantive clauses. Both relate largely to a matter of principle.

The right hon. Member for Derby, South was right to draw attention to the implications for small businesses of the proposed changes in the Statutory Sick Pay Bill relating to the first four weeks during which an employee is ill. No doubt we will have ample opportunity to table amendments to that proposal and I am sure that it will be discussed many times.

The Social Security (Contributions) Bill concerns a matter of principle. Hon. Members are either for or against the 1 per cent. rise in national insurance contributions. There is no need to provide a great deal of time for hon. Members to table amendments to that Bill.

Given the size of the two Bills, I believe that two full days of debate offer ample time to hon. Members to make short, succinct contributions that get to grips with the issues. That is the way in which all debates should be handled. I strongly support the motion.

4.53 pm

Mr. Terry Rooney (Bradford, North): I have been a Member of the House for just over three years and the one thing that I have learnt rapidly is that it behoves every hon. Member to read the representations that he or she receives, because they enlighten us about the implications of legislation.

I have received 57 letters from those running small businesses and 16 from those running large businesses in my constituency—yes, there are still 16 large businesses left there. Those people have explained the true implications of the Statutory Sick Pay Bill not only for their businesses but for their employees. Just today I received letters recording even more concern from the CBI, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Institute of Directors—organisations not noted for their donations to the Labour party.

The Leader of the House said that the Department of Social Security and its internal organisation had to get documents out in February. I wonder what happened—obviously it was before my time—when national insurance contributions were increased in previous March Budgets. Those contributions stood at 6 per cent. in 1979 and had increased to 9 per cent. before the current proposals. How was it possible for a change to be made in a March Budget and then introduced by 1 April without the aid of a guillotine motion? Now, with four months to play with, the Government have introduced such a guillotine.

Mr. Newton: I specifically acknowledged in my speech that it is not impossible to do things at other times of the year. Announcements about national insurance contributions that were made in March were not implemented in April, because it was not practicable to do so, and were normally implemented in October. Over the years, the business community found it extremely inconvenient to make national insurance changes and all that went with them twice a year.

Mr. Rooney: I accept that explanation from the Leader of the House, but no doubt others will challenge it. *[Laughter.]* I am glad that hon. Members find that funny.

The Government have made great play in recent times of the need to deregulate businesses. They have not, however, introduced much legislation to that effect. This week, however, we will debate the Statutory Sick Pay Bill for a maximum of six hours. But that Bill raises vital questions about exemption days and qualifying days. Following the decision last week, I wonder whether Sunday will become a qualifying day. What about the possible need for self-certification?

All those matters are relevant to the implementation of the legislation, but they are not mentioned in it. No doubt at some time in the future loads and loads of regulations governing that legislation will be tabled—as they will concerning the Child Support Agency—but it will not be possible to amend them. By then the damage will have been done and the costs incurred and people will have suffered.

The Statutory Sick Pay Bill represents a further betrayal of the promises made to employers when statutory sick pay was introduced and made the responsibility of management. Businesses were then told that 100 per cent. of the costs would be reimbursed and no one would lose out. I am reminded of the promises made in 1982 to local government when housing benefit management was transferred from the Department of Social Security to local authorities. Those promises came to nothing and council tax payers have had to bear the burden of tens of millions of pounds of lost revenue.

When the amount of sick pay rebate was reduced from 100 per cent. to 80 per cent., with a corresponding reduction in employers' national insurance contributions, that reduction was not extended to local authorities. In other words, local authorities have suffered a 20 per cent. cut in the amount reimbursed to them and it has not been offset by a reduction in their national insurance contributions. Will local authorities be similarly excluded from the terms of the Statutory Sick Pay Bill? If so, we should be told of the consequences for council tax payers, who will be expected to carry an additional financial burden. That is another issue that is worthy of scrutiny and amendment.

Two years ago we discussed a similarly so-called short Bill of two or three clauses. We were told that the House need not waste any time on it. It effectively gave people bribes to opt out of the state earnings-related pension scheme—SERPS—into personal pension plans. In the past week we have seen stories of hundreds of thousands of people whose cases are being investigated because they are being ripped off by shady insurance salesmen, and their personal pensions for the future are in question. That is the danger of chasing something through the House in a short space of time when dealing with major implications for people's personal future, security and welfare.

Much has been made of the fact that the Bills were mentioned in the Queen's speech and in the Budget statement. It is worth drawing attention to two points to do with the Budget speech, which was one of the shortest in many years even though it embraced the annual public expenditure statement. Only as the days have gone by have we started to see what was really in the Budget documents and not in the Chancellor's speech. Not least, we now find that not all pensioners will get the full amount. If they are on a reduced pension, they get reduced compensation for their VAT.

It has still not been admitted anywhere that, as well as reducing the job seeker's allowance from 12 to six months, the Government have abolished the dependant's allowance, which was previously payable with unemployment benefit. That has not been mentioned in the House. It has not been spoken about by any Minister. I suspect that it has not been admitted to the Government Back Benches. One has to get down into the paperwork to find that information.

The implications of the Bill are horrendous, covering as they do some 26 million people in work in hundreds of thousands of companies. Their prosperity, viability and profitability are at risk. With that there is a risk of higher unemployment. The Bills are so serious as to deserve much more than six hours of debate. I think that this is a stupid guillotine. It is totally unnecessary and should therefore be opposed.

5.1 pm

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): I welcome the opportunity to take part in this short debate. I shall say at once that I support the measure. I believe that the guillotine is perfectly acceptable and that, important though they are, the issues that arise out of the debate are perfectly capable of being debated within the time span allowed and being given proper scrutiny. The Bill has implications for health —it makes a major contribution to health—and the competitiveness of industry. Those points have not been dwelt on at all by the Opposition, who seem to show little interest in them.

On statutory sick pay, the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) was at her most high-minded when she opened the debate, talking about a measure that had major implications for British workers and businesses. One thing that I have learnt in this place is to be very suspicious of politicians when they are being excessively high-minded. In the case of the Statutory Sick Pay Bill it is instructive to look at the history of the matter and consider what may be the real reasons and motives that lie behind the sudden outburst of interest in the matter among Labour Members.

The proposal first came before the House in the Budget statement of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor, who clearly announced what the Government's intention was going to be in respect of statutory sick pay. As I said to the hon. Member for Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), although the Leader of the Opposition mentioned many other things in his response to the Budget debate, he did not see fit to mention at all the change in statutory sick pay, which had been announced by my right hon. and learned Friend.

The matter came before the House again the following day, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security made his statement and went into more detail. The hon. Member for Garscadden, on behalf of the Opposition, responded on that occasion. It is right that he raised the question of statutory sick pay in his response to my right hon. Friend. It was inevitable that he would do so, because it was the subject that he was covering.

[Mr. James Clappison]

I think that the hon. Gentleman will not take it amiss from me if I say that, in my experience of him, he is a stickler for detail. He is certainly assiduous in his attention to detail. There are times when he may regret going into as much detail as he does. In future, perhaps because of certain things that have happened here, we may have somewhat less detail from him. He took up the question of statutory sick pay with my right hon. Friend, but made no mention of a point made by his right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South about small businesses.

The hon. Gentleman did not pick up that point, although it was clear in the statement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of state, who explained what his proposals were going to be with the offsetting change in national insurance contributions and the protection that is being given to small businesses. Although the hon. Gentleman responded, he did not even query what the effect would be on small businesses let alone take up the point of the right hon. Member for Derby, South—so much for the hon. Gentleman's sudden concern for the fate of small business men.

If the hon. Gentleman would like the answer to the question that was posed by the right hon. Member for Derby, South, it is quite wrong to say that there is no compensation for small business men. They enjoy the national insurance contribution reduction in the same way as all other business men do. In addition, they get the protection of having 100 per cent. of the statutory sick pay rebated to them after four weeks of sickness. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) says, "After four weeks," but if he knows about this, he will know that the present limit is six weeks and that it has been reduced to four weeks and is being made at 100 per cent. rather than at the rate of 80 per cent.

Mr. Jenkin: Is it not rather extraordinary that the shadow Leader of the House should make a great revelation about a particular aspect of the small business relief as though she had stumbled on it by accident hidden in some dark recess? If she were to look at the Library brief on the Statutory Sick Pay Bill, she will find that it is there, under the heading "New Small Employers' Relief".

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): When was it published?

Mr. Jenkin: Obviously it was published in time for this debate. It would have been published in time for the debate on Second Reading and the Committee stage.

Is it not extraordinary that the official Opposition should need to make such bogus points about the measure?

Mr. Clappison: My hon. Friend is right. There have been no secret documents or secret inquiries made. If Opposition Members had an interest in the matter and took the time and trouble to study and listen carefully to what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security said on 1 December, they would have seen that the proposals were clearly set out there. Nothing new has come out since. The proposals were there. The difference is that Opposition Members—Labour and Liberal Democrats—were not interested at that stage in small businesses. They did not even have the interest to express any view about small businesses in their response to that debate.

The story gets worse from there on, because after that debate we had days of debate on the Budget—a specially extended debate. Shadow spokesmen on health made no mention of the matter, although it has major implications for health. A shadow spokesman on employment made no mention of statutory sick pay. In fact, no other Members on the Opposition Front Bench mentioned it, apart from the hon. Members for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and for Peckham (Ms Harman), who made the most passing remark about the cost being passed on to employers, without taking any account of the offset in national insurance contributions. That was clearly an omission. I shall leave hon. Members to judge whether it was an intentional or negligent omission in each case.

Opposition Front Bench Members were hardly being egged on by a tremendous outburst of interest and enthusiasm from their hon. Friends on the Back Benches, because so far as I can see—in my humble research into the matter—there were 34 speeches from Opposition Members in that long debate. Only two of those speeches mentioned statutory sick pay. They did not take up the point that was made today by the right hon. Member for Derby, South. Yet all the proposals were known. They were all there.

If Opposition Members had not been in the Chamber to hear the announcements in the Budget speech or my right hon. Friend's statement, they could have looked it up in *Hansard*. It was all there, yet there was no interest and no inquiries were made. I am driven to the conclusion that there is something strange going on with the Opposition. Why is there such a sudden outburst of enthusiasm for this Bill? What is the real reason for the sudden launching of guerrilla warfare? It is not for me to speculate on that.

Mr. Denham: I have been listening with interest to the hon. Gentleman. On a number of occasions, he has suggested that the arrangements that would apply to small businesses as a result of the Budget statement and the uprating statement made by the Secretary of State for Social Security were perfectly clear. I have a copy of the Library briefing on the social security uprating statement and I cannot find anywhere in it anything which says that small employers will have to foot 100 per cent. of the bill for the first four weeks. Why is the hon. Gentleman so confident that that should have been crystal clear to the House?

Mr. Clappison: I direct the hon. Gentleman's attention to the second half of column 1037. If he applies his mind to it, he will see that it sets out the matter clearly.

Part of my reason for taking part in the debate was so that I could strongly endorse what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) about the timetabling of Bills and the scrutiny of legislation. In my short experience, I have taken part in the deliberations on a long Bill, with a number of clauses. My experience of the debates on the Education Bill led me to the conclusion that the quality of debate and of scrutiny are much improved by timetabling so that there can be constructive and intelligent debate without the Opposition trying to delay and procrastinate, using base parliamentary tactics to obstruct the passage of Bills.

I see the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) laugh. I think he knows all too well what I am getting at. My experience also led me to the conclusion that the Opposition's motives for what they were doing were often different from what they claimed.

Mr. Enright: Does the hon. Gentleman also recall that Conservative Members, in what was a long-sitting Committee considering the Education Bill, refused to speak and give us the benefit, or otherwise, of their thoughts? That was a great shame, because it meant that we had to examine the Bill from the Conservative angle as well as from our own.

Mr. Clappison: I enjoyed the company of the hon. Gentleman on that Committee. I think that he will remember that I made my own contributions to the debate, but I found it difficult to speak for as long and to as little effect as the hon. Gentleman.

The Bill deals with important issues such as improving the health of the work force, improving managements' administration of sick time and improving efficiency. I remind the Opposition that we have the second worst rate of absenteeism in the European Community. It is an important and straightforward Bill, which will create incentives to encourage management to manage more efficiently and to deal with sick time, while at the same time compensating business.

Those are important points, but they can be dealt with in short order. As to the point made by the Opposition about small businesses, any small business man would greet that with the hollowest of laughs, given the massive programme of regulation to which the Opposition are prepared to sign up in the name of socialism under the socialist programme for the European parliamentary elections.

5.12 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): The hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) has got it all wrong if he thinks that the issue that we are debating, particularly when we are debating it under a guillotine, has anything to do with the merits or demerits of timetabling. I am happy to engage in discussions about timetabling, although that is difficult—much more difficult for an Opposition Member than a Government Member, but the hon. Gentleman may not always be sitting on the Government Benches. The House must deal with timetabling properly, but the Leader of the House does not make it any easier to deal objectively with timetabling when he treats us in this way.

We are faced with the most draconian guillotine that I have ever seen since I came to the House in 1983. As I said in the short debate on the money resolution last night, those on the Government Front Bench have to be careful about the precedents they set, because precedents can be used by anybody and everybody. If the House slips into a process of guillotining Bills before Second Reading, that will be another big step down the wrong slippery slope towards getting the procedures of the House and the rules and conventions disrupted. That may encourage others to emulate the Government's example, but it would not be sensible for the democratic process of the House.

I listened with interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice), who said that the Bill has only five clauses. I do not know where he was last year, but let me draw his attention to the fact that the Maastricht Bill had only five or six clauses. He said that there are one or two important issues of principle here, and so there are. However, £1,900 million-worth of expenditure is involved. The Bills were published only a few days ago, and are scant on the detail of some of the secondary enabling legislation. I agree that there are only five clauses, and that must be taken into account when we consider how many hours to allocate to them.

This is the most draconian timetable that I have come across, and I was caught by that. I gave the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East an example. In good faith, I tabled a reasoned amendment against Second Reading —the House will know that, because it is on the Order Paper—of the Social Security Bill on Thursday. Were that amendment to be selected by the Chair—that is at the discretion of the Chair—the 15 minutes on the vote would be taken off the total time available for the Bill.

That puts constraints on hon. Members who have a bona fide interest in trying to argue a case for a constructive and positive Second Reading amendment. If the amendment were selected, I would have to decide whether a vote on it would be the best use of the time of the House. That is a difficult position in which to put hon. Members when they are debating such important issues.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Is not one of the Government's dilemmas the fact that the Opposition's Whips Office is often unable to deliver its agreements made through the usual channels? The Whips go around saying, "We're not voting on this, brother," but hon. Gentlemen such as the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) force Divisions, taking up 20 minutes every time they do so.

I was in the engineering union, and I would tell the hon. Member for Bolsover, had he been sitting in his place now —we are not being televised live, so he is not here—that he does not pull his weight. He has a free ride. He never serves on Committees, while we are upstairs doing the work. If the Labour party cannot control its members, we shall continue to have problems.

Mrs. Dunwoody: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Has the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth followed the habit of the House and informed my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover that he intended to attack him in the Chamber?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): That is not a matter for the Chair, but the hon. Lady is right: that is the convention.

Mr. Kirkwood: I know the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), and I suspect that he can look after himself. That intervention, helpful or otherwise, should not have been addressed to me. I have already offered to act as bookie's runner between the two Front Benches. For a small fee, I am anybody's. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] We all have a price. The sooner that the two Front-Bench teams get their act together, the happier we shall all be. If that happens before Christmas, nobody will be happier than me.

My experience of the past 10 years has shown me that guillotine debates get further and further away from the purpose on which they are supposed to be focused—looking at the details of the timetabling motion. I should be interested—I bet any money that he does not—if the Leader of the House could explain why he thinks it necessary to put in some of the verbiage in the guillotine motion.

Paragraph 1(5) says:

> "No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which proceedings in Committee or on consideration of the Bill are taken."

[Mr. Kirkwood]

I will give the Leader of the House a £5 note for every time that has happened in the past 10 years. Paragraph 7 deals with supplemental orders, and paragraph 8, on saving, means that the debate can end sooner than is set out in the guillotine motion. As for paragraph 9, it would be fascinating to know what figment of the parliamentary draftsman's fantastic imagination made him think that it was necessary to have that paragraph in the motion. Those paragraphs are extraneous, irrelevant and totally unnecessary.

Why do we allow Ministers to table timetable motions that no one inside the House understands, let alone anyone outside the House? I spent the morning with the Clerks —and very helpful they were too—but how many other hon. Members spend time with the Clerks? *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) is an honourable exception.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Member knows that I have huge respect for him. He will realise that these things are drafted by incredibly clever parliamentary draftsmen, and it would probably be better if I sought advice before answering the hon. Gentleman's question. It is not unknown for hon. Members to cause difficulties in the procedure on timetable business—for example, by moving other debateable motions that consume the time available. They then complain that a Bill has not been debated. We are trying to ensure that the hon. Gentleman is able to make the constructive comments that he always does.

Mr. Kirkwood: That is a monstrous attack on the hon. Member for Garscadden. I am sure that he would not do anything of the kind.

Mr. Newton: It is not the hon. Member for Garscadden that I have in mind. Wild horses would not force me to say who it is.

Mr. Kirkwood: Anyone who looks at the guillotine motion, and asks the Clerks what it is all about, will see that, in paragraphs 4 and 5, the Leader of the House has taken sensible powers because he knows that absent friends could create difficulties.

I am not saying that guillotine motions do not have to contain certain necessary elements. Paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 make some sense in relation to the Government's position, but all the other rubbish is completely phantasmagorical nonsense and should not be there. May I return the compliment and say that the Leader of the House is a man for whom I have enormous respect, and I know that he is not given to this kind of thing.

If the Government are to resort to guillotine motions in future, there should be a sensible Standing Order that sets out the elements that a proper guillotine motion could and should contain. The motion would then come before the House as a numbered Standing Order. Everyone would then know exactly what the Government were trying to do by the motion.

I bet my bottom dollar that no more than three or four hon. Members in the Chamber could give a passable explanation of the detail of the contents of today's motion.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The hon. Member is missing the point. The Government's decision to put down a guillotine is not to make things clear to the House or the electorate. Their express purpose is to hide what they are trying to do. The hon. Gentleman's criticisms of the wording is to miss the whole import of the Government's reasoning.

Mr. Kirkwood: I stand suitably chastened. I was trying to explain from the House's point of view; I was not trying to make party political capital. The hon. Lady is right: some chicanery is going on to cover the Government's embarrassment. It does not make sense for the House to discuss motions that are unintelligible to everyone, including experts.

The Leader of the House's point about the 6 April deadline is vitiated, because everyone knows that the Government need to give proper notice. That deadline has always been the point at which administrative changes should take effect. Why did he not start last spring to contrive a parliamentary framework in which we could have a more sensible debate on this matter? He has got himself boxed in and has had to bring forward this legislation, which is of limited but important scope, in short order. He did not make a strong point when he claimed that it has been known for months that we needed to do this. He should have brought forward legislation about the national insurance contribution changes earlier.

The Statutory Sick Pay Bill is a very important piece of legislation, particularly in the financial effects that it will have on small businesses. I talk to small business men more than I do to the larger organisations that represent industry, and they have told me that they feel that, over the past five years or so, the Government have let them down.

They were given commitments and undertakings when the old national insurance contributory benefit of sick pay, which used to be paid at the 100 per cent. rate, was changed. They were assured that there would be no difficulties with the changes, and that they could rely on the Government's word that they would not lose.

That amount has now been reduced, particularly in respect of small businesses, and those businesses now face financial difficulties. A business that employs eight to 10 men and has employees off sick for two or three weeks, especially if two or three of them are off at the same time, will have no cover, and will have difficulties with its cash flow.

The Bill is not only about the adverse financial effects but will strike at the root of the relationship that small businesses should have with the Government of the day. Small business men feel that they have been let down. Most of the representations that I have received refer more to that relationship than to the cash flow and other implications of statutory sick pay.

Small businesses have lost confidence that they will be treated reasonably and fairly by the Government, because of the changes and the way that they have been made.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People will say more about this when he winds up, but the point that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire has made about small businesses—whatever representations may have been made to him—needs to be studied more carefully.

I have a table of the position of small firms with five employees, with an average sickness record, earning £90, £130, £190, £250 and £340. In each and every case, on average sickness records, those firms will be better off. Set against what they may have to find for the odd few weeks in particular sickness cases, there will be reductions for their employees' weekly national insurance contributions, week in and week out, for 52 weeks.

Mr. Kirkwood: That will come out in the wash. Those initial assessments may have been made on a false prospectus. Small business men have told me that they are worried about the losses they will incur, but they are more worried about the way they are being treated. That is something that the Government should attend to. If confidence in the partnership between small businesses and the Government is not maintained, it bodes ill for the future of our country.

The changes that have been introduced to statutory sick pay for small businesses are very difficult, if not impossible, to determine. It is not possible to work out the detailed effects of the Statutory Sick Pay Bill from its content, because of its enabling nature and because it increases the power of Ministers to table legislation.

The House must be resistant, strong and robust in objecting to Ministers' coming to the House day after day, week after week, to ask for more powers. In many instances, negative resolutions are involved: hon. Members must pray against the orders involved, and sometimes even that does not enable us to debate them. Indeed, securing debates has become increasingly difficult recently. That is bad for the democratic process, and I believe that people outside are already becoming disillusioned with the way in which we do our business.

As I have explained, I consider guillotine motions such as this unintelligible and inexplicable, and I believe that the Leader of the House has produced little justification for them in his rationale. Although such motions can be justified in certain circumstances, I consider this one completely unjustifiable. The House should reject it.

5.30 pm

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). As with most Liberal Democrats, butter would not melt in his mouth. At one point he cracked a little joke, saying that for a small fee he was anybody's; the joke would have had a greater ring of truth had the hon. Gentleman said that he was anybody's —that he would do and say anything—for a constituent's vote. As we know, the Liberal Democrats are happy to say one thing on one doorstep, and the opposite on the next. But you will be pleased to learn, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I shall say no more about the Liberal Democrats this evening.

Today's guillotine motion has an interesting backdrop —the first unified Budget. We should also bear in mind the fact that one of the Bills that we are discussing is very much part of the Government's overall economic policy. The motion has supposedly led to the suspension of cross-party co-operation in Parliament—the end of the so-called usual channels. I consider that something of a smokescreen: to some extent, I must take the blame for the ending of that cross-party co-operation.

Last Tuesday, I unveiled the incompetence of the Opposition by remarking, on a point of order, that they could have tabled an amendment to the Government's Budget motion, which would have allowed them to vote on the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel. Why did they not do that? Were they incompetent, or were they happy with the Chancellor's compensation package?

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): Both.

Mr. Riddick: That may be true. However, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who is seated on the Opposition Front Bench, gave the Government a helpful steer before the Budget had even been announced: he told us that 50p a week on pensions would do the trick. That was very good of him, and the Chancellor offered exactly that—but only in the first year; the compensation will become more generous in the second year. At the end of the process, single pensioners will be £1 a week better off than they would otherwise have been, and pensioner couples will be £1·40 a week better off.

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West) *rose*——

Mr. Riddick: I am coming to the point; I hope that the hon. Gentleman will bear with me.

In fact, the Opposition should be happy with the compensation package. Why, then, are they ending cross-party co-operation? They tell us that it is because of the guillotine motion, but I want to expose the real reason. I believe that we must return to the "incompetence" argument. As I have said, the Opposition could have tabled an amendment to the Government's Budget motion on Tuesday, whose wording was the same as motions tabled by a Labour Government in 1977 and 1988—and, indeed, motions tabled by the Conservative Government throughout the 1980s. Lord Jenkins actually tabled such an amendment in 1983. The truth is that this time the Opposition simply got it wrong.

We also know that there has been an unholy row in the parliamentary Labour party, between the shadow Treasury team and the shadow Leader of the House, between the shadow Leader of the House and the Whips, and in the shadow Cabinet generally. Labour Members have tried to blame the Prime Minister for their own incompetence: I was able to expose that in my point of order last week.

Over the past few days, we have read a good deal in the press about how the Opposition will refuse to co-operate with the Government through the "usual channels". They say that that is because of the guillotine motion, but, as I have said, they are merely trying to cover up their own incompetence of last week. Moreover, there is a growing disenchantment on the Labour Back Benches with the performance of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) as Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying a little too wide of the subject, which is the guillotine motion. I should be grateful if he would confine his remarks to it.

Mr. Riddick: I thought that you might pull me up at some stage, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was intending to apologise to Labour Members—and, indeed, Conservative Members—who may be inconvenienced by the fact that the usual channels are no longer working properly.

I believe that the guillotine motion could prove very helpful to Opposition Members. As we know, they do not have a very good voting record, and I think it will be beneficial for them to know when votes will take place: they will be able to ensure that they are in the House. Campaign Information Ltd. recently conducted a survey of hon. Members' voting records; it found that Conservative Members voted in 75 per cent. of all Divisions, while

[Mr. Riddick]

Labour Members voted in 55 per cent. and Liberal Democrats in 62 per cent.—the record of the Liberal Democrats was slightly better than that of Labour.

As I pointed out today at Prime Minister's Question Time, the vast majority of Members of Parliament among the top 200 voters were Conservatives; only six were Labour Members. Modesty forbids me to make a big deal about the fact that I was in the top 100, coming 84th in the league table.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that I shall not have to intervene again to remind the hon. Gentleman that the House is debating the guillotine motion. He must confine his remarks to that.

Mr. Riddick: I am grateful to you for making that clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My point is that the guillotine motion will not merely help Conservative Members; it may help Opposition Members even more. It is they who seem to find difficulty in coming to the House to vote. I was going to congratulate the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on coming first in the Division league table, but he is not present. Perhaps one reason why he can spend so much time voting in the House is that he never spends any time sitting on Committees.

Mr. Dickens: He has not done so for years.

Mr. Riddick: Not since 1988, I believe. The hon. Gentleman is very embarrassed about it, but as he is not present to defend himself, I shall not say much more.

We have two short, simple Bills in front of us. The national insurance changes were announced in March, and we had a long debate on the Budget speech at that time. We have had another lengthy debate on the recent unified Budget for about five or six days, during which the Statutory Sick Pay Bill could have been raised at any time.

I do not want to see national insurance contributions increased at all. I do not want to see any taxes increased or see any tax allowances reduced, but we have a problem with the public sector borrowing requirement deficit. That is one crucial difference between Conservative and Labour Members—we do not like to increase taxation or national insurance contributions and Labour Members do.

Every Labour Government, from the first one in the early 1920s, have increased the basic rate of income tax. As Conservatives, we do not like increasing taxation or national insurance contributions, but, at the same time, we recognise that we must have sound public finance, and that is what the Social Security (Contributions) Bill is all about.

We have a PSBR deficit of some £50 billion. the Chancellor was skilful in his Budget, as he managed to increase revenue—the Social Security (Contributions) Bill was part of that process—and at the same time reduce public spending in a number of areas without harming the key services of health and education. The only message that I would like to get over to the Chancellor is that, now that we have a tighter fiscal situation, we need a looser monetary framework. I hope that we will achieve that in the near future, by a reduction in interest rates.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) intervened during the speech of the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) and made reference to me.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): Was my hon. Friend referring to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody)? It is important that we know to whom he is referring as he makes his way through his speech.

Mr. Riddick: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, but I was referring to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North who intervened during the speech of the right hon. Member for Derby, South, and accused me of not understanding what was in the Bill in relation to small businesses having to pay sick pay for the first four weeks. The Chancellor made it crystal clear that the increased contributions that both large and small employers will have to make towards statutory sick pay will be more than offset by the reduction in employers' national insurance contributions. The figures suggest that small businesses will be net gainers under that process.

The Government should be encouraging all companies, especially small companies, to improve the sickness record of their own employees. The Bill will provide an additional incentive to businesses to ensure that the health and fitness of employees is maintained. That is an important principle, which I entirely support. The Statutory Sick Pay Bill will also mean that administration of sick pay should be simplified. The other benefit, to which I have already referred, is that small businesses should face a smaller burden as a result of the Bill, not a larger burden, as the right hon. Member for Derby, South said.

We have heard an awful lot of synthetic rage from Opposition Members, who say that they do not like the guillotine and that it is an outrage. They are deeply embarrassed by their own conduct, because they have made so little impact in the House for some time, and because they failed to table an amendment about VAT on fuel in the past week. That is why Labour Members have decided to cut off relations with the Government.

I do not expect that it will last long, because the Opposition will not be able to carry their own troops, judging from their poor voting record. That is the background to the debate, and that is why I am happy to support my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Lobby tonight.

5.45 pm

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): It has often been my responsibility to follow the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick). I feel some sympathy for him on this occasion, because he obviously found himself without a prepared speech, but was nevertheless required to occupy an amount of time in the debate. It would be wrong to describe his remarks as anything resembling a speech. It was the familiar mumbo-jumbo and rhetoric that we often hear from Back-Bench Conservative Members who are instructed by their Whips to occupy time and speak in the Chamber.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): That is not so on the Labour Benches.

Mr. Hutton: As my hon. Friend says, Opposition Members do not find themselves in that situation.

The hon. Member for Colne Valley failed to address some of the substantive arguments that are relevant to the debate. The guillotine motion is an abuse of the majority power of the Conservative party. As I said to the Leader of the House, when a parliamentary Session has only just begun, it is unprecedented for the Government to use their power to steamroller an allocation of time order through the House.

We are only four weeks into the parliamentary Session, and some of the proposed changes will have a significant effect on millions of people and on millions of small and large businesses. It is entirely appropriate under those circumstances for the House to spend more time discussing the proposals than the Government are seemingly prepared to tolerate.

An allocation of time order leads to bad law-making, because it denies hon. Members the chance to explore the wider aspects of Bills. References have been made to occasions on which an allocation of time order has been imposed, and its consequences have been spelt out.

I think especially of the recent legislation on the poll tax, which was an expensive fiasco that damaged the tax base, affected millions of people, and continues to do so, as there is some £2 billion unpaid poll tax still outstanding. That is the result of incompetence and poor management of business in the House, yet we are about to witness a further example of such mismanagement. We have also had time to reflect on the Criminal Justice Act 1991—another result of bad law-making.

The guillotine motion should be rejected also because it brings the House into some disrepute. We are elected as Members of the House of Commons to scrutinise legislation, especially legislation of tax-bearing dimension. The total money dealt with by these two Bills combined will run into billions of pounds—the money of ordinary taxpayers and small businesses.

I have been interested in the comments of Conservative Members about the effect of the Bill on small businesses. I do not believe that they have understood the full implications of the Bill in that area, and I hope that the debate will bring some of them out.

We cannot justify passing legislation in such a cack-handed and slipshod fashion to our constituents. Both Bills require further and more detailed scrutiny. It is not a legitimate argument for Conservative Members to say that there are few clauses in either Bill. That misses the point.

It is clear that, with the Statutory Sick Pay Bill, a host of complex regulations will be introduced by statutory instruments between now and the end of April. Those regulations will require detailed scrutiny as well, but as hon. Members know, we have limited and diminishing opportunities to subject those instruments to the fullest scrutiny.

The argument that we need spend only a short time on these Bills because they are short stems from a complete misunderstanding of the legislative process. If we need any reminder of that, hon. Members might reflect on the equally short Maastricht Bill which, rightly and properly, occupied many months on the Floor of the House.

The truth is that there is little constitutional propriety about presenting such a motion to the House at this time in the parliamentary Session. I asked the Leader of the House whether he could find a previous occasion when such an order had been presented. He failed to provide any illustration of such a motion, because there is none. That lack of information from the Leader of the House provides confirmation, if any is needed, of the inappropriate nature of this order.

As is often the case in our proceedings here, the reality is quite different. We are spending such a short time on the Bills because of their nature. Both are deeply unpopular. If the full implications of both were properly understood outside the House, they would have a damaging impact on the Government's already abysmal opinion poll rating. If the Budget is so popular, why are we not being allowed more time to discuss these Bills, which, as hon. Members on both sides have recognised, are central to the Chancellor's Budget strategy?

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): May I illustrate a point to strengthen the case? Like me, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have received a great deal of correspondence and been involved in contact with fathers concerned about the activities of the Child Support Agency. Does the hon. Gentleman realise that the detail of the activities of that agency was decided by order on the last day of the parliamentary Session, when hardly any Members of Parliament were present? These things should be debated and discussed and should be open for public debate. We get into a mess by passing measures quickly.

Mr. Hutton: Not for the first time, I agree with the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). He has made a telling point, and I hope that the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, who is on the Treasury Bench, has heard some of his comments. There is no doubt that that is a further illustration of some of the mistakes that we are making in our approach to law-making.

I believe that the real purpose of the guillotine motion is to silence debate, not to encourage it. The Government hope that, by doing that, they will ensure as few people as possible outside the House will understand and appreciate the damage they are doing to small businesses and ordinary taxpayers.

As I have said, the Bills are central to the Government's Budget strategy. The leader of the House confirmed that. The national insurance contributions Bill will hike up direct taxes. I wonder how many people who voted Conservative at the general election fully appreciated that they would be asked to pay an extra 1 per cent. on their national insurance contributions.

In that context, we must remember that the hike in the contributions in the form proposed by the Government is a regressive way of raising some extra revenue they need to cover the hole in the Government's public borrowing.

Mr. Duncan: Will the hon. Gentleman admit that the requirement for the national insurance fund to balance, at least in part, is a long-established principle? Will he admit that that fund has no borrowing ability, and that therefore the Government have a duty to introduce the measures in the Bill?

Mr. Hutton: I do not accept any of the hon. Gentleman's points. He is trying to camouflage the real scale of the Government's financial incompetence by giving the national insurance hike a bogus rationality. None of his arguments stands up to close scrutiny.

The Government are in a deep hole on public spending, and they are using the national insurance contributions hike to close that down. As I have said, it is a regressive way to close that gap in the Government's public sector borrowing. It will particularly affect those on low incomes, and will result in an increase of £3·20 a week in national insurance contributions for all taxpayers.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) drew attention to the fact that the increase will be regressive. It will raise £300 million more than a

[Mr. Hutton]

penny rise in income tax, precisely because national insurance contributions bite at a lower earnings level than income tax. If we look at the Bill in that context, it is clear that the guillotine motion has been introduced because of the Government's broken election promises.

The Statutory Sick Pay Bill reflects the other central strategy in the Government's Budget. In the national insurance Bill we have seen a hike in direct taxes—something that the Government said they would never do. The Bill is a further attack on the sick and disabled in our community. It is clear that it will have an adverse impact on small employers.

It is interesting to note that, when the Government last changed the rules on statutory sick pay in 1991, they did so with little or no consultation with the business community. When the National Audit Office looked into the effects of the last round of changes, it identified the fact that the Government were conducting an independent assessment of the impact of those changes.

That independently commissioned report has not yet been published. It would be interesting to know whether the Minister is prepared to let us know its findings. Opposition Members do not believe the Government's argument that the changes to statutory sick pay will have no impact on small employers. We believe that they will have a substantial and damaging impact.

The guillotine motion should be resisted, precisely because of the points to which the hon. Member for Northampton, North drew attention, and because it brings the House into disrepute. At this stage in the parliamentary cycle, there is no justification for this motion. It damages our credibility as effective law makers, and we should reject it.

Mr. Garnier: Given the line that the hon. Gentleman is taking, does he agree that the conduct of his colleagues during the final stages of the Railways Bill, when they blocked the Lobbies and so on, also brought the House into disrepute, and that those in glasshouses should not throw stones?

Mr. Hutton: I believe that on that occasion Opposition Members used tactics which were perfectly legitimate for a loyal Opposition, and I stick to that assessment. There was nothing improper or in breach of the Standing Orders of the House in the behaviour of Opposition Members on that occasion. I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's point. I am trying to finish my remarks, but I am finding it difficult because of the interventions.

This motion is unacceptable; hon. Members who care about the reputation of the House as a law-making institution should think carefully before supporting it.

5.57 pm

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): I must congratulate my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House on the way in which he has pursued this measure. He has selected a constitutional innovation which was introduced by the Government under the present premiership—to guillotine Bills before we have even had Second Reading. It is an extraordinary development. It is to be deeply deplored and it is odious because it reduces the House to nothing.

I came here, having been elected by the citizens of Aldridge-Brownhills, with the thought that, when they had cause to be anxious about something, I might be able to contribute to the process of debate—the detailed scrutiny of legislation where appropriate. I do not know why my right hon. Friend has chosen to guillotine a Bill before Second Reading and before we have heard where, in the detail of the Bill, the argument may lie. That develops in Committee.

A great former Home Secretary, the Luther of Mole Valley, now Lord Baker, was confronted with a real menace when he introduced his famous appendum to British constitutional history. If the House recalls, the nation was assaulted by ravaging dogs on every street corner that threatened our welfare, life and liberty, and emergency action was required. The Luther of Mole Valley did not hesitate. The Churchill of our Front Bench required action this day. At the behest of the popular newspapers, the House scampered along, citing something that was not so—that the danger was so great that the House should consider all stages. He allowed some 11 or 12 hours to discuss that important measure.

When the motion is passed, as I have no doubt it will be, it will be the fifth time that the Government have used this constitutional innovation. It is outrageous. The purpose of the House, and its lifestream, is to consider legislation. I remind some of my hon. Friends that Second Reading is about principle. We may agree on the principle of, for instance, driving to Birmingham. Most of us would assume that we may argue about whether to take the M1 and M6 or the M40 and M6, but when I find that we go via Cornwall and Wales and end up in Dublin, having gone via Edinburgh, I may want to move an amendment suggesting that it would be more practical, expedient and economical to go down the M1 and M40. Those are legitimate reasons.

I object greatly to the Bills. The Statutory Sick Pay Bill introduces a massive change of principle and will have great consequences for many small businesses which, with their backs against the wall, see no sign of recovery. Their staff will be taxed and they will have to fund sick pay for the first four weeks. I have a view on that.

However, this constitutional outrage of always insisting on guillotines has become an instrument of the Executive. Will the House reflect on the figures, which I have gone through before? Between 1945 and 1975, 30 Bills were guillotined. That is an average of one a year, if it is worth while averaging such things.

Under the Labour Administration, there were five guillotines in an afternoon. I thought that that was wrong and I still think that it is wrong. I listened to Michael Foot, whose fundamental argument was that, because Labour had no majority, it was appropriate to impose a guillotine motion. I always found that argument to be fatuous. If a Government have not carried the sentiments of the country with them, they have no right to impose a guillotine motion. In any event, Labour introduced some 14 guillotine motions—the House will understand that I cite those figures from memory—but a transformation came in 1979. I believe that the fault lies in the Whips Office rather than at the heart of Government, but it has become a habit. The guillotine has been introduced as an instrument of the Executive to bludgeon through legislation.

With a majority of 100 in the second of her two Parliaments and a majority of 40 in her first, it took Mrs. Thatcher—or her business managers—58 guillotines to push through her business. That is an average of five a year.

We now have a nation at peace with itself, no less, and the Prime Minister's business managers require 18 guillotine motions in three years, thus increasing the average. That means that the Executive need not trouble itself overly with the House of Commons. I remind my hon. Friends of the difference between examining principle and examining detail, which are fundamental duties of the House.

I watched Mrs. Thatcher's premiership come to an end. The poll tax was driven through with guillotine motions in this place, including on the Lords amendments. Had Mrs. Thatcher's Government listened to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), we might have been able to overcome the principle. We might have been able to make the Bill work. But no, no—off with our heads. We were told that Parliament had had enough time on it. The matter so destabilised public opinion, and, eventually, the views of my friends and colleagues in the Tea Room, that Mrs. Thatcher's premiership came to an end.

It is important that the House discharges its constitutional responsibilities, because we are not just an agent of Executive wish and whim. I may have overstated the case about my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley with his Dangerous Dogs Bill, but I have seen it before. On the football spectators legislation, the House was bludgeoned to create an Act of Parliament, no less, with all the nonsense associated with that. It hung on the say-so of a third party—a judge outside the House. Although the House was cranked up to push the legislation through, ultimately the measure was snuffed out, not particularly by the wish of the House but by the judge's decision.

Finally, I wish to utter a note of caution. One of the major flags of the present Session is to be a deregulation Bill. We shall deregulate Acts of Parliament—matters that have been considered by the House—in a way that some of us will find deeply distasteful. I never wish to give, nor do I wish to see my fellow countrymen give, into the hands of any Minister of the Crown the ability to decide what is legislation and what is not. That is our business, transacted on behalf of the people of this country and our constituents. We may soon have handed over that opportunity because we have over-legislated and legislated too casually.

The record of the 15 years in which I have been a Member has become worse and worse. I beg the House to reject the concept that the guillotine motion is the instrument of Executive whim. The latest fantasy, whether it is a Dangerous Dogs Bill or a Football Spectators Bill, must not be driven through the House merely on the nod, in a truncated sitting, the duration of which can be added up in minutes. Small businesses and people whom I represent will be condemned in six hours to funding sick pay in a major change of principle and policy. That is worth proper scrutiny of the Bill's detail.

Ultimately, this country's check and balance are no longer here. They are in our courts and are called judicial review. We must stir ourselves up, remember who we are and what this House is. We wish all our Governments well because our prosperity, well-being and fate are in their hands, but that does not mean that we should abdicate our responsibilities and accept such absurdities. We have time to look at the matter properly.

6.6 pm

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): It is disconcerting to sit through such a debate hoping to do some damage to the Government and then hear far more damage done to their reputation by a Conservative Member. The hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) has spoken with great conviction, not just on this issue but on abuses, spanning many years, of the ability of the House to scrutinise legislation properly. As a much newer Member, I find that there are lessons in what he has to say to this and any Government about how to handle our affairs.

I have listened with interest to the debate, but my mind has been dominated by a picture that flashed into it early in the proceedings. It was a picture of the office of the Leader of the House on the morning of 1 December, just as the champagne bubbles were finally beginning to pop after what was regarded as a successful Budget, which had not yet begun to come apart. It was the first unified Budget, which had been in preparation for 18 months, in which the machinery of government, the responsibilities of civil servants and the timetable of their work had all been changed.

The Leader of the House is asking us to believe that he was in his office on that morning when a civil servant put his head round the door and said, "Minister, we have suddenly realised that, to implement the Budget, you must guillotine the two key Bills before Christmas." I am sorry but I do not believe that, after 18 months' preparation for a unified Budget, it was not until the day after the Chancellor's speech that someone discovered that it would be difficult to get the Budget through the House in time for April.

I do not believe that the problem was not anticipated well before the Budget. I asked the Leader of the House earlier whether this would be an annual occurrence, but I shall have to look at the *Official Report* and read his answer, because I did not understand a word of it. He said neither yes nor no—he would have to look at it. All those problems, however, must have been anticipated in the planning stages of the first unified Budget.

No one could believe that, with the great weight of legal advice and procedural advice available to the Government, possible difficulties with implementing Budget legislation in time for April were not anticipated. The Government must have known that this problem might arise, and they consciously chose to approach the legislation in this draconian fashion, leaving hon. Members with far too little time to discuss the problems and issues properly.

It is interesting to note how, after the first euphoric 24 hours, the Budget has begun to unravel. I remember the Chancellor of the Exchequer claiming to be receiving support from business interests: from the Federation of Small Businesses, the Institute of Directors, the CBI and the National Farmers Union—the very organisations that have written to hon. Members in the past 24 hours opposing the guillotine and the measure that we are debating.

Some Conservative Members tried to have some fun at our expense earlier, asking why Front-Bench Opposition spokesmen did not raise these issues during the Budget debate. Why, those Members asked, did they not seize on them and highlight them? The hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) informed me that the impact on small businesses, which will have to pay 100 per cent. of

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statutory sick pay for the first four weeks, was perfectly clear from the statement made to the House on the uprating of benefits by the Secretary of State for Social Security. The hon. Gentleman referred me to column 1037. That column contains nothing relevant, but I assume that he meant 1038. There, the Secretary of State told the House:

> "From April next year, I propose to abolish reimbursement"

of statutory sick pay

> "except to small employers . . . So far, we have been reimbursing 100 per cent. of statutory sick pay for absences of longer than six weeks. I shall start giving 100 per cent. help after four weeks."—[*Official Report*, 1 December 1993; Vol. 233, c. 1038.]

So that was it—nothing about employers beginning to have to make contributions in the first four weeks, when they pay only 20 per cent. now.

It is therefore surprising that business lobbies, most of the press and many Opposition Members did not realise that the right hon. Gentleman's weasel words would hammer small employers with charges that they do not pay at the moment? Of course it is not surprising. Conservative Members who pray in aid this statement in defence of the Government are being outrageous. Having studied the Secretary of State's words, I have no doubt that, should he lose his current job, he would have no difficulty in securing another—selling personal pension plans to members of occupational pension schemes. That is what I think of the degree of integrity exhibited by his statement. It was simply more evidence that every attempt has been made to obscure from the House and from the people outside it what the Government have in mind.

I have no doubt that the way in which the legislation would be taken through the House was planned well before hon. Members had had a chance to hear the Budget statement. These are serious matters, and not only for the small businesses that will be badly hit. The hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) talked about the average costs to small businesses, but that is not the point. If a business employs only five people and two of them are ill for a long time, that is not an average cost. It is a devastating cost—one that the business will not be able to meet.

Vital though they are, small businesses will not be the only ones affected. Millions of people who are looking for work will be equally affected. By coincidence, I received a letter in today's post from a constituent, a former shipyard worker aged 58 who cannot find employment. He suffers from a heart condition, but not badly enough to qualify for invalidity benefit under the current rules, let alone for incapacity benefit under the rules to be introduced in a year's time. His prospects of finding work are bad enough at the moment; what are his chances of getting a job when every employer who will ever interview him will look at his health record and decide that he is going to become, at some point, a 100 per cent. cost to the wages bill?

Three million other people are looking for work, and such employers will obviously take on those who have not been ill recently. The legislation will mean that thousands of people who are capable of work but who are not in perfect health will fall into the limbo between invalidity benefit and work: they cannot get work because they have poor health, but they cannot get benefits because they are not judged sick enough to be unable to work. Yet the Government want to push this measure through in six hours.

A Conservative description of the Bill was that it was a mundane measure. Will it be a mundane measure for my 58-year-old constituent, who has had enough doors slammed in his face without this one being slammed in it, too?

Our insurance salesman, the Secretary of State for Social Security, spoke touchingly to the House in his benefits statement. Describing the impact of the legislation on employers, he said:

> "those who respond to the incentive to improve staff health will benefit even more."—[*Official Report*, 1 December 1993; Vol. 233, c. 1038.]

What a wonderful image that conjures up. One thinks of employers, in response to the new legislation, deciding to expand their occupational health service—perhaps installing a gym, like the one in the House, to keep members of staff fit. One imagines them screening all their employees to make sure that they never get sick, thereby reducing their sick pay bills. The House can believe that if it chooses, but it is not how employers will see the measure. It will not be an incentive to improving the health of their staff. Over time, they will merely begin screening out those whose health poses a danger of an increased pay bill.

For smaller businesses to which staff sickness can represent a crippling cost, the legislation will mean being caught both ways. They will not want to turn people away or to get rid of staff who have been unfortunate enough to be ill, but when they are looking at their balance sheets and deciding between that and bankruptcy, some will decide to shed staff. The Government are pushing such companies into this position in a matter of six hours. That is an abuse of Parliament. I have been here only a short time, but I cannot believe that that is a way to run the country.

6.18 pm

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): I listened closely to the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) and before that to my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd). Like the latter, I have a lasting faith in the paramount importance of parliamentary procedure, of Parliament itself and of the manner in which we scrutinise legislation. I suggest that my hon. Friend's impassioned pleas, although well directed in general, were misdirected in the context of the measures that we are debating today.

I have watched the proceedings of the House for well over 20 years. As a young teenager, spurred on by politics and wanting to be in this Chamber, I became interested in how the House of Commons works.

When I was between school and university, I watched the debate on the guillotine on the proposal to nationalise the shipbuilding industry. That guillotine caused absolute uproar and the then Opposition fought tooth and nail against the then Labour Government. I recall the battles in Committee led by my right hon. Friends the Members for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and for Bridgwater (Mr. King). The Conservative Opposition kept the Labour Government on a knife edge. The then Opposition fought against that guillotine for good reason. It was a good reason not only because they believed in what they were doing but because what they were doing, they were doing well. I shall explain why that distinguishes their behaviour from that of today's Opposition.

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): Was that guillotine motion before or after the Bill's Second Reading?

Mr. Duncan: I readily admit that it was after the Bill's Second Reading, but that measure was different from the one that we are discussing today. I suggest to my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills that the nature of the Opposition and their failure properly to scrutinise legislation whenever they have the chance irks him more than the guillotine motion.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: My hon. Friend is wrong.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Duncan: I should be happy to give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills, but I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow).

Mr. Marlow: We do not live in a perfect world. We should all know about every detail of legislation before we debate it but, as my hon. Friend knows, in reality, about 2 per cent. of us know what is happening at any one time. If a Bill is given a Second Reading before the guillotine motion, at least there is a tiny chance that an element of the House of Commons will know what is being put before it. If a Bill is guillotined before Second Reading, what chance does the legislature have of scrutinising it properly?

Mr. Duncan: Before my hon. Friend goes pop, may I say that most of what we are considering is a continuation of existing legislation rather than—as with the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Act 1977—completely new legislation.

We have witnessed synthetic rage from the Opposition —it is a cover-up on the part of the Labour party to disguise its problems. The Leader of the Opposition is at war not with us but with his own Whips. For evidence of that one need look no further than at the Opposition's attendance today to see that fewer than 30 Opposition Members were present to hear the speech of their deputy leader. There are now fewer than six of them present.

Mr. Enright: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for mentioning that fact, because, when my right hon. Friend the deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the House were making their speeches, there were twice as many Opposition Members as Conservative Members—I know that because I deliberately counted them. There are more Conservative Members than Opposition Members, so the percentage of Opposition Members present was huge compared to that of Conservative Members.

Mr. Duncan: There are moments when I will readily defer to a former schoolteacher, but counting the hon. Members now present suggests that the hon. Gentleman is heavily outnumbered.

I would rather have a good Opposition on whom the Government could more readily sharpen their blade. The arguments against the guillotine are not matched by the Labour party's efforts while in opposition. If all Labour Members were here more often and they had challenged the very life of the Government by their energy and procedural skill and had shown due diligence in their scrutiny of legislation in the past, they might have begun to have a case against the timetable motion—but they did not do that.

I have been a member of two Standing Committees in the past year—those on the Finance Bill and the Railways Bill. I marvelled at the poor manner in which Opposition Members scrutinised the Finance Bill. I was appalled, as many were, by the fact that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) rarely even turned up for discussions on the Railways Bill. The Opposition's poor record of scrutiny constitutes no basis for challenging today's timetable motion.

The two Bills that we are discussing are each only two pages long. The Social Security (Contributions) Bill was announced in March and we have not heard much from the Opposition since then. Indeed, their silence in the intervening months has been deafening. In terms of its significance, the Bill ranks with many a clause in any Finance Bill, but it happens to require primary legislation. The principles behind it are long established and have been debated in the House many times before.

As for the national insurance fund, as Nye Bevan said in 1946, "There ain't no fund." As we all know, the national insurance fund is a pay-as-you go fund and contributions should, wherever possible, reflect the cost of the benefits being paid from it. The fund does not have borrowing powers; in order to make up any deficit, it requires a Treasury grant. The insurance fund should be paid by those who are in work, not by all taxpayers.

That principle is lost on the Opposition, as is evidenced by their wish to abolish the upper earnings limit for contributions. When the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) makes his wind-up speech, will he tell us why such a proposal to abolish the upper earnings limit is acceptable when it makes nonsense of the contributory principle, because it will not lead to any corresponding increase in benefit for those who are asked to contribute more to the fund? The Bill is a straightforward adjustment to a well-established system and is being timetabled with full justification.

The other two-page Bill is the Statutory Sick Pay Bill, which is also straightforward. It involves a rebalancing of the obligations and entitlements between small and large employers. Large employers will lose their right to recover 80 per cent. of statutory sick pay. They can afford to do so because they can generally insure themselves against such an occurrence. Smaller employers—and, because of the Bill, many more of them—will be able to secure full reimbursement and for a greater amount.

Much of the system was set up by the Statutory Sick Pay Act 1991, about which a House of Commons Library brief stated:

> "The Bill made rapid progress through the Commons with the Second Reading, Committee and Third Reading taking place on the Floor of the House".

The views on the rapid passage of that Bill do not match the outrage that we have heard about the Statutory Sick Pay Bill.

I share many of the opinions of my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills, but I believe that it is perfectly legitimate for the two short, straightforward Bills to be guillotined.

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): Does my hon. Friend accept that, of the two measures, one received five days in

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the House and the other six days in the course of this year's two Budgets? Does that not make the case for a guillotine before Second Reading so much stronger?

Mr. Duncan: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments.

The apparent rage of the Opposition is entirely false. As this week's figures clearly show, their attendance rate is hopeless. Their attention to detail is lamentable and their discipline appears to be non-existent. The day that they apply themselves properly to their parliamentary duty will be the day that I join them in the Lobby to oppose such a guillotine motion.

6.27 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): The hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) is not noted for his humility. He may be a clever person—I am in no position to judge—but I predict that he will not have a popular career in the House if he makes speeches of such arrogance and self-righteousness.

I shall put in short order the Opposition's reasons for objecting to the guillotine motion. The facts of the motion are brutal enough so there is no need for me to use extravagant language. First, we object because of the lack of consultation before the motion was tabled. There has been much talk about the breakdown in the usual channels. In a real and important sense, the usual channels broke down the day the guillotine motion appeared on the Order Paper. No attempt was made by the Department of Social Security—certainly as far as I know—to discuss or consult about the Bill's passage.

I make that point—and if I had the high standards of the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton, it might be thought that I was confessing a sin—because I do not think that, while I have been shadow Secretary of State for Social Security, anyone could say that I have taken an unreasonable attitude to the business of the House.

The Minister of State will remember when the House considered the 1992 Social Security Bill. I do not make any petty party political point, but that legislation was urgently needed because the national insurance fund was 20 per cent. short of the funds required to meet its obligations, and on the statute book there was a rather optimistic Government provision to stop any subvention by the Treasury to the fund. When I was approached about the Bill I took the view that it was not a contentious matter as we all wanted to ensure that money was available to pay out the various benefits and pensions. I readily agreed to taking all the stages on the Floor of the House in one day. I do not think that anyone can accuse the Opposition of always looking for trench warfare.

I especially regret what has happened in this case. When the Leader of the House spoke last Friday, in an unscheduled but useful debate, he said:

> "Despite what was said earlier, there is nothing particularly unusual about the motion, although I accept that the situation more usually arises when there has been agreement in the usual channels to deal with such things rapidly. That is not the background in this case."—[*Official Report*, 10 December 1993; Vol. 234, c. 645.]

If we are talking of declarations of war, it is reasonable to ask the Minister to explain why that is not the background in this case. Why was there no attempt to reach agreement on how we might properly and decently deal with the business? It would not necessarily have been difficult to reach agreement. I cannot predict what course the negotiations might have followed, but I take severe exception to the fact that no approach was made and there was no attempt to reach agreement.

Perhaps it is because I am now reaching the veteran stage, but I have a certain amount of sympathy with those who want agreed timetables for Bills. However, timetables imply agreement, and there is a great difference between a timetable and a guillotine motion. If there had been an attempt to timetable by agreement, such an accommodation might have been possible—but unfortunately that is not what happened. Instead, we were faced with a lack of consultation and the unusual appearance, in form at least, of a guillotine motion before Second Reading. The hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) also made that point.

I am well aware that all Government business managers can be driven to introduce guillotines. I did my little bit in contributing to the driving process in my earlier days in this place. I accept that, if there is an open-ended Committee stage, with ingenious and long-winded Members filling column after column of *Hansard*, it may reach a point where the Government, to preserve their business or even to protect the House, must introduce a guillotine motion. However, that is very different from doing so at this stage of a Bill.

I can speak only for myself, and I took the view that there had been no attempt to reach agreement. The appearance on the Order Paper of an unusual, severe and restrictive guillotine motion means government by diktat and government by fiat—something about which we were both entitled and had a duty to protest.

Mr. Garnier: For present purposes, I fully accept that the Opposition feel that the timetable motion is a constitutional abomination. Will the hon. Gentleman comment on the conduct of his party during proceedings on the Railways Bill? Is not there something a little hollow about his hon. Friends' objections to the timetable motion on these Bills when during the proceedings on the Railways Bill Labour Back Benchers, aided and abetted by senior Members of the Opposition Whips Office, obstructed the Lobbies, locked the lavatories and inhibited the work of the Serjeant at Arms in clearing the Lobbies? In addition, the Opposition's Tellers miscounted the votes. Do I have the facts right or wrong?

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Gentleman's account of that incident is highly coloured. I certainly do not recognise the details that he described. In any case, there is no parallel between what happens under the pressure of a specific circumstance when a vote is called and the buttressing of an unfortunate constitutional precedent, which has been rightly criticised by Conservative Members. The view that we take of the one does not exculpate those responsible for the other. What we are now discussing is of much greater significance.

My second point is that the timetable motion is not only unusual but unreasonable. We are being allowed only six hours of debate. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) made the point that every time we vote, whether on Second Reading or during the truncated Committee stage, a quarter of an hour will be taken out of the six-hour allocation. That is a thoroughly unreasonable proposition.

The Leader of the House will remember the last time that we considered a statutory sick pay Bill in 1990. He opened the debate on that Bill, which was a direct parallel of the current Bill. In fact, it had three clauses, but in effect it had only one, whose purpose was to reduce the rebate from 107 per cent.—7 per cent. was for administrative expenses—to 80 per cent. The *Hansard* of that debate shows that we had a whole day for Second Reading because the Bill was considered to deal with a major issue. Indeed, the Front Bench speeches took one hour and 53 minutes. More than half the total time being allowed for Second Reading of the current Bill was spent on the two opening speeches on that Bill. Of that one hour and 53 minutes, the right hon. Gentleman felt it necessary to take one hour and 14 minutes.

I am not criticising the Leader of the House, who is not noted for being unnecessarily long-winded. The reason why he took one hour and 14 minutes on such a radical Bill, reducing the rebate from 100 to 80 per cent. as opposed to total abolition, was that he had to deal with an enormous number of interruptions from Conservative Members. The hon. Members for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls), for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman)—she is in her place—for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) and for Newark (Mr. Alexander) all expressed fundamental concern about the impact that the Bill would have in their constituencies. There was no doubt in their minds that it was a matter that had to be probed and examined in great detail and with genuine concern.

Indeed, the hon. Member for Lancaster made a good point with which I was unfamiliar, but which I suspect may arise again, about the impact of changes in the SSP scheme on agriculture. Therefore, the right hon. Gentleman's lengthy and complicated opening speech was dictated in part by the anxieties expressed in every part of the House.

Against that experience it is dangerous to suggest that the current Bill should go through the House with just three hours for Second Reading and three hours for Committee stage. That is especially so given that that is being done at a time in the parliamentary Session when one would not expect it to be necessary. I recognise that the Minister of State may say that the real villain of the piece is the unified Budget, that we are near the start of the new financial year and so on, but I do not think that that is any justification. We have a duty to do the job properly. The general argument needs to be stressed because I concede that this is a narrow and technical measure.

Mr. Marlow: Under normal procedure, a Bill has a Second Reading, which generates a debate in the country. That might lead to people suggesting amendments. After this week, after the guillotine and after the Bill has passed through its stages, if there is a debate in the country on what occasion might the House be able to amend the Bill?

Mr. Dewar: There may be some minor opportunity if the other place takes an interest in the measure. We had a substantial debate, lasting some hours, on Lords amendments to the previous statutory sick pay legislation. But it is very odd if we have to rely on the other place to create a rather limited and restricted opportunity to consider the consequences of what we do in the way that I have suggested. Apart from technical scrutiny—apart from the traditional role—we should be answering, reflecting, examining and analysing public concerns. That is an important point.

For the purposes of this debate, I am prepared to concede that the Government may have good answers to existing concerns, but the important point is how widespread those concerns are and how many of them are felt by organisations that would usually take the Government's word for it without question or argument. It may not be surprising that, for example, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux has written to hon. Members expressing a great deal of anxiety, but, as hon. Members will be aware if they have been following their mail, the Federation of Small Businesses has specifically urged Members of Parliament to impose this restrictive procedure—the guillotine motion that we are considering.

The Forum of Private Business, which I seldom find myself quoting on anything, has expressed its concern and says:

> "Current proposals if implemented are likely to become the principal cause of a significant number of insolvencies."

That fear may be unfounded, but we shall in any case have mighty little opportunity to deal with it and, if the Minister is successful, to remove it, in the course of the six hours allocated to us. I can go on and mention the CBI and the Institute of Directors. All those organisations have expressed their concern about what is being done. It is an important matter and is clearly seen as such outside.

The idea of the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) that this was humdrum legislation——

Mr. Duncan: I did not say that.

Mr. Dewar: It must have been one of the hon. Gentleman's clones. What has happened on the Conservative Benches in the past year or two has been like an outbreak of garden gnomes in a residential suburb. One Conservative Member managed the thought that this was humdrum legislation and his mind was on higher things. All I can say is that it is clear that the mind of British industry, employers and employees, is firmly centred on these proposals and there are concerns.

After all, the Social Security (Contributions) Bill raises £1·9 billion for the Chancellor—about £300 million more than would be raised by putting 1p on the standard rate of income tax. Conservative Members may say that the breaking of election promises is somewhat devalued now as a cause for concern and anger, but it is worth reminding the House that that is exactly what this proposition amounts to.

In addition, the Statutory Sick Pay Bill transfers £750 billion as a burden on to British industry at a time when we are trying to keep it competitive. The Minister says, "Oh no, it is offset by reductions in employers' contributions. There is no need to worry." I want to look at the small print, but I shall have little opportunity to do so because—a point that I stress—the Bill does not deal with offsetting, so it is impossible to table amendments dealing with it.

The Minister says, "Oh, don't worry about that, there will be orders." Those orders will be debated in one and a half hours and cannot be amended, yet this is an essential part of a package that we are expected to accept as a whole. There is another question. If this is to be a neutral package, why are we putting through all these administrative changes to achieve neutrality? That brings us to the argument that was effectively dealt with by my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham)—I

[Mr. Dewar]

almost said Portsmouth, which I am sure would have been an unkind cut—about the impact on the employability of those with a sickness record.

Part of the defence is that this is a package, but that takes us on to the job seeker's allowance and incapacity benefit—into what seems to be a challenge to, or at least an undermining of, the contributory principle, because young people will be asked to pay more of the contributions bill but will receive less because of the other measures that the Government are introducing.

Those are major issues and major public concerns, yet there is to be no consultation and what I can fairly and properly describe as a vindictive timetable is being imposed, giving no real opportunity to reflect that anger or to probe the consequences, many of which are hidden in the Bill.

Take for example, the interesting change in the retirement age in the Statutory Sick Pay Bill, which is now defined as 65, which means that women between the ages of 60 and 65 will, presumably, be able to have statutory sick pay and draw their retirement pension. In case I am open to misinterpretation, I make it clear that I am not opposed to that, but it is important that we consider the knock-on effect and consequences of that.

Anyone who has considered the complicated litigation to which invalidity benefit has given rise, such as the case of Mrs. Rose Graham—I see the Minister flinch and I can well understand why—will realise that genuine complications may arise from a decision with which we shall have to live until 2020 but which will not be probed here or, as I understand it, in any other forum, at least in the House, and that is unfortunate.

I would welcome a constructive debate, but we shall not have that as a result of what has been given to us at the moment. I never wanted the Bills to have a long-drawn-out Committee stage. I would have been happy to talk turkey on that with the Government, but I object to the proceedings being guillotined as though I had been a bad boy, a recidivist with a record, before Second Reading is even reached.

This is a petty, damaging, corner-cutting measure. It is bad for the Opposition, but it is also bad for the Government and bad for Parliament. I recognise that this could be represented as just a spat, just a disagreement between the usual channels—friction at the interface between the Front Benches. But the dispute goes further than that. We are setting unfortunate precedents for the future health of our parliamentary system.

One or two people have said to me, "Why bother? The Government will do it anyway. They will bulldoze the Bills through the House and there is nothing that you can do about it." But it is not the job of a parliamentary Opposition to shrug resignedly and say, "So be it." We are right to protest. I recognise that the Government have the votes and—with one or two honourable exceptions—I have no doubt that their supporters will secure them a majority in the Lobby tonight.

In spite of that—this may be the eternal optimist in me—I feel that there should be, and perhaps will be, some right hon. and hon. Members who, when they go home tonight, will look back at the lack of justification, need or special circumstance in terms of a threat to the good government of the House or the preservation of the Government's business. Those hon. Members may well want to question whether, if they have been through the Government Lobby, they have done a good night's work.

6.48 pm

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I start on a friendly and, I hope, conciliatory note by saying to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), sitting as he is beside the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), that, in my six and a half years dealing with social security, my dealings with him or his predecessor have always been friendly and reasonable in the extreme.

I am not familiar with the workings of the usual channels, but I am convinced that if we are to put the legislation on the statute book in good time for those outside the House who have to deal with its consequences and do it in an orderly and proper manner, time is of the essence.

I can understand the passion with which my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) spoke. We have had similar exchanges on previous occasions. I understand that he has a fundamental philosophical objection to the use of timetable motions to put legislation through the House according to a particular timetable. I hope that I can persuade him, not least because he expressed concern for small businesses in his constituency, that it is essential that we get the legislation on to the statute book as soon as possible.

Mr. Enright: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Scott: If the hon. Gentleman will give me a moment to finish the sentence, I shall give way. However, because of the time limit, I shall not give way frequently.

I hope that I can convince my hon. Friend that it is in the interests of precisely the small businesses for which he speaks, which are so close to his heart, to put the legislation on to the statute book as soon as possible.

Mr. Enright: Can the Minister explain to me—because I do not understand—why it would cause considerable administrative difficulties to come in for two or three days next week? It does not seem to me that two or three days matter very much.

Mr. Scott: That is not what we are discussing today. That matter could have been raised by the Opposition on other occasions. I seem to recall that it was raised by some hon. Members below the Gangway, but we are now working against the fact that the House will rise at the end of this week. We have to get the legislation through, not least in the interests of businesses—especially small businesses—which will have to deal with the consequences of what we intend to do.

Mr. Marlow: It has been said that this place is becoming something of a mockery and that our laws are made either by barter in Brussels or by guillotine in this House. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said that he is a reasonable man. He said that he will agree a proper process to get the Bill through quickly. Can I suggest to my right hon. Friend that, in the interests of the reputation of the House and the Government, he takes the hon. Gentleman at his word and has a discussion with him? If the hon. Gentleman is pulling the wool over my right hon. Friend's eyes, let the public as a whole know. Give it a try.

Mr. Scott: We are too late for that approach. It certainly would not be for me to make that approach to the hon. Gentleman. I believe that it is right to get on with the business of translating into law the Bills to which the timetable motion applies so that businesses know where they are and will be able to implement properly the arrangements from next April.

Of course I am aware that there is anxiety among employers about the changes to statutory sick pay. I remind hon. Members and in particular my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills that, when we were designing the pattern of provision in the Statutory Sick Pay Bill, we paid particular attention to the needs of small businesses. Full recompense will be given through reductions to national insurance contributions which will be made by order in due course.

That will more than compensate industry as a whole for the impact of the changes to SSP. The extent of the compensation will be in excess of £100 million a year of extra support for businesses. The arrangements have tilted that extra help specifically in the direction of small businesses to help them at a time when the economy is coming out of recession and embarking on what I believe will be a sustained recovery.

So employers will not be out of pocket. They will be in pocket under the statutory sick pay proposals and the proposal to introduce offsetting arrangements to reduce employers' national insurance contributions. All that will come into effect by next April. The Statutory Sick Pay Bill also contains other measures, some of which were mentioned in the debate. The hon. Member for Garscadden said that the Bill will extend the SSP scheme to working women over the age of 60. Obviously, we shall have to look at some of the details of that provision. However, I am sure that it will be widely welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House. It will enable us to comply with the equal treatment directive and it will be another step along the road of equality.

I wish to expand a little on the remarks that I made about small firms. The Budget as a whole was a considerable help to small businesses. The new arrangements for auditing, some of the arrangements for capital gains and, outside the impact of the Budget, the Government's efforts towards deregulation and lifting the burdens from businesses, especially small businesses, are some of the notable achievements of this Administration.

Let us look at the effect on small firms of the SSP legislation, if it reaches the statute book in its present form. A small firm—one with less than £20,000 of national insurance contributions—with five employees and an average sickness rate would gain an annual cost saving of £140 if the average earnings of the five employees were £90 a week, of £244 if the average earnings were £130 a week and of some £400 if the average earnings were £190 a week. We have deliberately sought to tilt in the direction of smaller businesses the help that will be available to offset the impact of the changes.

Anyone who has studied sickness absence rates in Britain knows that there is a great deal of scope for improvement if employers can be encouraged to seek such improvement. The interaction of the SSP provisions and the reductions in national insurance contribution will give employers that encouragement. The Audit Commission has done work in the London boroughs, which had a high level of absenteeism due to sickness. It found that most boroughs could make management much more directly responsible for managing absence by giving senior management clear responsibilities and commitments.

The boroughs provided appropriate information and trained their managers to give more attention to staff welfare. As a result of those measures alone the average level of sickness absence fell from 17 days to 11·5 days a year. The average level of absence among manual workers was fewer than 15 days and absence among office staff also fell. Some £11 million a year was saved. That has been reflected in other parts of our economy, including manufacturing industry. I have no doubt that, if people are given the right incentive, we have a clear possibility of vastly improving the sickness absence record of employees in Britain.

We need to have the Bill on the statute book by February. The legislation needs to receive Royal Assent well before it takes effect in April 1994. We must allow time for other measures such as the national insurance contributions re-rating order and the proposed enhancements to the statutory sick pay small employers' relief provisions to be introduced and debated in the House and in another place. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security aims to leave plenty of time to deal with secondary legislation in the new year.

Mrs. Beckett: The Minister is explaining the information that is available to the House. I understand from the Public Accounts Committee report that a review has recently been carried out on the impact on businesses of the reduction in reimbursement from 100 per cent. to 80 per cent. That review was completed in the summer. It has not been published. I have inquired why it has not been published and I have been told that it is in the hands of Ministers. As the Minister has made it clear that he is anxious that there should be proper debate, will he put the review in the Library before the debate tomorrow?

Mr. Scott: I cannot do that. The review will be published in the near future. I do not know the precise arrangements, but the document is in the pipeline for publication. Although I have not read it, I am advised that none of the findings support the arguments that have been made across the Floor of the House. I will have a look at the matter, but I do not think that we shall have it ready for the debate tomorrow. Perhaps before the secondary legislation is debated in the new year it might be possible to make such arrangements so that the House can at least be better informed.

We need secondary legislation to be debated so that we can fully bring the policy into effect. We must also allow the Contributions Agency to advise all employers of the changes that will affect them. Employers must be told by the end of February, if orderly introduction of the new arrangements is to take place and they are to make changes to their payrolls and administrative arrangements.

I hope that I have convinced the House that the urgency of putting the SSP provisions on to the statute book is well proven.

Following the passage of the Bills, affirmative instruments will be required. The re-rating order, statutory sick pay regulations for small employers' relief and the main social security uprating order and a number of associated instruments will be necessary.

I shall work backwards from 6 April, which is the date by which both Bills plus affirmative orders for contribution

[Mr. Scott]

re-rating and benefits uprating and consequental regulations need to be law. My right hon. Friend adopted that procedure, but, in order to assist the House, I shall do so in slightly more detail.

By mid-March we must lay consequential regulations to allow 21 days before the effective date of 6 April. Earlier in March the Lords will debate the affirmative orders. That means that we shall have to deal with them in February and must have the usual breaks between consideration in the two Houses.

It is essential for the Bill to pass all its stages in the House before we rise this weekend and hon. Members should be quite clear about the consequences if the motion fails. Depending on progress, the Department of Social Security will have to issue to employers in February some 1·2 million sets of new contribution tables with on the cover the endorsement, "Subject to parliamentary approval".

That will create a great deal of uncertainty for business and will generate many inquiries because employers will telephone the Contributions Agency to see when they can rely on the rates being certain. That would cause confusion, especially to small employers, who depend on advice from the Contributions Agency. The implications would be serious.

The hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Rooney) asked about personal pensions. That issue is not directly related to the matter being considered today, but it is causing some concern. We are satisfied that the programme of action that was announced by the Securities and Investments Board is the appropriate way to tackle the concerns raised by the hon. Gentleman. People should be assured that there is no need for current personal pension investors to take any precipitate action. Those who have questions about personal pensions should get in touch with their pension provider.

The Government expect remedies to be put in place for all investors who have been disadvantaged as a result of poor advice, and we are convinced that personal pensions are an excellent way of saving for income in retirement.

I shall now deal with other aspects of the legislation that will pass in due course. The legislation makes provision for national health service allocations. We have been advised that it is necessary to include new legislation about that so as to rectify the situation and to put beyond doubt the legal provisions on the calculation of the amount of national insurance that is passed to the national health service. That does not affect overall expenditure on the NHS, nor does it affect in any way entitlement to health service treatment. The Bill also includes provision affecting class 4 contributions and personal pensions. As the House knows, such pensions have been available for rather more than five years.

Few hon. Members are in any doubt about the reason for the debate. It has nothing to do with ensuring proper debate of the measures covered by the timetable motion. Effectively, each measure has one operative clause and the provision of six hours for each of the two Bills is ample. The debate has more to do with the Opposition's need to cover their incompetence in the Budget debate and, in particular, their sin of omission about VAT on fuel. The Opposition's enthusiasm was demonstrated by the fact that when the debate opened there were but 12 Opposition Members in the House. It may be——

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded to put forthwith the Question necessary to dispose of them, pursuant to Standing Order No. 81.*

The House divided Ayes 307, Noes 266.

Division No. 31] **[7.04 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*

Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*

Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip

Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John

Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*

Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don

Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan

Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn

Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Gordon McMaster.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall apply to the proceedings on the Statutory Sick Pay Bill and the Social Security (Contributions) Bill:

Second Reading, Committee, Report and Third Reading: Statutory Sick Pay Bill

1.—(1) The proceedings on Second Reading, in Committee and on consideration and Third Reading of the Statutory Sick Pay Bill shall be completed at the sitting on 15th December.

(2) The proceedings on Second Reading shall be brought to a conclusion three hours after their commencement, and the proceedings in Committee and on consideration and Third Reading shall be brought to a conclusion six hours after the commencement of proceedings on Second Reading.

(3) When the Bill has been read a second time it shall, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills), stand committed to a Committee of the whole House without any question being put and the Speaker shall forthwith leave the chair whether or not notice of an Instruction has been given.

(4) On the conclusion of the proceedings in Committee the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question and, if he reports the Bill with amendments, the House shall proceed to consider the Bill as amended without any Question being put.

(5) No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which proceedings in Committee or on consideration of the Bill are taken.

Second Reading, Committee, Report and Third Reading: Social Security

(Contributions) Bill

2.—(1) The proceedings on Second Reading, in Committee and on consideration and Third Reading of the Social Security (Contributions) Bill shall be completed at the sitting on 16th December.

(2) The proceedings on Second Reading shall be brought to a conclusion three hours after their commencement, and the proceedings in Committee and on consideration and Third Reading shall be brought to a conclusion six hours after the commencement of proceedings on Second Reading.

(3) When the Bill has been read a second time it shall notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills), stand committed to a Committee of the whole House without any question being put and the Speaker shall forthwith leave the chair whether or not notice of an Instruction has been given.

(4) On the conclusion of the proceedings in Committee the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question and, if he reports the Bill with amendments the House shall proceed to consider the Bill as amended without any Question being put.

(5) No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which proceedings in Committee or on consideration of the Bill are taken.

Conclusion of proceedings

3.—(1) This paragraph applies in relation to any proceedings on either Bill which are to be brought to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 or 2.

(2) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Speaker or Chairman shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(a) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed;

(c) the Question on any amendment moved or Motion made by a Minister of the Crown;

(d) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded.

(3) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (2) shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(4) If on 15th or 16th December a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) stands over to Seven o'clock and proceedings to which this Order applies have begun before that time—

(a) that Motion shall stand over until the conclusion of any proceedings which, under this Order, are to be brought to a conclusion at or before that time; and

(b) the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings which, under this Order, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Business Committee

4. Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) shall not apply to this Order.

Dilatory Motions

5. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings on either Bill shall be made except by a Minister of the Crown, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra Time

6. Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to proceedings on the Statutory Sick Pay Bill at the sitting on 15th December and to proceedings on the Social Security (Contributions) Bill at the sitting on 16th December.

Supplemental orders

7.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for varying or supplementing the provisions of this order shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to those proceedings.

(2) If at any sitting the House is adjourned, or if any sitting is suspended, before the time at which any proceedings are to be brought to a conclusion under this Order, no notice shall be required of a Motion made at the next sitting by a Minister of the crown for varying or supplementing the provisions of this order.

Saving

8. Nothing in this Order shall prevent any proceedings to which this Order applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by this Order.

Recommittal

9.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of, recommittal.

(2) No debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit either Bill to which this Order applies (whether as a whole or otherwise), and the Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Fisheries

[Relevant documents: European Community Documents Nos. 6272/92, relating to food hygiene on board fishing vessels; 5441/93, relating to European fisheries research; 4158/93, relating to fisheries: Spain and Portugal; 7047/93 relating to fisheries: Ireland; 9123/93, relating to fisheries: Spain and Portugal; 9285/93 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 10th December, relating to fishing licences; 10194/92, relating to industrial fisheries: North Sea and the Skagerrak and Kattegat; 11194/92, relating to industrial fisheries: North Sea and the Skagerrak and Kattegat; and the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 19th February 1993, relating to fisheries: Norway.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Before I call the Minister to move the motion I must inform the House that Madam Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

7.19 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jack): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9662/93, relating to guide prices for fishery products 1994, the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 9th December 1993 relating to total allowable catches and quotas for 1994, the Sixth Report from the Agriculture Committee of Session 1992-93 on the effects of conservation measures on the United Kingdom sea fishing industry (House of Commons Paper No. 620) and the Government's Response thereto contained in the Fifth Special Report from the Agriculture Committee of Session 1992-93 (House of Commons Paper No. 927); and supports the Government's intention to negotiate the best possible fishing opportunities for the United Kingdom fishing industry for 1994 consistent with the requirements of conservation of fish stocks.

As the winter weather is upon us, it is timely that we should reflect for a moment on the hazardous nature of the fishing industry. Many fishermen run considerable risks with their own lives and, obviously, the livelihoods of their families when they proceed with what is a risky business. I know that, from time to time, the House has properly shown its deep concern when tragedies affect the fishing communities around our shores. I am always conscious of that concern when I deal with fishery matters.

This will be a wide-ranging debate on fisheries issues, and I should like to pay tribute to our fisheries inspectors, and to the Royal Navy, which, in all weathers, carries out its task of enforcing our common fisheries policy with great professionalism and skill. The House may be interested to know that it is my intention in the new year to visit one of Her Majesty's vessels on protection duty to learn more about the way in which it carries out its duties.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): The Minister has paid a tribute to the men who work so hard in the fisheries industry. Does he recall that this week is the third anniversary of the loss of six men from my constituency in the Premier disaster?

Does he agree that one of our responsibilities as legislators is to ensure that the fishing industry has a viable future, and that all safety aspects are regarded as critical?

Mr. Jack: I endorse what the hon. Lady has said. None of us could forget the tragedy to which she referred. I am grateful for that intervention, because the hon. Lady was right to refer to safety. She will be aware that, some months

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ago in Committee, I announced the resumption of grants for safety measures. I also indicated our willingness to consider the implications of work being undertaken by the Department of Transport for vessels below 12 m.

I started by referring to the fishermen themselves, precisely because they and the communities in which they live and work lie at the heart of all our considerations. Since I took over responsibility for this area of policy, I have been greatly assisted by the many messages that I have received from hon. Members who represent fishing constituencies. I am sure that some of them will make their own contributions this evening, but fear that my hon. Friend the Member Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) will be unable to do so. In her own way, she has singularly communicated the particular needs of her fishermen. She has also done singular service in ensuring that I am kept abreast of the feelings of many right hon. and hon. Members on this subject.

This debate is an annual one. It is important, because it provides an opportunity to prepare for the December meeting of the Fisheries Council, which will begin on Sunday in Brussels. It is at that meeting that the decisions on next year's total allowable catches and quotas will be made.

The debate also gives me the opportunity to outline the Government's position on fishing policy, in the light of the outcome of the recent court case brought by the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations. In addition to deciding on the total allowable catches and quotas, the Council will also consider the important Commission proposal concerning the Spanish and Portuguese accession arrangements. The debate also affords the House the opportunity to discuss the valuable report on fishing policy from the Select Committee on Agriculture.

As always, some of the Commission's proposals have only just become available, because they must be based on the most up-to-date scientific advice. I know that that means that, unfortunately, there has been little time for the Scrutiny Committee or hon. Members to study them. I believe that hon. Members understand such matters sufficiently well, however, to make an appraisal on the information available to them.

During the summer, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland and I visited our major fishing centres. We covered the United Kingdom in a genuine attempt to understand some of the issues that affect the fishing industry around our shores. I learned a great deal about that industry, and about the men and women who work in it. I also learned about the importance to those communities of a viable fishing industry.

Differences of opinion may be expressed in the debate about how we should achieve the viability objective, but there is no doubt about our common cause in trying to find a way forward for the long-term future of the industry. I approach the debate in a genuine spirit of co-operation. I want to listen carefully to the views of right hon. and hon. Members. I also want to listen to the representations by the industry, because it is important that we try to recognise the common problem caused by trying to conserve fish stocks for the good of the industry.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): In the interests of fishermen, may I make a plea for greater co-operation among Departments? Following the tragic loss of the Antares, fine co-operation exists off the west coast of Scotland among fishermen and those mariners who sail the nuclear submarines. More needs to be done.

At this moment, a gas pipe is being installed between the south of Scotland and Northern Ireland, but the interests of the fishermen have been disregarded. Is it the case that part of that pipeline will be laid on top of the seabed and not in a trench? That decision is of considerable importance to the fishermen who work those waters. Similarly, with the abandonment of pipeline networks, as a result of the workings of the Petroleum Act 1987, much more consultation with our fishermen needs to be undertaken.

Mr. Jack: I thank the hon. Gentleman for displaying his customary courtesy in putting his views to me. We have debated matters connected with the Antares in Committee, and I know that he was satisfied with the response that I gave at that time. When my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland replies to the debate, I shall ask him to deal specifically with pipelines. Suffice it to say that there is considerable dialogue between those in the offshore gas industry and the fishing industry.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): When the Minister undertook his trip around the coastline to the various fishing ports, he must have become aware that, although there was huge opposition to the legislation governing days at sea, there was general support for the decommissioning package: the fishermen's only criticism was that it did not go far enough. When the Minister announced his response to the court reversal, why on earth did he say that the Government would suspend decommissioning after this year in addition to suspending the requirements governing days at sea? Is that really an example of the Government listening to the fishing industry?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman has anticipated certain passages in my speech. I will say something about that decision later, when I will be happy to take a further intervention from him.

Mrs. Ewing: During business questions on Thursday, my party specifically asked for a clear statement to be made on the days-at-sea arrangements. We then read in the national press on Friday morning that the Government intended to drop those arrangements. They made no mention of considering the decommissioning programme against the decision on the days-at-sea arrangements. What carrot and stick are the Government using?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Lady should wait until we have made a little progress, when we can deal with that matter. I am not aware of any statement that I made to the national press. She may have read certain local reports in Scottish newspapers. I have seen a copy of the answer to a parliamentary question tabled today, and it offers a complete view of our policy. Any other reports on that policy were speculative.

I hope that hon. Members will not mind if I now make further progress by outlining our future policy.

In considering the fishing industry, we should be minded by a statement by the European Court of Auditors. I hope that the House will bear with me if I quote from it, as it puts in context the real problems that the industry is facing. On decommissioning schemes, the following words were uttered:

> "It must be said that since the CFP was instituted, the technological changes in the fishing sector have been so big that catch and detection facilities have now reached such a level of perfection that the traditional balance between fishing and resources has been destroyed. Any resource can now be located and exploited with an efficiency that has never been known in all the time that man has been exploiting fish resources."

That gives some indication of the problem that we must all join in dealing with. The balance between man and his ability to catch fish is very much in the favour of man.

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): I thank my hon. Friend for visiting North Shields and listening to the concerns of local fishermen. With the desperate state of stocks in the North sea—the extract that he has just read highlights that situation—can he give us some assurance on the problems that are facing us if the Spanish and Portuguese are given access to the North sea? However difficult the situation is now, it will be disastrous if they are given free access.

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for raising that point. I congratulate him on the stalwart efforts that he has made in proposing, for example, a new fish quay at North Shields. He has done singular service to his fishermen.

I shall want to expand my remarks on Spain and Portugal. I understand the serious nature of the problems so far as fishermen are concerned, not just in the North sea but in the western approaches and Irish sea. Those are serious matters, and we will want to negotiate them during the coming Fisheries Council, commensurate with the policy of relative stability and no increase in fishing effort. I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that I will take the tenor of his remarks with all seriousness when we carry out that debate.

When I gave way to my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth I had given an indication of the European Court of Auditors' views on the relationship between man's ability to catch fish and the impact that that has on the fishing stocks. That reflects the fact that this time is difficult for the industry. The key problem is the perennial one of how to provide the maximum fishing opportunities for our fisherman while conserving the stocks sufficiently to ensure that there will be fish to catch in the future.

It is not an easy balance to strike, but we should not overlook the fact that the situation is not completely negative. In cash terms, the value of fish landed up to September this year has risen by 4·7 per cent. to a total of £315 million. That increase in the value of the landed catch reflects rises in each of the demersal, pelagic and shellfish sectors.

In deciding how the fishing stocks are to be managed, a key element must be the advice of the scientists, whose long-term analysis of the fish stocks guide their recommendations on the amount of fish that can be caught, area by area and species by species. As I shall outline, some of their recommendations will be difficult for our fishermen, as they reflect a real fear that some stocks will not be able to sustain current levels of fishing effort.

The negotiations taking place at the Fisheries Council in Brussels will also deal with the arrangements to apply in future to the Spanish and Portuguese fishing fleet, and will be very much focused on the means of ensuring that there is no increase in fishing effort by those fleets, so that vulnerable stocks are not further weakened.

As I have reported to the House, we are looking at all those issues against a background of securing the reductions in effort that are necessary to bring fishing opportunities, capacity and effort into a more sustainable balance, and to meet our part of the multi-annual guidance programme responsibility, which falls on all member states.

Those matters, then, constitute the agenda for the debate, and I want to expand on them. The sharing of our resources while protecting them and ensuring that we respond to changing requirements in ways that do not damage the delicate balance is one of the main challenges that we all must face. In achieving that, we must ensure that the United Kingdom's industry's needs and interests are fully reflected, in terms of fair treatment now and in developing measures for the future.

Last Thursday, in the House, I said that I would shortly clarify how the Government saw the way forward on days at sea. The House will be aware of the Government's plans to bring fishing effort more into a sustainable balance with the stocks and for meeting our MAGP targets. Hon. Members will also be aware of the recent High Court judgment in the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisation's judicial review proceedings.

The court, while noting that there is total agreement on the need to prevent overfishing of certain stocks, concluded that there are various points of Community law, which it felt unable to resolve. The case has therefore been referred to the European Court of Justice.

That means that the industry has been left in a state of uncertainty, and there is a question mark over our conservation policies. In that situation, my right hon. Friends and I have concluded that the most straightforward course is to suspend the implementation of days-at-sea restrictions pending the judgment of the European Court of Justice, which we shall seek to have expedited.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): In what the Minister has just said, the implication must be read that, were the decision of the European court to be favourable to the Government, they would be prepared to reimpose the days-at-sea restriction. Is that a reasonable or realistic position for the Government to have? Would it not be much more straightforward for the Government to say now that the days-at-sea restriction is to be abandoned completely, and to open negotiations and discussions with the industry immediately?

Mr. Jack: I shall answer the hon. and learned Gentleman's point now, and I hope that he will not mind if, in later remarks, I repeat some further amplification of it. I can understand the point that he makes, but none of us, in trying to deal with the question of the over-capacity of our industry and the need to constrain effort, can uncouple those different parts of the package. When we introduced days at sea, we were mindful of the failures of previous decommissioning schemes.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Not that hoary old chestnut again.

Mr. Jack: If the hon. Gentleman wants to run away from the hoary old chestnut, he is running way from the central issue in our efforts to deal with the problem.

The central problem of decommissioning is that, if, by virtue of that policy, one takes out fishing effort, any of the

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gains from so doing will be lost if one does not in some way constrain the fishing effort of the remainder of the fleet.

As I shall come on to outline, at this time further discussions have to be held in the light of the uncertainties that the court case has thrown up.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jack: If I may just make a little more progress to the end of this passage, I will give way to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Taylor: It is just on the European Court.

Mr. Jack: The right hon. Gentleman can have his say on the European Court when I have had mine on these remarks. In fairness, I want to finish my response to the intervention of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell).

Hon. Members will recall that days-at-sea controls are one element of a package of measures designed to conserve the stocks and meet our Community targets, while securing value for money. Other elements are various new licensing rules, and a £25 million decommissioning scheme.

I am pleased to be able to confirm that fishermen whose bids have already been accepted under the decommissioning scheme will receive their grants, provided that, in accordance with the scheme, they scrap their vessels and submit the necessary documentation to the Ministry before 1 March 1994. Beyond that, we need to review the way forward; as a first step, we shall be speaking to the European Commissioner about what further needs to be done. I shall also speak to the industry. I shall present further proposals to the House in due course.

It is, however, already clear that it will not be easy to achieve our targets and conservation objectives without the effort reduction that was represented by days at sea.

Mr. Taylor: A case dealing with days at sea has been referred to the European Court in Luxembourg, and by tradition that Court has taken a long time to consider issues. Based on experience, what period does the Minister expect to elapse before the court reaches a decision?

Mr. Jack: I expect that the court would take between 18 months and two years to come to its decision, and there may then be subsequent legal proceedings within the United Kingdom's courts. The challenge before us is that we still have to meet our European reduction targets.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Minister has repeated the terms of the written answer given this afternoon, which, while confirming the position on decommissioning for the first year, is silent about decommissioning for the second and third years. If he wants to talk to the industry and, one hopes, also listen to it in the constructive way that he set out earlier, does he agree that he will do his case, and the talks, no good if there is a veiled threat about withdrawing decommissioning? Will he confirm that the decommissioning schemes will go ahead for years two and three?

Mr. Jack: I am not in the business of making threats. I acknowledge that the situation is sensitive, but, under the changed circumstances, I want time to think through carefully the range of policy options that are open to us, so that we may meet our Community targets. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if, at this juncture, I do not reel off a potential list. Some schemes may be practical, others may not. I recognise the point that the hon. Gentleman makes, and I will take the most careful note of it in considering those options.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Jack: I must answer this important point, and I want my answer to satisfy the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace).

I want to give proper reflection to the available range of options to meet those targets—we shall come to other matters in the debate—and I may want to discuss all those issues with the Commissioner in the light of meeting our targets.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): My hon. Friend will know that people in my port of Fleetwood will welcome his comments about days at sea, because he knows that we in Fleetwood have had serious doubts about the effectiveness of the days-at-sea provision on effort control. Does he know when he will be able to give the House an idea of the other measures that he proposes to take, and whether he will be taking forward discussions with the industry along the lines of its recent proposals for an alternative to the days-at-sea provision?

Mr. Jack: I met representatives of the industry for discussions only this afternoon. The meeting had originally been called to hear their comments on the total allowable catches and quotas proposals from the Community, but we had an initial exchange on the implications of our announcement, and I gave them an undertaking that we would have—as I would want us to have—discussions with them on those matters. If our attempts to expediate matters in the European Court come to fruition, we might see an earlier resolution to some of the problems.

As to the other measures, once I have had an opportunity to meet the European Commissioner and discuss the situation with him, I hope that, not too long after that, we can come forward with some proposals.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I understand that the Minister is trying to be helpful, and I appreciate that, but can he be a bit more specific? Is there any chance of getting an announcement in the hands of the fishing industry by early next year?

Mr. Jack: I can agree with the "next year" bit, but "early" is one of those words about which one has to think carefully. I am conscious that we have to meet our Community objectives. I want to be quite certain that the policy implications arising from the court judgment can be considered carefully, in consultation with the industry, and after listening to the views of right hon. and hon. Members. I do not want to jump to an early conclusion when there is a problem.

For example, nobody can run away, in the argument on decommissioning, from the central issue that we have to find some way to control the effort of the remainder of the fleet. If we do not,. we might potentially negate all the gains. I want to reflect on that.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jack: I will continue to give way to hon. Members, so long as I do not suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. That is what happened last time, when I gave way many times but was then accused of taking too long.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Can my hon. Friend confirm that the Scottish fishing industry did not choose to have recourse to the courts? Will he undertake to continue negotiations with the Scottish fishing industry, particularly on the decommissioning programme?

Mr. Jack: I hope that my hon. Friend will continue the dialogue. I have enjoyed my conversations with the Scottish fishermen's representatives. They are robust, and I am sure that they will form a future part of our consultations.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Every hon. Member understands that the Minister is in a difficult position, and we do not expect him to tell us precisely what he will do in the interregnum while waiting either for the judgment from Europe or until the final decision has been taken. Surely he must say clearly that, among the options that have to be considered, he will not abandon decommissioning. That is all we are saying. Will he accept that decommissioning will have a vital part to play in the future? There is no difficulty in answering that question—a simple yes or no will do.

Mr. Jack: I have not uttered, nor does the rest of my brief contain, any words to the effect that I am abandoning any policy. As I have said, I understand the importance of decommissioning, and I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's understanding of my position, but I cannot give a definitive, detailed, worked-out, alternative approach.

I cannot escape the fact that the maximum effectiveness of decommissioning is derived when the central issue of effort control for the remainder of the fleet is addressed. In all honesty, nobody can run away from that point.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): Dorset fishermen have been impressed by my hon. Friend's approach to fishing problems. He should take credit for what he did for the inshore fishermen and the shell fishermen. We have a great deal of faith in what he can do. I hope that, supported by the positive approach of my fishermen to all the problems, he will be able to come up with a solution that can be to the benefit of all parts of the industry. After all, the industry will get the benefits of good conservation measures.

Mr. Jack: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's kind remarks. I met some of the fishermen from his area when we were discussing the previous policy, and I found what they had to say was useful.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Jack: I should like to make a little progress, because I want to deal with certain matters connected with decommissioning. I have been extraordinarily generous in giving way to hon. Members representing the Scottish National party. Others may wish to intervene. I am not against being interrupted, but I want to make a little bit of progress so that the House has something else to chew over.

Mr. Salmond: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was not quite able to hear the Minister, but he may in the extremity of the moment have forgotten that, earlier in his speech, he had committed himself to giving way to me. I know that he is a man of his word, and I am sure that he will want to keep it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Jack: I want to make a little progress. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) may catch my eye a little later.

Decommissioning has a role to play, but I note that even the Select Committee, which advocated a more generous scheme, appeared to share the Government's scepticism, in paragraph 140, and called for "value for money safeguards". Similarly, in last year's debate, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) admitted:

> "A decommissioning scheme is not a panacea or a policy that can work on its own".—[*Official Report*, 9 December 1992; Vol. 215, c. 865.]

Controlling fishing effort is not something we can dodge. No doubt Opposition Members will attack the Government—for example, on the size of our scheme. I hope that all those who choose that line of argument will be kind enough, on behalf of their respective parties, to tell us how much they would have spent, whether a firm pledge has been given or whether they have simply uttered words for the consumption of the industry—knowing, as Conservative Members know, that they will never have the chance to implement those hollow gestures.

Mr. Salmond: As the Minister knows, the plans of the Scottish National party for decommissioning were in our pre-Budget statement.

Will the Minister consider what he is doing with this policy? He has told us that the issue of days at sea will remain in the European Court and continue to poison the atmosphere. He is withdrawing decommissioning after the first year, even in Scotland where the industry was not a party to the court case that he is reacting to, as Conservative Members have pointed out. He has shown no signs of responding to the fishermen's submissions, which he asked to be submitted on 30 September.

Can we take from the Minister's utterances any indication of good faith towards the industry? He is in danger of once again poisoning the atmosphere by withdrawing decommissioning without rationale.

Mr. Jack: That almost sounded like a quote from the press release that was written before the debate started.

I have not yet said that decommissioning will be withdrawn. I said that I understood the importance attached to it, and that I would consider the views expressed by hon. Members during the debate. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) said that he understood my position and that I was not able to give definitive, detailed, point-by-point statements of the policies that we will have to follow, bearing in mind that we still have our Community effort-reduction targets to meet. I hope that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) will understand that and not misrepresent the situation.

Mrs. Ewing: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jack: No; I want to make some progress.

I do not want to pollute the good relations that I hope we have begun to build up with the industry, and I will later refer to the study that the fishermen's organisations have put before us.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): In the intervention by the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), and in some of the Minister's earlier comments, there seemed to be a suggestion that the Government thought it improper that the National Association of Fishermen's Organisations and my constituents should take the matter to the court to obtain a ruling. That is a different attitude from the one taken on Sunday trading. I never heard Ministers say that it was wrong for B and Q to take that matter to the European Court.

In seeking good constructive relations with the industry, I hope that the Minister is not implying that its application for a legal ruling deserves some form of punitive reaction in relation to decommissioning, and that his action is a temporary prelude to reintroducing it as part of a new package.

Mr. Jack: I am not vindictive by nature. If the NFFO felt that that was the best course of action to serve its members' interests, it had every right to proceed. My disappointment was because, having listened to what people said during the summer, I would have liked to respond. But the court case got in the way, and we now have to tackle the programme in a different way.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan thinks through his policies carefully, and I hope that he will understand the difficulty I currently face. I still have before me the Community effort-reduction obligation in MAGP, and I need to discuss its implications for the United Kingdom. I am aware of a number of ways of achieving effort reduction, but I want to weigh those discussions very carefully—as I will those that I will have with the industry—before coming to a firm conclusion, about which I and my right hon. Friend would feel comfortable when putting it before the fishing industry.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): I agree with my hon. Friend about the need for effort reduction. In Hastings and Rye during the summer, we did not reach our sole quota. There is great worry about the future existence of sole as a species in that area. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for arranging a survey of the shingle bank, in order to find out the cause of the problem. His announcement today will be welcomed by the fishermen. At least they have some respite from their worst fears.

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for her comments. She has done a good job in representing the interests of her fishing community, and she brought a delegation of fishermen to see me. I am grateful for her comments about the aggregate dredging of the shingle bank in her constituency.

Mrs. Ewing: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jack: Since the hon. Lady asks so nicely, I will.

Mrs. Ewing: I appreciate the exigencies under which the Minister is operating. He has spoken quite clearly about the carrot and stick of the days at sea and decommissioning. Under what circumstances would the Government argue for the continuation of a decommissioning scheme after 1 March 1994?

Mr. Jack: I have tried very hard to paint the picture. I have explained the current issues in regard to meeting the Community effort-reduction targets. As I have explained to the hon. Lady, and reflected in terms what the Select Committee have said, it must be recognised that, if we are to have a decommissioning scheme that delivers, we cannot escape considering the effort that remains fishing. No one can run away from that.

I do not dismiss any proposition about ways of achieving the Community target, but I need time to consider such propositions in the context of the discussions with the Commission and the industry.

Hon. Members have mentioned the work that the industry has done. Technical conservation has a role to play, as the Select Committee noted. The industry has done useful work during the summer and I want to pursue that subject in discussions with it. We must recognise that the scientific advice is that the industry's suggestions will make only a small contribution to reducing fishing effort. The multi-annual guidance programme targets as currently constituted by the Commission do not allow technical conservation to count. I am sure that Opposition Members will tell me that technical conservation is the answer to some of the problems.

What set of proposals are the Opposition in favour of? We have had two sets of proposals put before us: one from the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, which codifies existing good conservation practice but contains nothing which would genuinely relieve the serious pressure on north sea cod, except for the idea of a separator trawl. That would require more research, and raises a question of enforceability.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) remarked about the Scottish Fishermen's Federation's proposals, they seem to contemplate a days-at-sea scheme with no total allowable catches. Their main proposal for the North sea was for a reduced mesh size in square mesh panels.

Unlike the Opposition, the industry has at least put down its ideas in detail. There are limitations to the proposals, but much valuable work has been done. I can assure the House that we will resume discussions with the industry on its ideas, to see what part it can play in our further attempts to reduce fishing effort and meet our Community obligations.

I cannot leave out the views of the Liberal Democrat party about this matter. I am at a loss in trying to comment on its fishing policy, because, since I have been responsible for fishery matters, its only policy seems to have been waving in front of me a document which was acquired from one of our fishery offices. If it cannot do any better, it is the Liberal Democrat party that should be decommissioned forthwith.

I have already referred to a number of points about effort control in the Select Committee's report. I was pleased to note that the Committee also endorsed a number of key elements in the Government's approach to the common fisheries policy—particularly the central importance of relative stability, the use of total allowable catches and quotas as policy instruments and the need to base policy decisions closely on the advice of scientific experts. All those concerns will underline our negotiating approach to TACs and quotas in the Council next week.

I know that the Committee considered our proposals on days-at-sea controls too draconian. I hope that its members have been able to see the action that we have taken in the light of the court case; we had hoped to announce an easing of policy, but the case prevented that.

The Commission's proposals for TACs and quotas, which the Council will consider next week, must be seen against a background of continued pressure on the principal stocks, and the need to find a satisfactory solution to the problem of reducing effort.

The picture around our shores is generally worrying. West coast demersals continue to be a poor state: They suffer from the same problems as those in the North sea —high mortality and low spawning stock biomass. In the Irish sea, the cod situation remains extremely serious, and the Advisory Committee on Fish Management has recommended drastic action.

Reductions are proposed for important stocks in area seven—cod, anglers and megrim. It is also proposed that the TACs for northern hake should be significantly reduced, on the basis of the first analytical assessment of that stock. Flatfish stocks in particular—everywhere—have shown some recovery, thanks to good recruitment; but, in that and all other stocks, prudent management must be exercised.

The Commission's proposals on the TACs for North sea demersals, as well as North sea herring and western mackerel, must await the conclusions of the Community Norway consultations, which are currently taking place. I think that it is too early to judge the outcome of those discussions; however, I can tell the House that the stocks of all round fish except haddock are depleted. As for pelagic species, although western mackerel and herring stocks are in good shape, the stocks of North sea mackerel remain in a collapsed state.

Dr. Godman: In the light of the negotiations with Norway—and given that a number of vessels are ready to sail at the end of the month, so that they can start fishing in northern Norwegian waters early in the new year—can the Minister give us any idea when the negotiations between the European Union and Norway will be settled? Are they likely to be settled before 31 December?

Mr. Jack: They must be settled in time for the negotiations of the Council this weekend. At the end of that meeting, we must agree the TACs and quotas.

Let me draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to a recent piece of good news in relation to Community negotiations with the European economic area, which included discussion of the so-called cohesion cod. As a result of that discussion, in the north Norwegian waters our vessels will enjoy an increase of some 40 per cent. in the amount of cod they can catch. We hope that, in our discussions this weekend and next week, we shall reach a conclusion that meets the hon. Gentleman's timetable.

In negotiating, the Government will have in mind the needs and concerns of people in all regions of the United Kingdom. We shall also request Hague preference terms where appropriate, and seek to obtain western mackerel flexibility at least at the same levels as last year.

I know that hon. Members will understand that we are in the process of a complicated negotiation. As well as dealing with the TACs and quotas for stocks in our own waters, we must deal with those for stocks that we share with Norway. As one of 12 member states, we shall do the best we can to secure an outcome that gives the United Kingdom the best possible fishing opportunities for 1994, consistent with the requirement to conserve fish stocks and preserve the principle of relative stability.

I was anxious for the industry to be aware of those factors. This afternoon, I met some of its representatives to explain our position, and to listen to their concerns before the negotiations.

The motion refers to guide prices. I am pleased to say that the 1994 prices agreed—as is usual—in the November Council were generally satisfactory for the United Kingdom. In particular, we secured the continuance of the dual guide price for herring, which is designed to enable the United Kingdom industry to take best advantage of the Community support mechanisms.

Next week, the Council is likely to decide on the future of the fisheries accession arrangements for Spain and Portugal. As with the TACs and quotas, we shall insist that relative stability must be maintained; equally, there must be no increase in fishing effort. We must all accept that the option of doing nothing does not exist. The Act of accession for those two countries clearly lays down the obligation to examine the position, and for us to consider changes this year.

Mrs. Ewing: In which articles?

Mr. Jack: The articles dealing with this matter that I have seen so far were in the Commission's original proposals. They were not acceptable to us. We made it very clear at the outset that the Commission's wish to concede the principle of freedom of access for all Community vessels to Community waters before putting in place the detail of what was to replace the existing mechanisms was entirely unacceptable to the United Kingdom. When the matter was discussed again in the November Council, we were joined by other member states that felt the same.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jack: May I finish my answer to the important question asked by the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing)? I am glad that she asked it, from a sedentary position.

We have made our stance very clear. The Council will be presented with the outcome of discussions that have taken place among the various committees, including the Committee of Permanent Representatives. We shall have further proposals before us at the weekend, and I have outlined the basic principles on which we shall judge those matters.

Let me make it clear that I take the issues involving those with fishing interests in the North sea as seriously as I take issues affecting those who represent fishing interests in the western approaches in the Irish sea. This matter affects both areas, and it is extremely serious; but, as I have said, the option to do nothing is not available.

Mr. Tyler: I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House will wish to be helpful, and to strengthen the Minister's arm in the negotiations. In relation to both the western approaches and the Irish box, these matters could pose as serious a threat to the industry as the days-at-sea provisions—more serious, perhaps, in regard to certain species. We all recognise the problems that the Minister faces.

Nevertheless, I think that we all feel—I am sure that this is the industry's view—that the circumstances in which the accession treaty was signed were different in material ways. The emphasis on the conservation of particular species has changed dramatically in the intervening period.

[Mr. Tyler]

I hope that the Minister will be robust in the negotiations, and will not be happy to indulge in horse trading that will sell our fishermen down the river.

Mr. Jack: We took an extremely robust line when the matter was first discussed. We said that the Commission's proposed measures were unacceptable—and we took a similarly robust line last time. I like to think that the force of our arguments and our negotiating position attracted support from others.

I have made our basic principles extremely clear. Let me say in all sincerity, however, that, however robust I am, and however hard I fight for our fishermen's interests—which I will do—we are but one of 12. I cannot anticipate the final actions of other member states, which will themselves consider the matter in terms of their own national interests.

It is worth recording, in connection with the way in which the Community works, that Greece and Italy have little direct interest in the matter. Obviously, Spain and Portugal are entirely in favour of the proposition. The United Kingdom and Ireland have made a clear statement of opposition to the proposals that have been put forward so far. Other countries have voiced reservations in their own interests as they see fit. We shall continue to try to ensure that there is robust support, and to question inadequate proposals. We do not have the option on this occasion to do nothing.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): The issue to which the Minister refers has serious implications for the Irish box and the Irish sea, where France, Spain and Portugal take 88 per cent. of the catch. The odds in that playing field, if one may use that analogy, are loaded agains the Northern Irish fishermen, and I am worried that the Minister's comments indicate a willingness to let himself be persuaded, or perhaps bullied, by other European nations.

That is not acceptable to the fishing industry. We need the same rules and regulations and for them to be enforced against other countries that are taking the major part of the fishing industry away from those Irish areas.

Mr. Jack: I thank the hon. Member for his remarks. Let me not leave him in any doubt that the United Kingdom has been resolute in its objections so far to the proposals that have come forward. Our negotiators went for further discussions with a clear remit that, unless the basic principles that I have outlined—relative stability and no increase in fishing effort—were met, the proposals were unacceptable.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand that I could sit in the Council meeting all next week, thump the table hard and continue to say no, but if 11 people decide to say yes, I am not in a position to veto that. My task must be to negotiate with as much skill and determination as possible to achieve the best possible deal for our fishermen, under circumstances in which to do nothing is not an option.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman understands that there is an agreed Community position that the Irish box ceases to exist at the end of December 1995. That is not to say that there are not other options that ought to be considered that relate to the removal of that box. We shall consider those proposals carefully. Some people have suggested alternatives, such as a Shetland box, or closed areas. If any one of those were to be introduced, they would be put in place on a non-discriminatory basis and all Community countries would be bound by whatever restrictions were imposed.

In closing areas, one must remember the displacement effect—where people go to fish when they are not allowed to do so in certain areas. When I visited the three Northern Ireland fishing ports in the summer, I was left in no doubt of the state of the fishing industry there and the difficulties faced by those who fish there. Those difficulties shall be in my mind as we negotiate.

I hope that hon. Members understand the reasons for the policy announcement. I am not abandoning policies, as has been suggested, but merely regrouping to consider where we go from here. I cannot escape the Community obligations under our multi-annual guidance programme. I shall fight hard in the negotiations in Brussels in the coming days for our fishermen, and over the issues of TACs, quotas and the concerns with Spain and Portugal.

Conservative Members do not shirk difficult decisions over the fishing industry. It is easy, in the interests of gesture politics, to talk fine words, but our common task must be the conservation of our fishing stocks for the long-term future of the industry.

8.8 pm

Dr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I beg to move, to leave out from 'and supports' to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

'agrees with the House of Commons Select Committee on Agriculture that days at sea restrictions are "unnecessarily draconian" and "carry the risk that the United Kingdom fleet will suffer a catastrophic financial implosion"; notes the recent High Court judgment on the Sea Fish Conservation Act 1992; urges the Government to abandon the days at sea restrictions and to respond positively to the conservation proposals put forward by the fishing industry; calls upon the Government to maintain the role of the Royal Navy in fisheries protection work and to do all in its power to ensure that the Common Fisheries Policy enforcement mechanisms coming into operation on 1st January 1994 are effective; urges the Government to ensure that the minimum possible disadvantage is imposed upon the United Kingdom fishing industry by any agreement on the Spanish and Portuguese Act of Accession; and calls upon the Government to use the forthcoming European Union Fisheries Council meeting to secure a better deal for United Kingdom fishermen.'.

This has almost become the annual debate on the fishing industry. It is certainly the main debate of the year as it traditionally precedes the December Council when important decisions are taken in relation to the industry. Tonight's debate is not only about that Council. We have the report of the Select Committee on Agriculture and the Government's response before us and this debate is an unsatisfactory way in which to deal with that. There is a great deal of valuable information in the report. The Select Committee has made a great effort and it is unfair and unacceptable that it should be slotted into the debate when hon. Members wish to raise a whole range of issues. If there is any doubt that it is unfair and unacceptable, I suggest that hon. Members re-read the Minister's speech to see how little reference he made to some of the report's important recommendations. Indeed, he hardly mentioned it because he is inevitably preoccupied with the decisions to be taken at the Council later this month.

I am afraid that the industry is still in a relatively depressed state when compared to its state in the past year. There has been some improvement in prices, but not in all areas. However, the Scottish salmon industry—not the traditional sea fishing industry—is especially depressed. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland will make some reference to it in his reply. The salmon industry is facing a crisis. It is being subjected to an utterly unacceptable level of dumping of salmon from Norway.

The minimum import price that has been set is derisory and the original proposal to license imports would have been more effective, but Norway refused to accept. In the Minister's negotiations with Norway and in talks at the Council, he must come up with more effective action to save that industry because thousands of jobs are at stake. The House as a whole does not seem to appreciate the growing importance of fish farming and how crucial the jobs are, not only to the Scottish economy, but to the United Kingdom as a whole.

The fishing industry depends on government. I use the word "government" in its widest sense to apply to the authorities of the European Community and the Government who are answerable to the House of Commons. I know that the present Government and their predecessors have made great play of their wish to disengage from industry and apply a laissez-faire approach. That cannot apply to fishing and at least on that point there is common ground.

The House accepts that the fishing industry cannot conserve its own stocks. Clearly, it needs Government intervention to protect its future and it needs support in other respects. Opposition Members would argue that the Government have a special responsibility to ensure that we can conserve our stocks and maintain a viable industry for the long-term future. One only has to look at the history of the North sea herring to recognise what can happen to stocks, or at the Mediterranean, where, as a result of over-fishing by some of the other EU member countries, there are too many fishermen chasing too few fish. As the Minister said in his opening remarks, we need to achieve a better balance.

The record of the Government—not just the record since the Minister of State took over, because we are entitled to take a longer view than that—is essentially one of failure, and nothing that we have heard today encourages us to believe that that period of failure is about to come to an end. One example of that is decommissioning, which has been central to much of the argument in the House.

When the Minister took over the brief, I dare say that, like me, he read some of the debates, particularly the main debate of the year, over the past five years or so. He will have seen the arguments about the need for a decommissioning scheme. Between 1987 and 1992, £256 million was made available for decommissioning schemes throughout the Community. Ireland did not take advantage of that because it has always been Ireland's policy—there is an implicit, if not explicit, acceptance of it—that its industry was entitled to grow. Ireland's position was unique in that respect. The only other country that did not take a penny of the money that had been allocated by the EC for decommissioning was Britain.

We are talking about substantial sums. Let me remind the House that Spain, which has a large fishing fleet, took £61 million out of the arrangement and Germany—that big fishing fleet—took £26 million.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): The hon. Gentleman is talking about decommissioning. Will he tell the House how much his party would put into a decommissioning scheme in this country? How much would it cost and where would the money come from?

Dr. Strang: I shall come to that. If I do not answer that question, I hope that the hon. Member will intervene again.

I want to spend a little time on the history, which is important, not least because of the announcement today. The previous Minister, the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), made it clear consistently in debates that the Government were resolutely opposed to decommissioning. In December 1990 he said:

> "I emphasise that decommissioning is not the way to reduce the pressure on fish stocks".—[*Official Report*, 13 December 1990; Vol. 182, c. 1171.]

Hon. Members who have been more regular attenders of these debates than I have been over the past five years will know that that was at a time when virtually every hon. Member with a fishing constituency was advocating the need for a decommissioning scheme.

We have a decommissioning scheme now, but it is inadequate. The Minister was quoting selectively when he referred to the Select Committee report. In fact, I believe that it was the only reference to the report in his speech. I shall give the whole quotation. The report states:

> "We understand the Government's scepticism about decommissioning, although it has made things much harder for itself by its failure to control the size of the fleet since the end of the last scheme in 1986."

The definitive point—I am glad that the chairman of the Select Committee is present—is this:

> "We do not however consider that the Government's half-hearted scheme is the right response to the problems associated with decommissioning. More money should be committed to make a serious effort to reduce over capacity along with the necessary value for money safeguards."

In the other place, the European Communities Select Committee published an equally good report. It said:

> "The decommissioning scheme announced by the Government in February 1992 is welcome as a sign that the Government have accepted the principle of decommissioning. However, the measures which were announced are not sufficient to reduce the capacity of the fleet in the long term. The Committee accepts that £25 million is not even enough to prevent the fleet capacity from expanding. Four or five times that amount is now needed to make up for the lack of a decommissioning scheme in the United Kingdom during the last decade. The scheme which was announced must, regretfully, be described as too little, too late.

We have said, and I repeat it, that £25 million a year should be the opening position for a decommissioning scheme.

Obviously we cannot predict what the circumstances will be in three year or four years. However, I submit that in the present climate an absolute minimum should be £25 million a year for three years, not £25 million over three years. The one thing about which we should be clear is that we must have a decommissioning scheme that will have a real impact on the fishing capacity, or we might as well not have one at all. All that we have from the Government is a belated, half-hearted approach. It has come many years after the other countries have implemented decommissioning schemes. Now, we are not sure what the Government are suggesting, but it seems that there may be a threat to suspend the scheme from the end of the financial year.

Mr. Jack: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for confirming his party's firm pledge about the amount that it would wish to spend initially. I note that it was for three years and possibly beyond. The hon. Gentleman talked about the effectiveness of decommissioning. Does he accept that constraining the effort of the remainder of the

[Mr. Jack]

fishing fleet after the effects of a decommissioning scheme have been felt is crucial to the effectiveness of decommissioning as an approach to restraining fishing effort?

Dr. Strang: To pharaphrase the Minister, what he is saying is not dissimilar to what he quoted my hon. Friend the Member for Glandford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) as saying, which is that decommissioning is not a panacea. It is not a solution to the long-term problem. We must take into account the increased efficiency to which the Minister referred to in his opening remarks. We accept that. However, we believe that a proper and effective decommissioning scheme has a part to play.

The Minister can correct me if I am wrong, but I believe that the enforcement of the Government's measures, including the proposed days-at-sea restrictions, would cost about £9 million. That is very costly. High costs are involved in some of the things that the Government are threatening to do. However, I take the Minister's point. In itself, decomissioning is not sufficient, but we are saying that it should be a major element of our approach.

The Government's approach is also inadequate—I would describe it as a debacle—on the proposed days-at-sea restrictions. There was virtual unity against that proposal among representatives in the House from fishing communities. The Opposition parties, led by the Labour party, consistently voted against the days-at-sea proposals at every opportunity. There was no support from the industry and no support from the House other than the whipped votes that the Minister secured. It could have been a close-run thing following the passage of the enabling Act, but not enough Government Members voted with the Opposition.

When the new Minister of State and the new Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food took over, they announced that the Government would not go ahead with the implementation of the days-at-sea restrictions on 1 October, but would defer them until 1 January. I am grateful to the Minister and his right hon. Friend for meeting us twice to discuss those issues. that deferral was a window of opportunity for the Government to come up with an alternative policy that did not involve days-at-sea restrictions, which were clearly unacceptable to the industry.

During the course of all that, the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations decided to go to court. The Minister was making it clear throughout that the Government were not minded to get rid of the days-at-sea restrictions. They may have reached that conclusion, but nothing that I heard him say at our meetings enabled me to walk out of the Ministry and say to the media, "Yes, I think that the Government will abandon the days-at-sea restrictions on the basis of the proposals put forward by the industry, which have all been submitted by the end of September."

The NFFO wrote to the Government to put it on record that it did not want the fact that it was going to court to prejudice the discussions on the conservation proposals put forward by the industry. The reply, dated 11 August, signed by Ms Rimmington, the Minister's Private Secretary, said that the Secretary of State was

"aware that leave was granted on 22 July, and that the substantive hearing"—

the court hearing—

will take place in the first week of November. However, she has asked me to emphasise that this should not affect the dialogue with the industry which the Minister of State announced on 7 July."

Notwithstanding that, the Minister gave the clear impression, which has been confirmed by interventions in the Chamber this evening, that the Government deeply resented the NFFO going to court. Indeed, in the course of the dialogue they threatened that, in return for going to court, the NFFO might find that the Government would abandon the decommissioning scheme. The industry was given the impression that that was an option. I was aghast when the Minister said as much at my second meeting with her on 11 November.

Why did the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), who is not in his place, and the leader of the Scottish National party, the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), focus attention on the fact that the Scottish industry was not party to the court case? As the Minister knows, they made that point because the Government clearly implied that they were minded to punish the industry for going to court. What other interpretation can we put on their statements during that dialogue? If I had the press release, I could quote from it.

The Minister implied that the court process distracted from the real issue of considering the industry's proposals. But the deadline for those proposals was 30 September and the case did not come up in court until November. The Government had the whole month of October to reach decisions on the alternative proposals and announce that compulsory tie-up would not figure as an element of their package of measures for conserving our stocks. That is what should have happened, but the Government did not do that.

We now have the court's decision. Had it not been for the Government's announcement this afternoon, the NFFO would have applied for interim relief in the court on 11 January. Had that been granted, the court would have prevented the Government from going ahead with the days-at-sea restrictions. I do not know what legal advice the Government took, but it is important to make that point clear. The Government have simply said that they have suspended the days-at-sea restrictions until a decision by the European Court of Justice. That is a bad decision by the Government and I hope that, when they have had time to consider it further, they will recognise that they must remove the proposal completely. It will work only if the industry co-operates and the industry will never co-operate on that matter.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the court judgment referred the matter up to the European Court of Justice? To summarise both cases, it was a neutral judgment. However, the court observed that it was necessary to conserve precious stocks.

Dr. Strang: I do not dispute that. I have quoted the Select Committee in our amendment. On compulsory tie-up, the Select Committee said that days-at-sea restrictions were "unnecessarily draconian" and

"carry the risk that the United Kingdom fleet will suffer a catastrophic financial implosion".

We believe that days-at-sea restrictions are wrong because they will discriminate against people who have borrowed large sums of money and young skippers who have bought a new vessel and are trying to earn an honest living. How can they pay off those debts and keep their business viable if those restrictions are imposed on them?

Like his predecessor last year, the Minister opened this debate by referring to the dangers associated with fishing. I make no apology for making this point and I make it as gently as I can. At present, if fishermen are a long way from home, fishing in difficult weather conditions that constitute a danger to them, they will come home. With days-at-sea restrictions, there will be a pressure, however small, and an incentive to continue fishing in those dangerous conditions because that will be one of the limited days on which they can fish at sea.

One reason why the proposal would be unfair and unworkable is that, for various reasons—usually historically—Spanish, French and Irish vessels operate in the same areas as our fishermen, who could be tied up in port. The number of days which our fishermen could spend fishing those waters would be restricted, whereas no such restrictions would be imposed on those other member states because they are not implementing the days-at-sea restrictions, with which the Minister is still threatening the industry.

In the statement which the Government issued this afternoon in a written answer to the hon. Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks), the Minister says that he will discuss the matter with the EC Commissioner. We understand that there is a common fisheries policy and that it is not unreasonable for the Minister to discuss the matter with the Commissioner and his colleagues in the Council of Fisheries, but I hope that the Government will not try to replace what is essentially domestic legislation—the regulations that have been enacted by the House of Commons on the basis of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1992—with EC regulations that would apply days-at-sea restrictions across the board. Is that what the Minister has in mind?

Mr. Jack: Given that, as I said earlier, we still have to try to achieve our Community effort reduction target, under the multi-annual guidance programme, it is right that we should go to the Commission, explain in more detail what has occurred and analyse the implications of suspending the days-at-sea restrictions. They were an attempt to reduce fishing effort for the reasons that I gave earlier in terms of their relationship with decommissioning. We should then explore alternative measures with the Commissioner. I do not rule out the possibility of exploring with him some of the ideas with which the industry has come up. I gave a guarded reservation on the Commission's scepticism over gear regulations, but I did not rule out discussing that and other measures. What the Committee may choose to do is up to it.

Dr. Strang: We shall see what develops from the Minister's discussions with the Commission. I presume that they are to take place this month——

Mr. Jack: Early in the new year.

Dr. Strang: I am grateful for that information. I understand that Ministers will be preoccupied with all the material before the Council next week, so it will be January before the hon. Gentleman meets the Commissioner.

The Government's statement on decommissioning does not stand up. We listened carefully to what the Minister said about it, but there is no case for the suggestion that decommissioning might not continue beyond the end of this financial year. The very opposite is true. If we are suspending the days-at-sea restriction proposals, we need additional measures to tackle the problem of too many fishermen and too few fish. If anything, the Government should announce this evening an enhanced decommissioning scheme.

The Minister failed to give any logical reason for suspending the decommissioning scheme from 31 March —which was certainly the implication of his remarks. We can read the statement in only one way: the money will be provided for this year, but the Government wish to consider whether they will provide the money for the next two years. Either that is just vindictive, or it is a threat that the Government will halt decommissioning at the end of this financial year. If the Minister reads his remarks today he will find that he totally failed to make the case for what he announced.

The Minister was right to draw attention to the conservation proposals that he has received from the Scottish Fishermen's Federation and the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations and it is only right to pay tribute to the work that they have put into their proposals. Those proposals are not complementary; they are contradictory in many important respects. That is not to say that it is impossible to produce a package of additional technical conservation measures, allied with an enhanced decommissioning scheme, which would greatly improve the future of our fishery stocks.

I have already mentioned the inadequacy of the time allowed for debate on the Select Committee report and the Government's reply to it. I do not have time to do justice to that problem, but I should like to refer to one element in the report which is important—the proposal for individual transferable quotas. I wholly endorse the Government's response to the Select Committee on this. The Select Committee was wrong to make the proposal in the first place and the Government's reasons for rejecting it were valid.

My main worry about ITQs is that big business would move in and buy them up, with small fishing communities in the south-west of England or the north-west of Scotland selling them off. They might not even be able to buy them in the first place, because the Select Committee recommended auctioning the ITQs, so that people would have to pay for the right to fish. Another problem is that some of the ITQs could go to foreign-owned vessels.

I also agree with the Government's comments on enforcement and conservation. I do not believe that ITQs would produce a more effective conservation regime.

The Minister mentioned total allowable catches being proposed at the forthcoming Council. My hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe will have something to say about TACs later, but I should like to point out two issues in this context. The Minister did not refer to the first of them, which was the idea of the Council regulation establishing a control system for the common fisheries policy. The Minister will, however, recognise that this is important. We know that some countries are flouting the regulations more than others are.

I make no apology for singling out Spain, which has a large fleet and which is guilty, as the Irish Government have documented. There was an excellent programme on television about it, carried on "The Cook Report". The Spanish fishing industry is certainly flouting the

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regulations in a big way, so it is crucial that the new Council regulation be used in due course to sort out the problem.

The responsibility for policing the quotas will remain in the first instance with the fishery inspectors. We have a good force of them and the Minister paid tribute to them. The Spaniards have very few inspectors and other countries have inadequate systems of surveillance and inspection, so there is no effective enforcement of the quotas. That renders the whole approach to TACs nonsensical. I strongly urge the Minister to make a major issue of this next week.

My second point about the Council concerns the Spanish and Portuguese accession, to which we refer in our amendment. I appreciate the fact that the subject must be discussed at this meeting and that there is a commitment to come up with a firm solution. It will not be enough to stonewall in the belief that that will maintain the status quo until the year 2002.

The bottom line is that we must ensure that Spanish vessels in particular do not gain access to waters where they cannot fish now—the south-western approaches, the Irish sea and the Clyde fishery, not to mention the North sea. I emphasise the importance of the Irish box—an emphasis different from the Minister's. The real pressure from the Spanish will arise in the Irish box. We need a wide variety of ways of dealing with that; it calls for some ingenuity. If the will exists, it will certainly be possible to put in place successor arrangements which achieve precisely what the Irish box achieves: to prevent Spanish vessels from getting into these waters. As the Minister said, that must apply also to the North sea, where we want no additional Spanish effort.

This is the supreme challenge facing the Minister at the forthcoming Community meeting. Ultimately, although the TACs are important, they change from year to year, but this problem is one with which we shall have to live for years to come. As long as the proposal, presented by the Commission or by the Presidency, is within the terms of the treaty of accession, the decision will be by qualified majority voting: there will be no British veto.

Understandably, therefore, the Minister said that we cannot stop this on our own. But the best way to stop it would be to avoid a vote altogether and to succeed, in the horse-trading that goes on, in getting a deal meaning that we have enough support to stop any measure that would damage our interests being agreed to. I do not fault what the Minister has said, but the real test will be what he brings back. It is crucial that he does not let down the British industry and the House of Commons in the forthcoming negotiations—I am sure that we are united on that.

We regret the way in which the Government have handled the conservation issue. We believe that relations between the Government and the industry are at an all-time low, and are worried that that is reflected in an increase in the number of landings of black fish. The only way in which we can stop that is to re-establish a proper relationship between the industry and the Government. I appeal to the Government not just to suspend the days at sea restrictions but to abandon them. They should return to the House as the Minister pledged in his announcement today—I dare say that it will be February at the earliest. The Government should announce a clear abandonment of the days at sea restrictions and a policy enabling the Government to work with, not against, the industry. We shall vote for that when we vote for our amendment tonight.

8.51 pm

Sir Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): My first pleasant task is to say how nice it is to see the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) back on the Labour Front Bench, and I am sorry that I have not had an opportunity to say so earlier. It is many years since we used to debate together across the Floor of the House on various agricultural matters. If my memory does not fail me, in those days I used to disagree with almost everything that he had to say. I was therefore delighted when I entirely agreed with his first three points.

The hon. Gentleman said that he believed that we should have had a considerably longer period in which to debate the Select Committee's report. Although I say so myself, it was an important report, and I was grateful for the support that I received from members of the Committee. The hon. Gentleman might have a word with his hon. Friends on the Liaison Committee which, despite an application for a half-day debate on the subject, decided that the matters that we debated yesterday should take priority. It is partly for that reason that the Government have been kind enough to refer to our report in the motion.

The hon. Gentleman also commented on the fish-farming industry, and I endorse what he said. Some two or three years ago, we did a study of that extremely important industry, whose economic importance may one day exceed that of the wild fishing industry. In parts of the highlands of Scotland it remains far and away the largest employer. The Norwegians have disgracefully over-produced. I hope that, on receiving a sensible application from the salmon farmers, Her Majesty's Government will use that as a card in the negotiations and put up a substantial quota against the farmed fish which are coming in in such profusion, and at well below the cost of production, from Norway.

The hon. Gentleman also made a statement reinforcing the Committee's conclusion—the absolute necessity for Government intervention if there is to be control over the fishing industries of Europe. The hard truth is that the physical operation of fishing has become much too efficient. The march of science cannot be halted—fish-finding equipment, trawlers, machinery and all that goes with the technology of fishing are all more efficient than stocks will allow. I cannot see any voluntary arrangement ever being successful in constraining Europe's fishermen from overfishing their main resource.

I have never spoken in a fisheries debate before, and I shall be brief as the two or three fishermen in my constituency hardly constitute a major interest. We had to learn about the industry almost from scratch and the subject was of interest to us all. When we stand back from the subject in a way that no other hon. Member present in today's debate can do—with the possible exception of the Whip—we see a relatively small industry.

I was pleased to learn that the industry's gross output has risen to £315 million, which must be a much higher figure than in recent years. To put the industry in context, it is less than half the size of the canned pet food industry and quite a lot smaller than the coffee industry. It has representatives in the west country who are more vociferous and—dare I say it—sometimes less reasonable than their counterparts in Scotland.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): It is sinful to say that.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: I do not wish to enter into a debate about that, but the calmness and rationality of some of the Scottish fishing interests were impressive.

I also acknowledge that there are small villages, harbours and ports where the fishing industry is so important to the social fabric and structure of the district as to have a disproportionate effect on the local economy. It is perhaps for that reason that my hon. Friends from the west country are present today—we always stick together.

Mr. Harris: Not at the moment.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: I was making comparisons to encourage everyone to adopt a more rational approach. There has been a good deal of hot-headed talk in the debate, from which I can stand back, and I did not think it was unreasonable to make my earlier comment.

The Committee travelled all over the United Kingdom, and would have preferred to take longer doing so. We also visited fishing dependent areas in Norway, France and Spain. As we listened to fishermen and others, we felt considerable sympathy for all Governments in their attempts to establish a workable sea fisheries conservation policy.

The blame for the uncontestable fact that sea fish stocks are in a parlous state always lay with somebody else—the Eurocrats in Brussels, the Government in Whitehall, Spanish fishermen, French fishermen, Norwegian fishermen, other types of fishing vessels and methods, the chaps from the next-door harbour—certainly those from the next-door county. If we were in Cornwall, we were told that it was the fault of the Scots; if we were in Scotland, we were told that it was the fault of those in the west country. Such an approach did not allow anybody to produce a rational and sensible solution.

In private, not a single fisherman, whether Norwegian, Spanish, French or Scottish, denied that a problem existed. They all freely admitted that something had to be done and that there could be no future without a policy of some sort. But they could not suggest a firm arrangement that would not affect them, so any suggestions were unacceptable. I know that that seems harsh, but we must face reality.

The Committee felt that, in effect, the common fisheries policy had been developed from the agricultural sector of the Community. Although it appeared to be a good idea at the time, the failure to administer it in a universal and even-handed manner throughout the northern fishing countries has led to the mess in which we now find ourselves. The fact remains that, despite the figures given, our fishing stocks are still declining. Far from simply imposing the proposals, much more urgent and stricter measures will be needed if positive assistance is to be given to the re-establishment of certain stocks.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East referred to the history of the herring industry. The truth is that the herring fleet was happy to have a moratorium on herring fishing because there were no herring left. By not fishing for herring for 10 years, the stocks are now gradually being restored. The same principle should and must apply to many other species, but for the United Kingdom it is particularly important for cod and haddock.

I previously expressed sympathy for the Government, but I admit that the Committee had some rather harsh things to say about how the Government were proposing to achieve their capacity and effort-reduction targets under the Community's 1993 to 1996 multi-annual guidance programme. The three key elements of that policy are the decommissioning scheme, the cap on the number of days fishing vessels can spend at sea and the penalties on the aggregation or transfer of fishing licences.

We have heard a great deal about days at sea. Because of the court case, which has not been resolved but which has shot everybody's fox, there is to be a void next year. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Minister said that he has an open mind, but the fact remains that on 1 January everybody will fish like mad and, without constraint, will continue to do the damage that has been getting progressively worse over the years. I hope that my hon. Friend does not allow the political pressures on him to divert him from the essential need to reduce total fishing effort.

I am sure that hon. Members have read the Committee's report—certainly the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East has done so. Of course, I hope that he will not always find our reports so useful for quotations to back his case. Nevertheless, there is all-party accord on the issue and the Committee had no difficulty reaching agreement.

The Committee asked a number of questions and we feel that the Government's response has been a holding one. Because of events and because my hon. Friend the Minister has gone around the fishing industry—I know that that has been widely welcomed—he may now feel able to answer some of those questions. The Committee commented on the absolute need to base future policy on research and on the question of how technical conservation measures and gear selectivity can be carried out.

We want to know how that is progressing. Some £18 million of taxpayers' money is being spent on research annually. We visited two laboratories and found that the Scottish one was in much closer in touch with its fishermen. The west country fishermen made the genuine complaint that they did not feel that the scientists from Lowestoft understood their problems.

The accession of Spain and Portugal will cause my hon. Friend the Minister considerable difficulty as both have made it clear that they expect a sympathetic hearing. When we visited La Coruña we saw the vast fishing industry which operates on that part of the Spanish coast. It is on a scale that we do not see in the United Kingdom. The Spanish have more than 19,000 fishing vessels. On my last visit to Portugal, I looked out of my hotel window in the middle of the night and counted 43 fishing vessels. I concede that they were small and probably single-handed operations, but what I saw reflected the number of people in those two countries who were involved in the industry.

The question of taking the matter onshore and examining the social aspects has not yet been mentioned today.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. As the Front-Bench spokesmen have taken up more than half the debate, may I, through you, appeal for short speeches in order to allow Back Benchers the maximum participation? Many hon. Members wish to contribute to the debate, so brevity would assist everyone, especially the fishing industry.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): On this occasion, the Chair cannot dictate the length of speeches, but the point is well taken.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: I have never been accused of making long speeches, but my Committee spent nearly a year on the matter and produced a full and comprehensive report. I do not think that any Conservative members of the Committee will speak in the debate, so I hope that I will cover what I hope has been an important contribution to the general debate.

One of the functions of a Select Committee that is not always observed is its ability to collect the relevant evidence from the various interested organisations. I hope that hon. Members will have a good look at some of that evidence because much work was put into gathering it, not just by us but by the contributing organisations.

I asked my hon. Friend the Minister whether he would say a little about the Government's attitude to fishing dependent areas and what will happen to them as their industry declines, as it surely will, either because measures have to be taken or because the fish are simply no longer there. It is no good dodging the issue; one must face up to it.

Another question concerns the collection and presentation of economic data. We were surprised to find that, unlike in farming, where the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food can give the economic returns on various farms in various parts of the country, evidence from the economic returns on fishing is poor—the cost of vessels and all that goes into preparing a proper economic background.

Finally, I come to the Committee's recommendations with which the Government did not agree. The decommissioning issue has had a full airing to which I shall not add my comments, except to say that I understand that, according to a press release from the Ministry, 142 vessels are likely to be decommissioned in the first year, reducing the capacity by a mere 2·5 per cent. That surely is the root cause of the problem of decommissioning—at the end of the day, it is only the worst, the least efficient and the oldest vessels that are taken out of use. The French, in the port of Lorient, gave us similar figures showing that a large number of vessels have been taken out of commission with practically no effect on the total numbers or quantity of fish caught.

It gives me little pleasure to see disarray creep into the Government's policy on days at sea, even though my Committee came down strongly against it. We have been quoted several times. We believe that it would be an inherently unfair policy, more particularly when no other country in the EC was subjected to a similar regime. Unsurprisingly, the French told us that there was no question of their being able to make such a policy work, even if it were to be imposed centrally.

We shall fall short of our MAGP target. That will not be for the first time, but if we have the fishermen's interests at heart the Government must take some steps to reduce fishing effort. I am sorry that I cannot persuade anyone that ITQs are a solution. The fishermen's organisations were against them, but I am not sure that they truly understood the great benefits of quotas. Quotas for milk and sheep have been widely welcomed—perhaps one should suggest abolishing them to see what the reaction would be.

Mrs. Ewing: I am interested to hear what the hon. Gentleman has to say about ITQs because, obviously, he has not understood the significance of that aspect of policy for the fishermen whom my hon. Friends and I represent, many of whose boats are small family fishing businesses. ITQs would inevitably mean that those fishermen were bought out, thus destroying the fishing industry as we understand it and, as a result, destroying communities.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: The fact remains—the hon. Lady must grasp this point, as everyone in the fishing business must grasp it—that there must be a reduction in the number of vessels, or at least in the number of fish that are caught. If we decide in advance that there will be a fixed quantity of fish and give everyone an allocation, we shall, first, do a great deal to prevent waste and, secondly, and perhaps most important, give the fishermen an economic alternative to fishing. They will have the quota to sell. That is what happened in the milk industry. It is exactly what is happening in the sheep farming industry. It is a way of fixing production when otherwise there is absolutely no control.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister not to reject ITQs. With a little organisation and understanding, they may prove to be far and away the most simple way of handling this most obscure and difficult problem.

9.10 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Each time we debate fisheries, the uncertainty becomes greater. Each year, the complexities become even worse. This year, the matter has been further obscured by the court case. Although I do not have many serious complaints about the length of the Front-Bench speeches—the Minister and the Opposition spokesman took many interventions and fisheries are not an easy matter to deal with—those speeches took one hour and 31 minutes out of a debate lasting two hours and 41 minutes.

The Leader of the House is here and he should take note that it is not good enough to squeeze issues into half a day's debate. We cannot discuss them properly. We have a debate in shorthand. We have to take a view and stick by it instead of discussing the issues rationally. Only by rational discussion shall we get ourselves out of the mess that we are in. I was not being over generous to the Minister when I said that I understood his problems in being definitive between now and the time of the final decision on the days-at-sea regulations, yet now that he has been dragged kicking and screaming into accepting that decommissioning is important, he cannot abandon that policy.

All that the Minister has to say when he replies to the debate is, "Yes, in future, decommissioning will have a part to play in the policy." It cannot be otherwise. I accept what he says. Decommissioning alone will not solve the problem. Yet restrictions on fishing effort alone will not solve the problem either—unless he is fixed on a policy of driving down the size of the fleet through bankruptcy, and all the problems that that brings with it. Decommissioning and restrictions must go hand in hand. The Minister must make it clear that decommissioning will be an even more important part of the policy.

The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) mentioned the small proportion of fishing effort that has been taken out as a result of the 142 acceptances of decommissioning. That demonstrates the problem.

There were 433 applications. Even at the present rate of growth, the three years would be taken up by the applications before anything else happened. It is vital that we have an extended decommissioning scheme.

Of course, we must consider different fishing methods and how we should proceed. I accept that there is no possible way in which we can approach the problem by abandoning total allowable catches and quotas. That is a deficiency in the Scottish Fishermen's Federation document. We cannot go back to a world in which there are no controls, in which people simply go out and fish and conservation is done by voluntary effort.

A programme on television the other night showed what had happened to the Canadian fishing industry. The producers went around the fishing ports in Canada and the film showed the absolute devastation that had occurred. It is in order to avoid that devastation that we all want a rational policy. I hope that the Minister will make it clear at the end of the debate, so that there is no poison in the atmosphere, that a proper discussion is being had with the industry. I plead again for an increase in decommissioning.

I shall make only one more point because I am not like the after-dinner speaker who said that he had not known what was expected of him so he had prepared a long speech and a short speech and had decided to give both. I shall give only the short one. A useful proposal has been made on monitoring and inspection in other EC countries. Yet we have heard all this before. For goodness' sake, it must stick this time. There must be a proper inspection and control policy in other fishing nations. I know that other people do not always play by the book.

In terms of black landings or trying to pull a fast one, the fishermen of the north-east coast are no more saints than the fishermen in the south-west or anywhere else. However, our fishermen are still a damned sight better than those in most of the other countries. We demand parity, and I hope controlled parity, of inspection. That is one of the most important measures to take forward.

In a sense, the court case presents a window of opportunity that should be used to discuss and present rational policies. I hope that the Government will grasp that opportunity and will not ruin the relationships that have been built up. Under the ministry of the present Minister, there has been a change in attitude. Discussion has been much freer and there has been much more willingness to listen. My problem is that, although Ministers have listened a good deal, so far they have not given very much. In that respect, I hope that the future will be a bit better for fishermen.

9.15 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): It is a pleasure to know that you are chairing this debate, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I am aware of your constituency interest in fishing, especially that which is practised from the Barbican. I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin), who is the Chairman of the Select Committee on Agriculture, has left the Chamber because, although I welcomed the general thrust of his Committee's investigation and report, I wished to take him to task over some of his remarks.

In his reference to the importance of the industry, my hon. Friend may have given the wrong impression by stating just the bald output figure. Of course, the industry is of much greater significance than just the total value of its catch. The jobs of many people on shore depend on the catch, but it goes much wider than that because our lifeboats are manned by fishermen and the very fabric of many villages and fishing ports depends on fishing. If the industry were taken away, not only the ports but communities that have been there for generations would decline. Therefore, there is also an important social side to the industry.

I am afraid that I must also take my hon. Friend to task over his remarks about the quality of representation of the fishing industry in the west country. My hon. Friend may have been getting at me: I do not know. Some fine people lead the industry in the west country and in that context I took exception to some of my hon. Friend's remarks.

The Minister's announcement of the suspension of the days-at-sea restrictions has been greeted—certainly in the west country and, I suspect, all around our coasts—by relief rising to jubilation. I hope that the suspension of the scheme marks the end of the whole concept of the days-at-sea restrictions. My position and that of my hon. Friends the Members for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) and for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) is well known. We have been opposed to the days-at-sea scheme because we think that it is unfair and unworkable.

I have always told the industry that there is no point in just opposing the scheme but that it has to present viable alternative proposals. The National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations should be given full credit for doing just that in a comprehensive document that went far beyond what many of us expected from the industry. The industry did not present a soft option but a well-thought-out scheme that would cause pain to the industry. That is because one cannot tackle the problem of conservation without painful measures. There is no easy way if the policy is to work.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister for the way in which he has listened to the industry and tried to work with it. In the void created by his announcement today, I urge him to do as he has promised and hold serious talks with the industry both in England and Wales and in Scotland. I know that there is a divergence between the approaches to the problem in those two parts of the United Kingdom, but I believe that the way forward is contained in the NFFO document.

That document is not the complete answer, but it suggests, for example, the concept of closed areas, in which fishing would be restricted or even completely stopped, especially during the spawning season. That would be a courageous step and, although it would cause pain to fishermen, I believe that the Minister would be well advised to consider such proposals with great care. I am sure that they represent a better way forward than the days-at-sea restrictions, if only because if the Minister moves in that general direction he will have the general backing of the industry, whereas if by any chance he reverts to restrictions on days at sea, he will be on a confrontation course.

The NFFO is to be congratulated on its courage in taking the Government to court, at considerable financial risk to itself. I have always maintained that it was right to pursue its opposition in every constitutional way that it thought fit. I have always made it clear that I utterly opposed the actions of some fishermen who blockaded ports and invaded and occupied Ministry offices; indeed, I believe that those actions were illegal. However, although I deplore such direct action, which caused many other

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people inconvenience, to say the least, I heartily applaud the way in which the NFFO took the matter to the courts and I am pleased with the outcome.

I shall now switch—quickly, because many hon. Members want to speak in the debate—to discussing the two issues before Ministers at the Fisheries Council, which have already been well rehearsed tonight. The first of those issues, which concerns the total allowable catch and the quotas, has special significance for the south-west, where it is causing alarm. I shall not go into all the details, because my colleagues and I have already met the Minister to press the case being made, especially by the Cornwall fish producers organisations, for changes in the proposals before Ministers.

Three major species would be affected if the proposals took effect. First, the Commission proposes a cut of up to 50 per cent. in the hake quota. Some countries, such as Ireland, benefit from the hake preference, whereas the south-west does not, and they will have their position safeguarded at the expense of my fishermen. The other species are monkfish and megrim. Channel cod and sole would also be affected to some extent. I do not have time to go into the details, but I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is well seized of the point.

The other danger, for which we in the south-west are in the front line, is Spanish, and to some extent Portuguese, accession, with those countries' consequential claim for greater penetration of the waters of the south-west, especially in the Irish box—the waters between the south-west and Ireland. That is extremely worrying for our fishermen, especially as it comes on top of the history of flag-of-convenience boats.

We have lived with the Spanish presence in our waters and we know what it means. As other hon. Members have said, the Spaniards completely disregard the rules on conservation. We have seen many examples of the tricks that they get up to, such as false holds, and catching undersized fish. This week I was delighted to hear that, in your own city, Madam Deputy Speaker, the court imposed a large fine on a Spanish boat that had been caught and, perhaps more significantly, suspended for two years its licence to fish in our waters. We want more of that when dealing with the Spaniards.

I would not be so crude as to use the phrase "double whammy", but our fishermen face a serious double threat of a possible reduction in the quotas of important species in the south-west and possible increased fishing by the Spaniards in the waters around our coasts. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will do everything possible to remove those threats, although the House understands that he may be outvoted.

There is no real danger of the Spaniards gaining access to the North sea, partly because the alliance of member states is determined to keep them out, because they have never had access to those waters. The Irish box waters are a different matter and that is why the fishermen of the south-west feel so vulnerable. That is why I look to the Minister to defend their interests.

9.25 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): It always seems to fall to me to follow the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris). I agreed with much that he said. He was right to point out that the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin), in his capacity of Chairman of the Select Committee on Agriculture, missed the point: that, although the catching side of the industry is important to many communities, the onshore jobs that that sector creates are just as important.

Those who are worried about any move towards individual transferable quotas, ITQs, are concerned that those quotas would be concentrated on a relatively small number of communities. That would not only lead to the loss of catching capacity in other communities, but the loss of onshore jobs. The whole fabric of many remote communities, where alternative employment is not readily found, would be damaged.

I do not intend to criticise the Minister for the time he took. He got his defence in early when he said that he would take interventions, but he would not take criticism. I accept that.

The time taken up by the contributions from the Front-Bench spokesmen and other hon. Members demonstrates that three hours is inadequate for a debate on fishing. In fact, tonight we are holding two debates, possibly even three. The first debate is the normal one held in advance of the December meeting of the Fisheries Council. We are also debating the contents of the Select Committee report. It would have been far better to separate those debates, although no doubt hon. Members will have an opportunity to repeat some of the points raised tonight in tomorrow's sitting of European Standing Committee A.

The 1994 TACs will be negotiated at the weekend. They are still clouded in mystery because the negotiations with Norway are not yet complete, unless something has happened within the past 12 hours. I understand that the Norwegians have made substantial demands with regard to some of the pelagic species. I hope that our Ministers and officials will be firm in their negotiations with them and the House will, I am sure, do anything that it can tonight to strengthen the hand of the Minister.

An important factor with regard to the pelagic fishery is the continuation of the flexibility across the 4 deg. line. In recent years that has had an important part to play in that fishery and I hope that it is kept in place. I have made representations to the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland that there is nothing special about the cut-off date of 31 December. Last year, after that date had passed, we suffered exceptionally bad weather, as I am sure hon. Members will remember. Fishermen were forced to make hazardous journeys to ports on the west coast of Scotland because they were not allowed to land their catches for trans-shipment at ports such as Lerwick because the flexibility had ended on 31 December. I know that the Under-Secretary was sympathetic to my representations when he responded earlier this year and, as a result of negotiations, I hope that he manages to obtain even more flexibility than we have had to date.

Every year, the same cry goes up, that there appears to be inconsistency and mystery about the basis on which the white fish TACs are recommended by the scientific community. This year it has been suggested that the haddock quota will go up while the cod and whiting quotas will be reduced. According to some of the scientific state of the art information, although it is accepted that cod and haddock stocks are under potential threat, the same cannot be said of whiting stocks. Why then is it proposed to increase the haddock TAC and reduce the whiting one?

There has to be some rationale introduction into that. We should recognise, too, that if there is a reduced cod quota and an increased haddock quota, when the two can be caught together, one is inviting illegal cod to be landed. I am sure that Members on both sides of the House, and the responsible parts of the industry, would strongly condemn that. Likewise, the experience of the fishermen is that saithe is in relative abundance and that perhaps the United Kingdom quota has been understated in past years. That is a continuing source of some concern, which I hope will be addressed this weekend.

The hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) referred also to the savage reduction in the TAC for hake. The reduction is of concern to fishermen not only in the south-west but in Scotland, as it is a very large cut for those communities which are dependent on fishing to take in one go. The important point is that it appears—certainly to the fishermen—that much of the reason for the reduction in the availability of hake is not due to anything that they have done; it is due to the intense pressure by Spanish and French fishing vessels. The proposals of the NFFO is that the TAC should be broken down into tighter management areas, or subdivision of existing areas. In that way, there may be an opportunity for our fishermen, particularly in the south-west, to be able to continue to prosecute the fishery —they have done that responsibly—and not have to suffer additionally for what effectively has been the over-fishing by others.

The question of hake take us on to the important issue of the Spanish and Portuguese Acts of Accession. We have seen the depletion of stocks of western hake following on from a moratorium on southern hake because of the gross over-fishing by the fishing vessels of those countries off the Spanish and Portuguese coasts and the south bay of Biscay.

I would challenge just how wide it is legally responsible for the European Union to go in amending the Act of Accession. It has been suggested that it may relate only to the basic list of vessels and to a consideration of the Irish box and that it would not be legally competent to extend the Act to the North sea, where there are also other factors —the Spanish have no track record in the North sea. If, as has been suggested, they are to have open access, but we are still going to maintain relative stability, it is not worth their while to come into the North sea, because they have no quota to fish. That suggests why the issue should not even be opened up. The concern must be that, if they have any access, it will be difficult to police, despite all the fine words and safeguards that have been mentioned.

The issue of fishing in the Irish box must concern my hon. Friend the Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler). We are in a very different situation now from when the Acts of Accession were originally agreed. We have far fewer fish. We are in an era of conservation. It seems difficult to justify greater access for Spanish vessels to the Irish box at a time when we are having to reduce substantially the quota for one of the main species to be fished in that box.

I hope that the Minister will introduce his own proposals and win friends to support them. He was honest in saying that the industry has to know that he cannot necessarily deliver on this, but it appeared to me that he was making his alibi before he had even lost. I hope that he will not lose and that he will not be outvoted by 11 to one. I hope that he will try to win friends and get a solution that will satisfy the industry.

I shall now refer to the issue that has dominated much of the debate—days at sea—and the announcement that we had earlier from the Minister. I shall not repeat all the reasons why the days at sea restrictions have been strongly opposed, not only by the industry but by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House, and by my party quite consistently. If the Minister had looked up only a few copies of *Hansard* he would have found out where we stood on the issue.

The hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) suggested that the decision of the High Court was neutral. In a very technical and legal sense, it was. But if we examine what it said, it criticised the says at sea legislation on a number of grounds, queried whether it would do anything for conservation, and said that the legislation would severely prejudice the value of fishing vessels. It was not neutral in some of those comments. The Select Committee report uses strong words about the days at sea proposals and those words are repeated in the Labour party's amendment.

Where is the Government's policy on conservation after today's announcement? We have a suspended days at sea policy, a yellow card has been shown to the decommissioning scheme and the Minister lightly dismissed some of the technical measures. Basically, there is an effort to expedite the proceedings in the European Court of Justice and a chat with the European Commissioner.

We need a commitment to the continuation of the decommissioning scheme. It is not sufficient for the Minister to say that we have to reduce capacity, but to imply that the decommissioning scheme may not continue. He said that decommissioning is all very well, but that we need something to back it up so that the good of decommissioning is not undone, and we accept that. However, in the arguments before the High Court, reference was made to a report by the Sea Fish Industry Authority, which showed that even the much-criticised decommissioning scheme in the 1980s reduced the overall fishing effort. It did not lead to an increase in fishing effort and was relatively successful. Therefore, decommissioning is one way to tackle the problem. It reduces capacity.

If the Minister wants to know how much we would spend on such a scheme, I answered that question at a press conference, given during the last general election campaign in a hotel in Aberdeen. I leave it to his researchers to find it out, because it was well publicised. *[Laughter.]* It was sufficiently well publicised in Scotland that we won far more seats in fishing areas than did the Conservative party.

The Minister should not dismisss some of the technical measures suggested by the NFFO and the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, and many other bodies representing fishermen. He took only one specific from the NFFO's submission, but it suggested a whole range of other measures. I am sure that he has that submission in front of him. Other proposals include closure areas, the licensing of the industry and a minimum landing size.

He has a large agenda on which he can have discussions with the industry. If he does that in a constructive spirit, it can come up with proposals which will mean that days-at-sea restrictions will not be necessary. It is important to recognise that these are alternative proposals and that they should not be latched on to days-at-sea restrictions. If the Minister abandons days-at-sea and says that decommissioning is here to stay, he will achieve the

[Mr. James Wallace]

necessary good will and constructive approach to enable the industry to go forward, co-operating with the Government and getting in place some effective conservation measures.

9.37 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): I thank the Minister for visiting the north of Ireland and the fishing ports of my constituency, where he took part in a robust exchange of views, which was of benefit to both sides. It is an indictment of the management of the fishing industry to do what I have done—stand on the beach and watch the burning of viable ships. The last time that happened in Ireland was when the Vikings drew their longships up to the Strang fjord and set them alight. Such actions are an appalling sign of the state of the fishing fleets of the north of Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

Like other fishing communities, those in the north of Ireland are opposed to the days-at-sea concept set out in the Sea Fish Conservation Act 1992. They see it not as a conservation measure but as a fleet limitation or fleet reduction programme based on the multi-annual guidance programme.

One aspect of the decommissioning scheme that has not been mentioned today—I do not want to repeat what has been said about conservation—is that we need to have efficient, economic fishing units. We know that there is a limited catch, so fewer units of catch or production should pursue it. That is an additional reason why decommissioning should be a continuing part of the Government's policy. For those who continue in the industry, there should be a smaller number of vessels so that the economics of fishing are more sustainable than they can be when the catch is spread among a greater number of vessels. I endorse what other hon. Members have said. I hope that the decommissioning scheme will not only continue for the second and third years but be substantially enhanced.

The fishermen of Northern Ireland are diametrically opposed to the so-called conservation measure of tied-up boats. They see it as an uneven and unjust system. It is galling for the fishermen of Kilkeel and Ardglas to look out two or three miles across Carlingford lough and see Republic of Ireland fishermen fishing to their hearts' content without restriction. That is a mockery of the European concept of fish conservation.

Northern Ireland fishermen want equality of treatment. The Chairman of the Select Committee on Agriculture mentioned his visits to Portugal and Spain, where he saw the enormous Spanish fishing fleet. It is interesting that for that enormous Spanish fleet there are only 17 fishing inspectors, all of whom are based in the land-locked city of Madrid. We have 285 fish inspectors. It is a charade to say that there is any degree of enforcement against the Spanish and the Portuguese.

As other hon. Members have said, those fishing fleets strongly impinge in the Irish box and the Irish sea fishing areas. Between them, France, Spain and Portugal take 88 per cent. of the catch in those areas, leaving only 12 per cent. for the indigenous fishing industry.

Local fishermen do not feel that they are being listened to. They do not feel that their experience at sea and their knowledge of fish shoaling is sufficiently taken on board. They are convinced that, in many instances, the scientific evidence is flawed, yet it appears to be the rock base on which all decisions are made. Will the Minister take the local fishermen's practical experience and knowledge on board, as well as the scientific evidence, when he comes to agree and fix quotas?

As to TACs, year after year the quota of the Republic of Ireland is not used, particularly of whiting. It is ludicrous—our boats are tied up and unable to fish because they have caught their quota, while our neighbours 10 miles down the coast do not achieve their permissible quota. Will the Minister use his position to contact his opposite number in the Republic of Ireland and ask him to transfer to the Northern Ireland fishermen the quota of the Republic's catch that it does not anticipate making this year? Such transfers have happened in the past. He should also make that a more permanent feature, rather than a gratuitous year-by-year endeavour; he might well find a willing ear.

The reductions that have been made will strike yet another devastating blow at the Irish fishing industry. I cannot go into all the details. Let me confine my remarks to the subject of herring, which has merely been touched on. The industry has been diminished almost to extinction and fishermen on the east coast of Ireland feel that the closure of the Douglas bank area from 21 September does not represent proper management. They strongly believe that, because the herring season has come later in the year than it used to, the Douglas bank closure should also take place later. The stocks are substantial, and I know that a review is in progress. It may be finished by June next year. I hope, however, that the results of the reconsideration will be implemented before September 1994.

I wish to draw attention to the plight of the fishing industry and the social consequences mentioned by the Chairman of the Agriculture Committee. A report prepared by the United Kingdom Sea Fish Industry Authority, entitled "Regional, Socio-Economic Study by the Fisheries Sector", states:

> "Here"—

in Northern Ireland—

> "there are currently very few alternative employment opportunities. Perhaps this is one area where the maintenance of fish and related industry employment should be a priority".

I hope that the Minister will take note of that.

I welcomed the Minister's announcement that the implementation of the days at sea provision would be abandoned for the duration of the court hearing at The Hague, but I support the contention of other hon. Members that that constitutes—de facto, if not de jure—the abandonment of an ill-conceived scheme that did not fulfil the purpose for which it was intended. I hope that the Minister will reconsider the matter in general, abandon the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1992 and give us a new set of proposals based on many of the fine ideas presented to him by the various fishing organisations, and by others, with their co-operation.

Ultimately, our fishermen know very well that it is in their interests for fishing to continue into the next century. They are more concerned about conservation than any of us. Given the chance, they will produce the real measures that will sustain both the industry and fish quantities. We need a partnership between the Government and the industry that will continue into the 21st century.

Mr. Salmond: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friends and I represent more than half the Scottish fishing industry, which in turn represents rather more than half the United Kingdom industry. Is it not rather absurd that the procedures of the House do not even allow us to contribute properly to the annual fishing debate?

Madam Speaker: I have considerable sympathy with the hon. Gentleman and with other hon. Members representing fishing industries who have not been called tonight. I have looked at the list, and I appreciate that—although there were many interventions on the opening speeches—the two Front-Bench speakers took up an hour and 24 minutes. That is a considerable time, given the shortness of the debate.

9.49 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Following on from that point of order, with which I have some sympathy, I should like to put on record my anger at the fact that the debate covers three separate issues. Ministers should have responded to the court case in a proper statement to the House. The matter should not have been dealt with by a written answer just before this important debate. There should have been adequate time for a considered response to the Select Committee report, which contains a great deal of work and many important suggestions and recommendations that ought to have been considered more carefully and in more time than we have had.

The real reason why we do not have time to discuss issues is the Government's contempt for procedures and for proper democratic scrutiny. It is not as if we are short of time in the parliamentary Session. The Government would rather run on auto-pilot than have Members of Parliament scrutinising legislation and discussing matters in a sensible way. Given that contempt, is it any surprise that relations have broken down between the usual channels? If that attitude continues, normal relations will not be restored for some time.

Mrs. Ewing: I speak as an hon. Member for whom the usual channels have no implications. Does not the hon. Gentleman recognise that the usual attitude of both Front Benches allows a debate on such a vital industry to be compressed every year into a short period shortly in advance of the Fisheries Council, where fundamental decisions are taken that affect our communities? Surely there must be a better way forward. Although Standing Committee A will help, there should be a full debate in the House at least twice a year on the fishing industry.

Mr. Morley: The problem is more to do with the procedures than with the Front-Bench speakers. In all fairness to the Minister, he allowed a great many interventions in his speech and made it clear that he was doing so.

The main points that I should like to address, which we have not had time properly to debate or scrutinise are the allocation of total allowable catches and the quota that the United Kingdom fishing industry will get at the outcome of the Fisheries Council. I hope that the Minister will seriously consider those issues when he replies.

Under the draft proposals for the North sea, the haddock allocation is to be reduced by 28 per cent., there is to be a marginal increase in the cod allocation, the whiting allocation is to be decreased by 25 per cent. and the plaice allocation is to be decreased by 16 per cent. There is a potential problem with mixed fisheries of that kind. There is also a certain inconsistency to the scientific advice about the allocations. I remember a few years ago when the Minister said that scientists were recommending that whiting catches should be increased on the ground that whiting was a predator of cod stocks. Now it seems that whiting catches must be decreased. Such inconsistency makes one wary of that sort of scientific advice.

If there are to be mixed fisheries in the North sea and the haddock allocation is to be increased by 28 per cent., there will be problems in terms of discards of cod and whiting. I hope that the Minister will bear that in mind at the Council of Ministers and try to equalise the figures so that the industry can operate on a more managed basis. Given the reduction in the plaice allocation in area 7 and given that plaice is traditionally used as a swap in negotiations with the Fisheries Council, a reduction in the allocation by 16 per cent. would inevitably restrict what the Minister can do.

The main problem for the south-west area is the dramatic proposed cut in the hake quota, to which several hon. Members referred. We all know that one reason for the proposed cuts has been the pressure on the hake stocks exerted by the Spanish vessels and the illegal catching of undersized hake.

I add my congratulations to those which have been expressed at the fact that at least one vessel has been adequately dealt with by a two-year suspension of its licence. I welcome that firm action on a vessel that was breaking every rule in the book and was caught red handed. We know that the Spanish presence is one reason why there is a suggestion that there should be a reduction in the monkfish allocation. I understand that we fish up to our full allocation of monkfish, but other member states do not. That is due to the attention of many Spanish vessels.

On the west coast there is a problem with the suggestion of a major reduction—about 66 per cent.—in the cod quota. I listened carefully to the Minister's comments about the pressure on west coast stocks and I acknowledge that point. Nevertheless, he will be aware that, if we have a quota reduction on that scale, there is a danger of the hake preference being implemented. That would mean that United Kingdom fishermen would lose out to the Republic of Ireland. That would affect the Northern Ireland fishery. That is a serious problem. If that preference were implemented, our total share of the cod catch in the west coast area would decline from 42·7 to 28·3 per cent. I hope that the Minister will do everything he can to ensure that the hake preference is not implemented in the west coast area and that our fishing industry in that area is protected.

The treaty of accession for Spain and Portugal has been mentioned. The point has been well made. I endorse and support the concerns that have been expressed by hon. Members about the implications of having Spanish and Portuguese vessels operating in what was the former Irish box area.

In the limited time left to me, I should like to deal with the High Court case. That is crucial in terms of planning future fisheries policy and meeting multi-annual guidance programmes. The National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations did the industry a favour by taking the case to the High Court and being successful. I remind the Minister that it was supported by Northern Ireland fishing organisations and, although the Scottish fishermen did not

[Mr. Morley]

contribute financially, I know from talks with many in the Scottish industry, that they are pleased with the outcome and the reference to the European Court.

However, that court case should not have happened. We should not have been in a position in which the Government were taken to court by fishermen's organisations because a policy was unpopular and despised and was considered unworkable. We warned the Government that the days-at-sea measures were unpopular, unworkable and of debatable value. We argued that the Government should be seeking co-operation with the industry for a package of measures with an effective decommissioning scheme at its heart. As my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) said, we recognise that when dealing with effort limitation and conservation we must have a package of measures. Whatever we have, an effective decommissioning scheme must be a central part of it.

We also want to see measures such as the technical measures that the industry has been challenged to come up with—it has responded favourably to that challenge. We want to look at closed areas, particularly spawning areas, and we want to see effective management agreements and enforcement. Over the years, our position has been backed by a House of Lords Select Committee report, every industry producer organisation, every industry fishing association, the processors and hon. Members on both sides of the House who represent fishing communities.

Mr. Sebastian Coe (Falmouth and Camborne): I do not wish to intrude on private grief, but the hon. Gentleman is suggesting a slight change in the history of those debates. The discussion tonight on days-at sea would have been irrelevant had it not been for the ill-discipline of Opposition Members on the night the orders were before the House, when 20 or so Opposition Members could not stay behind for a three-line Whip to get rid of the proposals.

Mr. Morley: That is nonsense. If a few more hon. Members from fishing constituencies had joined us in the Lobby, the measures might have been defeated. Those measures should never have been rammed through the House without the Government having listened to the reasonable arguments expressed on both sides of the House. It is yet another example of the Government's not giving proper consideration to other people's views or allowing proper scrutiny of Bills, with the result that they face a humiliating U-turn in the courts.

The Government should deal with the matter more effectively. When the Minister heard the court result, he initially shrugged it off by saying that the fish had lost the case. I am only glad that he did not blame single parent fish, as single parents seem to be blamed for all the Government's problems. The Minister now says that he is regrouping after the court loss. It is not regrouping but retreating. His measures were shot down in flames as they did not stand up to critical examination.

I remind the Minister of the evidence that was put before the High Court and influenced its decision to refer the matter to the European Court of Justice. The court accepted evidence that the days-at-sea measures were unfair and were in the interests of neither the market nor conservation. The court went on to consider the fact that the Government had chosen to rely on using market forces rather than on decommissioning. Market forces operated by expanding rather than reducing the United Kingdom fleet. The use of market forces and blind dogmatism, rather than sensible regulation and co-operation with various sectors of industry, are not unique to the fishing industry. The Government have used market forces in other legislation, with the same disastrous results.

It is not too late for the Government to think again about the whole matter. It is not good enough for the Minister to talk about the failure of the original decommissioning scheme, which was designed for different kinds of ships and was poorly implemented and supervised. The right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) was the Minister responsible for that scheme at the time. It is therefore unreasonable to suggest that this decommissioning scheme should be tarred with the same brush.

If we are to manage the conservation of our fisheries effectively, it must be done with the industry's co-operation. It must have the support of those who will carry out the measures, and the measures must be effective, fair and justified. The Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1992 never fulfilled those criteria.

I hope that when the Minister negotiates a workable conservation scheme with his European colleagues, he will recognise that the industry has responded to his request for suggestions and has made detailed proposals. As he knows, it has trialled many of the experiments with technical conservation gear, with encouraging results, and I believe that they can be built on further.

I hope that the Minister will recognise that he has lost the heart of the Bill and needs to think again about those measures. Rather than being dominated by blind dogmatism and an arrogant disregard for the democratic procedures of the House, he should sit down with the industry to discuss its suggestions seriously and bring forward proposals that will command respect, benefit our fishing industry and properly conserve our fish stocks.

10.3 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): This has been a valuable debate and many constructive points have come out of it. However, it is fair to say that the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) was extremely important. It highlighted, from a top-of-the-mountain view, the fact that conservation is desperately important and that no one had come forward in the debate with constructive ideas on how to meet the same effort control that may have been taken out by the loss of the days-at-sea restriction.

This is a most important subject, especially for the highlands and islands of Scotland, where there is little alternative employment. That is why the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) was right to say that we must consider the interests of onshore and offshore concerns alike—including the processors and, ultimately, the housewife, who is the important customer of the fishing industry.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): Will the Minister find time to respond to what the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) described as the crisis in the Scottish salmon industry? I know that the Minister has many topics to cover, but he must know that that crisis is profound. Will he at least tell the industry that the

Government regard the status quo as unacceptable and that they will return to the European Community to try to obtain stronger safeguards?

Sir Hector Monro: Certainly the salmon industry is very important to Scotland, particularly to the area that the hon. Gentleman represents. We have a minimum import price which is lower than I would like, and a reference price, which will come in on 1 January and which I hope will be much higher. I appreciate the fact that 6,000 jobs are at risk in Scotland if the salmon industry does not flourish. That is why it is important to make every effort inthe Commission and the Community to find the right solution.

Norway is producing 180,000 tonnes, while Scotland produces 45,000, and we have been swamped this autumn by sales from Norway to the continent. That has had a serious impact on the price. We are holding regular talks with the Commissioner; the Minister is in touch with Commissioner Paleokrassas, and I hope that there will be a chance to raise the matter next week at the Council in Brussels.

Fish are an important natural resource and most of our stocks are under great pressure. We have to reduce the amount of fish being landed—a fact that was not disputed when the court referred the matter to the European Court of Justice. We know that there are no easy or painless solutions and that we cannot rely solely on technical measures or on gear selectivity.

In the coming weeks and months, we must review in detail the many constructive ideas suggested by the Scottish and English industries and by the independent bodies that responded to the consultative document, in an attempt to find the right solution, both to restrict fishing and to make certain that our fishermen operate a profitable industry.

Mr. Salmond: Will the Minister give way?

Sir Hector Monro: I will not. I have only a few minutes left, and members of the hon. Gentleman's party have intervened umpteen times in this debate.

The industry is beginning to realise that effective measures to control effort are essential, and we must work together to put something in place as soon as possible. Everyone accepts that days at sea are out for the count, at least for the coming year, so, like last January, the industry will be starting with a clean sheet.

What steps can the industry take? I should like to comment on the black fish landings that are prevalent in Scotland and are the cause of major worry to leaders in the industry. Sophisticated organisations are handling black fish and transporting them south to the processors. That must stop; it is getting us a bad reputation in the European Community. We give credit to the officials in the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency who have helped to run the industry, as have others. They have made progress in enforcing the provisions. This year, there have been 94 successful prosecutions over a nine-month period, compared with 78 last year over a 12-month period. The black fish issue is a sad development that undermines the future of our industry.

Mrs. Ewing: Will the Minister give way?

Sir Hector Monro: No, the hon. Lady has intervened several times.

The recent court decision to refer the days at sea restrictions to the European Court was not a victory for fishermen and was a major setback for conservation. We must find something to put in place, and it will take quite a long time to achieve that. We shall examine urgently what measures—technical and effort control—are available and have discussions with the industry. My hon. Friend the Minister of State has frequent meetings with representatives of the industry in England, as I do in Scotland—and will be doing so again this week. It is extremely important to establish a policy which is acceptable to the industry and the Commission and which, most importantly, will have an impact on conservation.

Important issues concerning Spain and Portugal have been raised in the debate. The efforts of my hon. Friend the Minister are beyond criticism. He raised the issue in the October meeting of the Council and put a stop to the efforts of other countries to force the issue through. The discussions continued through the November Council, and we shall return to the subject next week when he and I shall be in Brussels representing the Government.

Mrs. Ewing *rose*——

Sir Hector Monro: I shall not give way.

As my hon. Friend the Minister of State said, there is no doubt that we shall do everything possible to ensure that the view of the United Kingdom Government prevails. We have made it absolutely clear that we shall not accept a blank cheque. We do not wish to see additional fishing in the North sea and we want relative stability to be retained. We want to ensure that the review that has to take place now only comes into force in 1996, with amendments to the policy that are acceptable to us—including a decision to consider the Irish box, which expires on 1 December 1995. The Belgian presidency is working on an alternative and I hope that we can consider that issue in a constructive light next week.

I emphasise that the United Kingdom view is firm and that we shall be fighting as hard as possible for our fishermen.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to the Under-Secretary of State for showing his characteristic courtesy in giving way. Earlier, I asked the Minister of State about the need to supervise other maritime industries to ensure that they did not impinge badly on the fishing industry. Will the hon. Gentleman ensure that the installation of the gas pipeline between the south of Scotland and Northern Ireland does not damage the interests of our fishermen who fish those waters?

Sir Hector Monro: I heard the hon. Gentleman's question when he originally asked it. I have been unable in the intervening time to establish exactly what contact the fishing industry has had with the gas and oil industry. Normally, the relationship is good, and we shall follow up the issue and ensure that no unnecessary hiccups occur in the pipeline between Northern Ireland and Scotland.

I emphasise the importance of next week's negotiations in relation to Spain and Portugal, and the issue of catches and quotas. There is immense pressure on the west coast —the haddock stock will certainly go down in the Irish sea and the western approaches, whereas it will go up in the North sea. I agree with the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland that discards are worrying—it is unattractive to

[Sir Hector Monro]

see good fish wasted. The problem is how to enforce quotas if we do not have strict regulations covering the catches that are taken ashore.

There has been much discussion about decommissioning. It is fair to say that the current scheme has been successful. It involved 140 boats, or 5,400 tonnes, of which 46 boats, or 1,400 tonnes, came from Scotland. I cannot understand why Labour Members are so suspicious when we discuss decommissioning. If we are considering overall fishing policy, we should consider decommissioning as well.

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Sir Hector Monro: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Salmond: Why not?

Sir Hector Monro: Because the hon. Gentleman asks so many damned silly questions.

At a time when we are bringing forward new policies —we hope in conjunction with the English and Scottish fisheries organisations—we must consider all the issues. As the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) said, we cannot consider decommissioning alone; it must be done in conjunction with other efforts.

I thought it important that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) put on record the fact that the Labour party is giving a firm pledge to commit £75 million to decommissioning and that it expects that further effort restrictions will be required. I was glad that he also linked decommissioning to effort restrictions. It is important that they are acknowledged as complementary.

I am also glad that the hon. Gentleman and I are as one on the matter of ITQs. The industry is not keen on them. The hon. Gentleman made the point that relatively wealthy areas would buy up the quota, taking it away from the less-well-off areas, especially those in the highlands and islands. Inevitably, that would have a bad effect on fishing in those areas. Hon. Members rightly mentioned dependent areas, which are important in the north. I am glad that objectives 1, 2 and 5(b) are likely to apply. It is important that the highlands and islands now have objective 1 status, plus help from the enterprise companies.

My hon. Friends the Members for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) and for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) gave, as I expected, a warm welcome to our decision on days at sea. We will bear in mind what was said about fishing in the western approaches.

The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) referred to inspectors from Spain. His facts were not quite right. Spain is recruiting 25 more fisheries officers, with another 25 next year. We are looking carefully at the Douglas bank herring box under the Advisory Committee on Fisheries Management review next year.

The house agrees that the fishing industry is vital to many of our coastal communities. It has always played a distinctive part in the economy of these islands. We must take the necessary steps to ensure the long-term future of the industry. The policies promoted by the Government are designed to achieve that objective and I commend the motion to the House.

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM SPEAKER *proceeded to put forthwith the Question necessary to dispose of them, pursuant to Standing Order No. 81.*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 273, Noes 312.

Division No. 32] **[10.18 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*

Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, David
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*

Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Dennis Turner and
Mr. John Spellar.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James

Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*

Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Bradley, Keith
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman

Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter

Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 309, Noes 272.

Division No. 33] **[10.34 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*

Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry

McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9662/93, relating to guide prices for fishery products 1994, the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 9th December 1993 relating to total allowable catches and quotas for 1994, the Sixth Report from the Agriculture Committee of Session 1992-93 on the effects of conservation measures on the United Kingdom sea fishing industry (House of Commons Paper No. 620) and the Government's Response thereto contained in the Fifth Special Report from the Agriculture Committee of Session 1992-93 (House of Commons Paper No. 927); and supports the Government's intention to negotiate the best possible fishing opportunities for the United Kingdom fishing industry for 1994 consistent with the requirements of conservation of fish stocks.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

COURT OF SESSION

That the draft Maximum Number of Judges (Scotland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 28th October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

The House divided: Ayes 309, Noes 4.

Division No. 34] **[10.47 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary

Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Cryer, Bob
Loyden, Eddie
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Water and Sewerage (Northern Ireland)

That the draft Water and Sewerage Services (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 2nd November, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

The House divided: Ayes 292, Noes 129.

Division No. 35] **[10.59 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, [illegible] Liz
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John

Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Arbuthnot and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Burden, Richard
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Sedgemore, Brian
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn.

Question accordingly agreed to.

11.10 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before you put the Questions on the next two motions I thought that it might be prudent to check what happened in the Committees that considered the motions. I went to the Vote Office and was told that the reports on the Committees in which the orders were considered are not yet available and cannot be made available to hon. Members. Therefore, I believe that it would be wrong to put the Questions when the House cannot know anything other than that the Committee considered the instruments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): The right hon. Gentleman knows full well that it is in order for the motions to be moved. The matter he raised is a matter for the Government.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

INSURANCE COMPANIES ACCOUNTS

That the draft Companies Act 1985 (Insurance Companies Accounts) Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 23 November, be approved.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

The House divided: Ayes 277, Noes 127.

Division No. 36] **[11.11 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den

Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan

Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*

Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael

Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew MacKay and
Mr. Derek Conway.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Burden, Richard
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Flynn, Paul
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Gunnell, John

Hanson, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Morley, Elliot
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*

Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Sedgemore, Brian
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eddie Loyden and
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Beith: Further to my previous point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In similar circumstances, the occupant of the Chair has given the Government the opportunity not to move an order when the necessary papers are not available. The House is not in possession of the Committee report relating to the next motion on the Order Paper, which is the only way in which right hon. and hon. Members can know whether a vote took place or whether substantial objections to the order were raised in Committee.

Madam Speaker is responsible for the printing and accuracy of the reports of proceedings of the House. Therefore, it also falls upon the Chair to be concerned if those proceedings are not available to the House when they are required. It seems to me, and should appear to Ministers who are present, that it is an abuse of the procedures of the House to attempt to make the House vote on a motion for which the necessary papers are not available. I believe that that view is shared by some Conservative Members.

Sir Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Would not it be better to adopt the practice of voting in our seats as all the votes are spurious?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Standing Orders are clear on standing and sitting, and the present circumstances are not appropriate. It is for the Government to decide whether they wish to move a motion. The Chair's responsibility is to call the motion.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

INSURANCE ACCOUNTS DIRECTIVE

That the draft Insurance Accounts Directive (Miscellaneous Insurance Undertakings) Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 23rd November, be approved.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

The House divided: Ayes 270, Noes 119.

Division No. 37] **[11.25 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartliss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard

Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan

Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'Fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew Mitchell and
Mr. Derek Conway.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Burden, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth

Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Flynn, Paul
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Gunnell, John
Hanson, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Llwyd, Elfyn

Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Morley, Elliot
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.

Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Sedgemore, Brian
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Mr. Bob Cryer.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND)

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 6th December, be approved.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

The House divided: Ayes 261, Noes 109.

Division No. 38] **[11.36 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon

Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter

Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Burden, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Galloway, George
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Gunnell, John
Hanson, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Morley, Elliot
Mudie, George
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
Olner, William
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Sedgemore, Brian
Short, Clare
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Mr. Bob Cryer.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Amendment) Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 25th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

The House divided: Ayes 260, Noes 108.

Division No. 39] **[11.47 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. Michael Brown.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Burden, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry

Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Galloway, George
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Gunnell, John
Hanson, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew

McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Morley, Elliot
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Sedgemore, Brian
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. George Mudie and
Mr. Kevin Hughes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Orders of the Day

Consolidated Fund Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills):*

The House divided: Ayes 265, Noes 91.

Division No. 40] **[11.58 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den

Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*

Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Derek Conway.

NOES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Caborn, Richard
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McGrady, Eddie
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Morley, Elliot
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Neill, Martin
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Reid, Dr John
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Sedgemore, Brian
Short, Clare
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Turner, Dennis
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Mr. Bob Cryer.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 264, Noes 97.

Division No. 41] **[12.10 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*

Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Bradley, Keith
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Galloway, George
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
Mahon, Alice
Marlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Morley, Elliot
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Sedgemore, Brian
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Turner, Dennis
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Kevin Hughes and
Mr. Bob Cryer.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Motion made, and Question proposed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills), That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Marchioness Disaster

12.23 am

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I have no pleasure in raising the subject of the Marchioness disaster. We should not be here; it should not have happened; and it should have been cleared up by a public inquiry.

In my Adjournment debate on 10 July last year, we were given an answer by one of the Ministers who are now present. I suspect that either he or a colleague will reply to the debate. I understand why two are present; I think that other debates may follow. I asked at least 10 questions which were not answered in that debate.

One of the singular issues was that had the Marchioness disaster happened in June or July with the House in session, there would have been a statement within a day or two. There would have been an enormous furore, and I think that there would have been a public inquiry. Anything less would not have been, and I do not believe has ever been, acceptable.

Fifty people died unexpectedly and tragically in the centre of London. It is the only disaster we have had on the Thames in over a century, since the Princess Alice went down off Beckton. That illustrates the relative safety of the Thames and makes it all the more important that something should have been done.

Three former or existing residents of my constituency, including Stephen Perks, lost their life. One of the former residents was the skipper of the Marchioness, Mr. Faldo. However, my constituency interest is not the prime motivation or interest that I have in the issue. My interest started because this is the 50th year in which I have been fairly regularly navigating the tidal Thames. It is roughly 45 years ago, about the summer of 1945, that I came down the river in a dinghy and moored somewhere near Westminster pier on a buoy when some men in a steamboat said, "Come along, sonny. Get your tea out and moor alongside us." That was the Marchioness.

I have no commercial interest in the river, but I am a vice-president of the River Thames Society and a member of the Inland Waterways Association, Transport on Water, the Thames Traditional Boat Society and the Thames Wherry Trust. That is not the wherry of the Norfolk sort, but the traditional type which for 200 or 300 years were on the river in their thousands.

I make mistakes on the river, as we all do on the road. One looks back afterwards, grateful that others were not making a mistake at the same time. So I have considerable sympathy for both men—one drowned and one alive—who were involved in the incident as skippers. Old Father Thames may seem nice in many ways, and he is; but he is a nasty old man between Blackfriars and the Tower.

Usually I tend to be rather detailed and legalistic. I hope that the House will forgive me if I become more colloquial in recounting the complex and horrific story of the events that took place after the disaster. I do not want to give way, except to Front-Bench spokesmen if they really wish to intervene.

This has been a story of inaction. After King's Cross and the incident at Clapham, there were, quite rightly, big inquiries. An inquiry asks questions and reveals and the Government and all of us should assist that process. Unfortunately, in this instance, as I will demonstrate, the reverse has been the case. Survivors and relatives have been thwarted not only in their attempts to get a decent public inquiry, but even in the matters that they have raised. I do not believe that they have been dealt with in the way that the House would wish.

After the refusal by the then Secretary of State for Transport to grant a public inquiry—the recess helped that—a former Director of Public Prosecutions brought a case. People thought that there would be action at last. It was a case about not keeping a proper lookout. In the courts, that meant that matters of liability, blame and factors other than failing to keep a lookout were not germane to the proceedings. I understand that the maximum fine for that offence was £2,000 or two years imprisonment. It meant that all other comments were sub judice. That went on for a long time. Unfortunately, the jury did not agree on the first case, and it had to be retried.

The Marchioness action group, which I met, ironically, at a conference on river safety some two years after the event, opposed that prosecution. Why was it brought by the Director of Public Prosecutions, and why did not the Attorney General use his powers, under what lawyers call "nolle prosequi", to stop that prosecution taking place? Surely it was not in the public's interest.

Time went on and the matter died down to an extent. It progressed only at an inquest by the Westminster coroner. I expressed concern about that at the previous debate on the matter, but I have had no satisfaction. Some of the hands of those who were drowned were removed by order of the coroner, who prevented, by some form of order, some of the next of kin from even identifying their loved ones and family.

When the case on keeping a look-out arose, the matter went sub judice and, when it was concluded some time later, despite requests from more than 30 families, the inquest was adjourned and has not been resumed.

So cutting off the inquiry was the second block. I understand why that may have been justified. In answer to a written question, the Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office told me:

> "Under section 16(3) of the Act, the coroner may resume the adjourned inquest after the conclusion of the criminal proceedings if, in his opinion, there is sufficient cause to do so."—[*Official Report*, 13 December 1993; Vol. 234, c. 439.]

That is usually when some other circumstances are connected with the death, but the coroner has an option to reconvene the case. In this case, he used the right not to do so, despite the clear need to take the matter further through the inquest.

Next, a private prosecution was brought by a relative of one of the deceased. Mr. Glogg's wife was drowned, and he brought a private prosecution against the owners of the Bowbelle, Ready Mixed Concrete, which is a large firm with strong links with this House, with both personnel and well-known financial connections.

The corporate case against RMC was against individual members of its management, but things went wrong. It would take too long for me to go into the complication, but the difficulty arose because the DPP intervened again. He has the power to take over a private prosecution if he thinks that it is wise to do so but, having taken it over, he can drop it.

There was an argument between him and the Marchioness action group about what was to happen. I understand that he said that he wanted to see all the group's evidence before taking a view on the matter. Members of the group thought it so outrageous that the DPP wanted to see the evidence before it was tried in court that they made the matter public and he then dropped it. I may not have got that absolutely right, but my description shows the difficulties that those people faced at least a year after the disaster.

The prosecution went ahead, but further difficulties arose when the firm involved understanably applied for a judicial review and tried to stop the case going ahead. Although it went ahead, the magistrate—it was held in the Bow street court—said that, if it was a matter of corporate liability, the condition of the craft and how it was managed would not necessarily count. He questioned whether it could be proved that the Marchioness had turned to port, as the inquiry had showed.

In the same way, one might have an accident with a motor car that comes across one's front. He said that it was impossible to tell whether that had happened. If it had, it would have made no difference how well the ship was managed or how responsible the company was. That is my understanding of that matter.

That took us, after two years, to the report of the marine accident investigation branch. Although that report was completed and some of the material that it contained, including the recommendations, were published, the report itself—quite properly—was not due to be published.

If the Marchioness action group—I am taking this a little out of sequence—wanted to pursue the corporate matter, as it did, it had a problem with the report, because it was about to be published. The action group went to the Attorney-General and said, "If the report is published at this time, the case that we are about to pursue based on the course of the Marchioness will be prejudiced. Please ask the Government to hold back the MAIB report, so that—as in all the other cases—the matter will be deemed sub judice, but this time on our terms, until that court case is finished." The Government did not agree.

The preface to the MAIB report is signed by Captain Marriott, who states:

> "I submit my Report following the Inspector's inquiry into the collision between the passenger launch Marchioness and the aggregate dredger Bowebelle".

Although Captain Marriott was the senior man in the MAIB, it was not his inquiry. He refers to "the Inspector's inquiry". Who conducted the inquiry? That is not stated in the report. The inquiry was conducted by someone who may be known but who was not named, and was sent by his superior officer to the Secretary of State for Transport. We do not know who formally conducted the inquiry, although we might have some guesses about it.

How did that arise? Unlike a proper inquiry, if I may put it that way, a maritime inquiry of that nature comes under the Merchant Shipping Act 1979 and Statutory Instrument 1172, the Merchant Shipping (Accident Investigation) Regulations 1989, which were published only a month or two before the Marchioness disaster, and which are highly relevant. Regulation 8(2), regarding the conduct of investigations, states:

> "An investigation may extend to cover all events and circumstances preceding the accident which in the opinion of the inspector may have been relevant to its cause or outcome, and also to cover the consequences of the accident and the inspector's powers shall apply accordingly."

Regulation 8(4) states:

> "Upon completion of an investigation the inspector shall submit to the Chief Inspector his findings as to the facts of the accident and, where the facts cannot be certainly established, his opinion as to the most probable facts. He shall clearly distinguish

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

> between established facts and conjecture. He shall also submit his analysis and his conclusions together with such observations and recommendations as he thinks fit to make."

The personality of the inspector who submitted his report to the Chief Inspector, Captain Marriott, is therefore most important. We are getting further and further away from what one would expect from a public inquiry in the form that one would expect, at which members of the public can volunteer information, and so on.

The MAIB report was well publicised at the time of its publication. Full summaries were sent to the press in August 1991, and it is true that it said some hard things about the way that Department of Transport officials and possibly Ministers handled safety on the Thames for a number of years. I will not quote those comments because they appear in the summaries and even more so in the Hayes report, to which I shall refer later.

It is interesting and important to note that not all the people who wanted to provide evidence did so. As I understand it, that happened without much knowledge of the victims who were on the boat or their families.

I am told that many of those who survived the traumatic incident gave statements to the police, and that was all they heard about it. One person of whom I know had to make great efforts to give evidence to the MAIB inquiry. Other people did not know that they had the opportunity to do so. Advertisements were placed in newspapers. Does that mean that the survivors' addresses were unknown? It was an extraordinary way to go about things.

I did not know the position at the time. I knew that the Bowbelle had been involved in several accidents before that disaster—neither the Bowbelle nor its sister ship was unknown on the river. As soon as the report was published, I looked to see what it could tell me about the accidents that I had seen in Lloyd's List. Out of seven or eight accidents of which I knew, only one was included in the report. I immediately wrote to the Secretary of State for Transport, who was then the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind). In my letter I stated that the Bowbelle had been involved in six accidents that were not mentioned in the report, and that there must be something wrong.

I found that many factors were wrong. I read the report and found that it raised as many questions as it answered. I wanted to know so many facts that were not included in the report. There were so many omissions and massive gaps that I could not regard it as a thorough or complete report. It was necessary to know the river to be able to identify them. I concentrated on the six accidents that were not reported. I corresponded with the hon. Member for Derbshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin), who was then a junior Transport Minister and we had a sort of tennis match in *Hansard* on complex issues.

On 12 December 1991, the Minister eventually told me that he had received no representations about omissions of relevant facts from the investigation. I said that I had sent him a letter asked questions only to be told that they were not relevant. The Minister's reply continued:

> "The letter of 19 August from the hon. Member was received on 20 August: I replied on 19 September. That letter from the hon. Member was not considered to be a representation about relevant facts in the context of the Marchioness report. The marine accident investigation branch inspectors were aware of the number of incidents involving vessels, including Bowbelle, which had occurred prior to the tragic accident that they were investigating. Section 15 of the report discussed the reaction of the owners, PLA and the Department at some length. To have gone into detail on each incident would have greatly lengthened that section without adding to its value; the reason for singling out the incidents described in annex 11 of the report is that they had particular similarities to the Marchioness case."—[*Official Report*, 12 December 1991; Vol. 200, c. *511*.]

One of the cases happened in Sydney harbour in 1927. The six that I had singled out were not mentioned. The answer also mentioned "detail on each incident"—I was not asking for detail; I just wanted the matter listed.

Eventually, on 21 January 1992, the subject was placed on the record when I asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he would draw the accidents to the attention of the Hayes inquiry established by him. The gaps in the report included the fact that it contained no account of the career or experience of both masters. There was no real investigation of the intensity of illumination—at least of the Bowbelle's lights. The inspector said that, if Captain Faldo had turned and the boat was in the line of vision, it was possible that he did not see it.

The report contained no description of the tidal sets —streams that run sideways across the river—which are important; or the depth of the water at that time. Speed tests were not carried out on the Bowbelle. There was no transcript of the Thames navigation service radio, which transmitted messages from various boats at that time. The transcript that is now in the Library has the phrase "unknown vessel" against one of the key transmissions.

Later—I emphasise that—the report states that both boats went through the centre arches of Southwark bridge. That is what the report says, and everybody agrees with it. There was no discussion about convergence speeds or line of sight at that point.

Most important of all, because rumour was rampant on the river at that time, there was no reference to when police took statements from those who were mainly concerned. I do not repeat rumour, but I can ask questions. There was a rumour, not mentioned in the report or denied, that a representative of Ready Mixed Concrete was aboard Bowbelle before the police. That may not be true; I do not know. All I am saying is that that was believed by some people. I ask the question: was that true or not true? Why was not it dealt with in the report as a matter of routine description?

We move to the next phase, when the Marchioness action group met the Secretary of State and asked for an inquiry. He had to do something about that, did he not? He then produced the Hayes report into river safety. That was trumpeted around, and resulted in headlines in the press. I shall quote the Department of Transport press release dated 19 December 1991. It was headed:

> "Marchioness: river safety inquiry announced",

and said:

> "An independent investigation is to take place of the Department of Transport's past and present handling of river safety, Malcolm Rifkind, Secretary of State for Transport announced today."

I do not know who wrote the headline. We have problems of our own in the subbing of headlines.

In fact, the Hayes inquiry was not into the Marchioness disaster. Its terms of reference stated:

> "In the light of the Marchioness/Bowbelle disaster to examine the handling since 1980 by the Department of Transport of its responsibility for the safety of vessels on rivers and inland waters and to report on the effectiveness of the present approach. The enquiry should take account of developments in the field of marine safety at the international level."

In correspondence, Mr. Hayes made it quite clear that, while he could consider that disaster and take some lessons from it, he was not entitled either to investigate the disaster itself or still less to make an evaluation of the MAIB report. Those terms of reference were set out in Cm 1991, which is the Hayes report published by the Government.

A remarkable statement was made in paragraph 1.7 of the report, when Mr. Hayes said:

> "When the disaster occurred I understand that the decision not to order a public inquiry was taken at No. 10 Downing Street on advice from the Department."

I do not suppose that the Minister can tell us why that was the advice. I should very much like to know. The only reason that I have heard was that, as in the case of an air disaster, the technical people could deal with it rather better than a public inquiry.

One of the principal recommendations of the Hayes report was:

> "There should be an early review of the rescue arrangements and equipment on the Thames which should take account of the Marchioness/Bowbelle disaster."

As the Hayes committee would not have been set up but for that disaster, we automatically expected that that would be accepted by the Department, because it was surely one of the principal recommendations.

I have lost count of the blockages that occurred in this sad story, but I shall cite another involving the present Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor). In his reply to the Hayes report, he said:

> "The Government have given careful consideration to the recommendation but have concluded that a further review of this kind would not be justified. Action is, however, being taken to ensure that the lessons . . . have been fully assimilated."—[*Official Report*, 7 July 1992; Vol. 211, c. *101*.]

One of the prime reasons for setting up the Hayes committee, even if, contrary to public expectation, it did not consider the Marchioness disaster, as that misleading headline suggested it might, was not accepted. But it gets worse, if one can imagine that.

On 19 July, a year later, the hon. Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) asked the Secretary of State for Transport:

> "which recommendations in the marine accident investigation branch report into the collision between the Marchioness and the Bowbelle have now been implemented and what action has been taken on the recommendations in the report of the inquiry into river safety, the Hayes report."

I am sorry to say that the Minister for Transport in London, who is present in the Chamber, answered thus:

> "The MAIB report into the loss of the Marchioness contained 27 recommendations. All have now been implemented. The Hayes report contained 22 recommendations, and action is in hand on all."—[*Official Report*, 19 July 1993; Vol. 229, c. *78*.]

That is the nearest thing that I have seen to a falsehood in *Hansard* in my career. I hoped that I have phrased that correctly.

That leads, I think, to block six. I have lost count. We have stopped at almost every point. Requests for further action and a public inquiry were rejected. It was said, "Ah, we have had two court cases and two reports and all the facts are known. What more is needed? You are up a gum tree."

That was more or less the position until the debate that I initiated a year ago, when the 10 questions that I posed were not answered and which, unfortunately, did not receive much media attention—at least, until last Wednesday when the "Despatches" programme on Channel 4 went into the subject in a big way. I shall not deal with that in detail, because videos are as readily available as newspapers these days.

The programme did not spend much time on the disaster, except at the end, when it was very important, but it gave the background to the ships—alas, apparently badly managed—of Ready Mixed Concrete, a large organisation the characteristics of which I mentioned en passant a short while ago.

Several crew members of the vessels gave various accounts of what had happened. It may be that some will be questioned by the company; no doubt they will. The programme dealt with many things, some of which hon. Members may wish to refer to, which cast light on the management of all the vessels in the concern involved. It also made it clear that the evidence and experiences of various witnesses and survivors of the incident had not been taken into account in the MAIB report.

The programme went on to show, as the MAIB report says, that the facts suggested that, under all the circumstances, it was probable that the Marchioness sank somewhere between Southwark bridge and Canon street railway bridge, perhaps nearer to the latter, and was probably turning to port when it was run down. That is broadly what the MAIB reports says. Most of the evidence—not all of it—in the courts and taken by the MAIB suggested that that was so.

The programme suggested that at least there was some evidence the other way. But that evidence was not in the MAIB report, probably because, as I have said, it was not easy to give evidence to the inquiry. How could people know about it when details were not widely circulated, at least according to my information?

Yet time after time, Minister after Minister talked airily, as all Ministers do, about there having been a full and thorough inquiry, with all the facts having been made known. That was not so. They were brought out in the programme on Wednesday.

Therefore, I asked a question which was answered the day after the programme. I asked the Secretary of State for Transport

> "if he will now reconsider the decisions made not to establish a public inquiry into the Marchioness disaster of comparable scope to those already conducted into the disasters at King's Cross and Clapham."

The reply was:

> "When the then Secretary of State considered the need for a public inquiry he concluded that the holding of a formal investigation was unnecessary given that a full, thorough and comprehensive inquiry had been carried out by the Marine Accident Investigation Branch—MAIB. Subsequently, the view has remained that a formal investigation would be unlikely to add to the inspector's findings,"—

I suggest that it would be likely to do so—

> "or to the 27 safety recommendations made in the MAIB report. The position was not changed by anything said in the Hayes report, which made no suggestion that a further inquiry into the accident was needed."

Of course, the report made a recommendation which was not taken up that an inquiry should be held into safety in general. The answer continues:

> "I therefore remain of the view that the case for a formal inquiry has not been made."—[*Official Report*, 9 December 1993; Vol. 234, c. *341*.]

That was the day after the broadcast.

Some people were stirred by the broadcast, including some survivors. I have received two letters since the broadcast which I should like to quote. One was from a lady called Gillian Moseley, who wrote:

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

> "I am a survivor of the disaster and was the first person to climb out of the Boat after the Bowbelle ran over us and once the Marchioness 'bobbed back up'. I was in shock at the time and my senses were heightened and I described to many people the open water I came up in. We were definitely on the west of Southwark bridge and I was horrified to learn from the programme that it was assumed otherwise, and that this assumption was the basis of false conclusions which closed the case."

It is true that the river may have been running at 2 or 3 knots and people may have been swept up river, but what about the letter from Mr. Simon Hook? Mr. Hook was a survivor. He was in a WC cubicle at the time of the collision. He said:

> "there was a window on my left which was square with curved edges. The bottom part of the window was blacked out. The top part of the window slid open to let the air in and it was possible to see out. The Marchioness was on a straight course and had not changed course in any way when there was an initial lurch to the side as if something had hit us. At the time my hand was in the open window and I used this to steady myself. As the Marchioness lurched over on one side I saw through the open window, the underside of a bridge overhead the boat. I now believe this was Southwark Bridge. I could see the bridge because as we tipped up there was some light coming from the Marchioness and then immediately afterwards the lights went out.
>
> Before seeing the television programme I did not know that the official report and the prosecution had been based on the disaster occurring between Cannon Street and Southwark Bridge. I know from my own observation that this is not the case and that the Marchioness was under Southwark Bridge and can confirm what was said on the television programme by the eye witnesses on the Hurlingham."

They were the people who did not speak—the Sherlock Holmes dogs who were not allowed to bark. The Hurlingham rescued many survivors from the terrible tragedy. The skipper and many passengers were aboard that boat, some of whom gave evidence on the television programme which was contrary to the conclusions of the official inquiry.

The House cannot judge what evidence was right. We are not an inquiry which can do that. All I am saying is that there is evidence contrary to that included in the official inquiry, and that witnesses were not heard and apparently were not sought.

I asked a question, answered today by the Minister for Transport in London—the same person who answered previous questions, I make it plain, for the Secretary of State and previous Secretaries of State. I asked the Secretary of State:

> "what relevant facts he now has in his possession, or have been drawn to his attention, which in his opinion are additional to those set out in the report of the Marine Accident Investigation Branch concerning the "Marchioness" disaster."

The answer was:

> "None."

The witnesses may have got it wrong under cross-questioning, but can it really be said that the facts drawn to the Minister's attention are irrelevant? I do not think so.

So my submission is that the official report on which so much has been based, including the evidence about the turn to port between the bridges rather than possibly being struck under the middle of Southwark bridge, is that the report is inept, inadequate, incomplete, incompetent, inefficient, probably incorrect and was taken in private in Orpington—by a unnamed inspector. It might have been Mr. Marriott or Captain DeCoverley—I do not know.

A decent inquiry would have been held not only in public but in Greenwich, Southwark or Westminster. There is an inquest court and a high court in Westminster, and this is the high court—Parliament, where we must question not only Ministers' handling of this matter but the Department's handling of marine matters and the handling by the Government, successive Secretaries of State, Attorneys-General and the past DPP.

I put that point to the Leader of the House on Thursday, who, again reading his brief, said:

> "I am advised that no new evidence has been produced to warrant a further inquiry and that the evidence cited in the television programme covered no ground that was not examined during the MAIB investigation."—[*Official Report*, 9 December 1993; Vol. 234, c. 488.]

Anyone who has seen that video and read the report could not go along with that. I do not think that the Lord President does so, but he said that the inquiry had covered the ground, and I hope that I have covered quite a lot of the water.

The MAIB is not an awfully well regarded organisation. It has been heavily criticised in relation to other matters, and the recent record on maritime safety has not been good. The Derbyshire incident has not been dealt with and questions remain unanswered about the Pescado and the Ocean Hound.

It is no good the Government saying, "Let us do it like aircraft inquiries," at which the interests of passengers and the financial interests of air companies are in harmony. At inquiries into incidents involving cargo vessels, the interests of the safety of the crew and the financial interests of owners are in conflict.

I shall conclude by asking some questions. Why did the DPP initiate the case? Why did he then try to stop, in effect, a private prosecution? Why did not the coroner complete his investigation? Why were hands cut off? Why did the coroner deny identification? Why did not the Attorney-General apply nolle prosequi, and why did not he postpone the publication of the MAIB report so that the case could have got on? Why did not the Secretary of State have a Clapham or King's Cross style inquiry? Why did not he implement the recommendation of the Hayes report? Why are Ministers trying to say that they did, when they did not?

Every hon. Member whose constituent was drowned or who represents a grieving family or friend has a right to know why the Government do not want a public inquiry —and London wants to know, too.

1.2 am

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I begin by paying tribute to the relentless way in which my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has pursued the scandalous sinking of the Marchioness and the more scandalous way in which British officialdom has attempted to deal with it.

I should like to put a question to the Minister: have Ministers seen the "Despatches" film right through? I will give way if the Minister can tell us. Apparently he has not. I do not know whether silence betokens consent.

There is a basic position: when a substantial number of our fellow citizens suffer sudden death, any Government, even a minimalist Government of the present persuasion, must recognise that they have a basic obligation to investigate those deaths as thoroughly as is humanly possible and to produce reports that are thorough and satisfactory and which satisfy all rational people, especially those who are involved either as survivors or as relatives of the people killed.

In the case of the Marchioness disaster, in which 51 people died, British officialdom has failed on all counts. What has happened has brought our judicial and administrative systems into disrepute.

Let us begin by considering the investigation by the marine accident investigation branch. It was conducted behind closed doors and it has never been disclosed who gave evidence to it. We know, however, that some of the evidence that it considered was given to the police for other purposes. Questions relevant to the MAIB were not asked and the investigation received evidence that was irrelevant to its inquiries. No one has had the opportunity to challenge any of the evidence presented. It is clear even to a layman reading some of the technical evidence that the investigation was shoddily conducted. For example, the "spot the Bowbelle" tests bore no resemblance to the circumstances in which the sinking occurred.

The report did not deal with all the issues and it mixed up evidence and conclusions. It was a second-rate investigation and a second-rate report. The Government must bear some responsibility for that because they constantly tell their officials and the public that they do not believe in strict regulation and that any regulation of business is a burden on business and should be avoided at all costs.

The shoddy, second-rate report produced by the Department of Transport is wrong in even the simple matters. It states that it was not known what the skipper of the Marchioness was doing the afternoon before the accident. The Department had all the facilities of the state at its disposal, but it could not find out that he was visiting a friend's wife who had had a baby. Other people found that out, but British officialdom could not be bothered; apparently, it did not matter.

The report makes it clear that, because the Department had decided in advance that the movements of the Marchioness were the basic cause of the incident, more time was spent examining the visibility from the wheelhouse of the Marchioness than the visibility from the wheelhouse of the Bowbelle. It is clear that, because the Bowbelle was not properly ballasted, the bows were high out of the water. The nearest water in front of the Bowbelle that the people in the wheelhouse could see was 1,000 ft away, far beyond where the boat it ran into was located. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South said, the shoddy report managed to mention only one of the seven incidents on the river in which the Bowbelle had smashed into someone, something or some bridge.

Let us now consider the inquest on which Ministers rely when they say that they do not want a public inquiry. The inquest opened in April 1990 and lasted four days. In respect of all but seven of the people who died, what might be called part I of an inquest was completed. It established the identity of the victims and the immediate cause of death —drowning. The relatives of the seven people refused to allow part I of the inquest into the deaths of their loved ones unless an undertaking was given by the coroner to complete part II of his investigation. All were issued with interim death certificates, and some relatives have still not received final death certificates. The coroner has not returned to complete part I of the inquiry on the seven whose deaths were not dealt with in April 1990 and he has not returned to part II of any of the investigations. He said that he was not doing so because other investigations and judicial inquiries were doing the job.

The fact is that the deaths were not properly investigated or decided on by either of the two unsuccessful public prosecutions or by the private prosecution. The law states that, if a repetition of what had happened could lead to a further loss of life, the coroner is usually obliged to resume his inquest and complete it. That has not been done.

The master of the Bowbelle was prosecuted on the limited charge of not keeping a proper lookout and it was made clear that the offence was committed when he had left Nine Elms. Prosecuting counsel made it quite clear that that offence was irrelevant to the sinking of the Marchioness and the loss of 51 lives. The skipper never gave evidence. The jury did not agree. There was a retrial; the jury could not agree again. But in the words of prosecuting counsel, that prosecution had nothing at all to do with the sinking of the Marchioness, so that does not excuse the Government's unwillingness to hold a public inquiry or the scandalous unwillingness of the coroner to conduct his business properly.

Then there was the private prosecution, which at the outset was obstructed by the Director of Public Prosecutions, who harassed the lawyers representing people who had been killed. Following public uproar, the DPP had to withdraw from that scandalous approach.

Then we had the committal stage hearing. The judge stopped that, saying that, on the strength of what he understood at the time, the Marchioness might well have been at fault so the matter could not be put to the jury.

The next excuse for not holding a public inquiry and not completing the inquest is the Hayes report. That was not an inquiry into the Marchioness disaster. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South pointed out, its terms of reference did not ask or even empower it to investigate the Marchioness-Bowbelle disaster; it was charged with examining the handling by the Department of Transport of its responsibility for the safety of vessels on rivers generally. That was totally inadequate.

All those lawyers had to be paid for. At the end of all that expenditure, one basic thing is clear beyond doubt: the authorities still do not know for certain where the two boats crashed. It follows as surely as night follows day that, if we do not know where they crashed, we cannot begin even to consider how or why they crashed.

The survivors and the relatives believe that a substantial number of questions have not been answered. Worse still, they believe that some of the questions have been wrongly answered by those set in authority over us. They want the inquest reconvened and completed and they want a full public inquiry. The reason why they want a full public inquiry—and the House should support them—is that they feel that there should be an inquiry that covers all aspects of the accident. They think that each and every piece of evidence that is available should be challenged—and it would be challenged for the very first time.

Such an inquiry would provide an opportunity for evidence to be heard from the new witnesses revealed in the television programme and in the letters to which my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South referred and an opportunity to challenge the shabby technical evidence produced by the Department of Transport.

Further questions remain to be answered including the fundamental question: where did the accident happen? British officialdom says that it happened east of Southwark bridge. As far as we know, the only evidence that it has for that—we have not been told about anyone else with any

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

evidence—is that provided by the lookouts who are alleged to have been on the bows of the Bowbelle. There are those who believe that the two dodgy witnesses on whom the Government rely were not there in the first place.

All the other witnesses who have made their views public say that the incident occurred west of Southwark bridge, or on the western side of the edge of the bridge as the boats went under it. That evidence is from people on the Hurlingham, the other pleasure craft that was around at the time, and from those who survived the Marchioness sinking themselves. If the sinking took place where they say it happened, the charge that the accident resulted from a change of course by the Marchioness is simply not believable—and if that did not happen officialdom's version of events simply collapses. Those who are concerned about the Government's inactivity and failure believe that the explanation in plain and simple: The Bowbelle ran down the Marchioness. It hit and ran; then it stopped, and then it went on again.

It did not render any assistance to the rescuers. Why not? There are doubts that the lookouts were in place. We know that the visibility was such that people in the Bowbelle's wheelhouse could not see a damned thing in front of them in the water. We also know that the man steering the Bowbelle—the poor man is now dead—had defective hearing, sight and speech. Such defects are not generally expected in someone in charge of such a boat.

The Bowbelle and her sister ships had been involved in more than 50 incidents of ramming, banging and bumping into other boats and bits of piers and bridges. The survivors and the relatives of the dead want to know why the Director of Public Prosecutions did not prosecute the skipper of the Bowbelle for more serious offences, and why he took no action against the company. We now know that that company knew all about the inadequacies of the communications, lookout and engine control systems.

Why did the DPP decide to try to obstruct the private prosecution? Why was the inquest not resumed after all three prosecutions had failed? Why were the police so slow in getting to the Bowbelle? A member of the company management got from Southampton to the Bowbelle before the police managed to get on to the boat. Who, other than the lookouts on the Bowbelle, gave evidence in secret about where the crash occurred? People want an opportunity to challenge that evidence.

People also want to know who decided to sever the hands of some of the victims in the water, and they also want to know why that was done. They want to know whether the hands of 26 victims were severed, as stated by the coroner, or whether it was the hands of six or seven victims, or no more than nine, as stated by different parts of the Metropolitan police.

Why has there been no public inquiry? People know from the Hayes report that the original call for a public inquiry was blocked by 10 Downing street. Why? Fifty-one people were killed in the Marchioness disaster. At King's Cross 31 people died and a public inquiry was held. At Clapham 31 people died, and again there was a public inquiry. What was different about the Marchioness?

We know what those disasters had in common. The people responsible for investigating the Marchioness disaster were from the Department of Transport; they were also responsible for regulating the river and had made a lousy job of it, so they were partly at fault for what happened, which means that they were also attempting to investigate themselves because they were responsible for the generally unsafe culture on the Thames at that time.

It was the same with the investigation into the Piper Alpha disaster and with the railway inspectorate's investigation into the disasters at King's Cross and Clapham. The difference is that this is the only major disaster in which the people responsible for it, the boat's owners, contribute substantial amounts to the Tory party. They contributed nearly a third of a million pounds during the 1980s. They have close connections with the Tory party and have ex-Tory Members on the board. At the time of the disaster, one was a consultant to them.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): That is sad.

Mr. Dobson: It is sad, but there are many things a hell of a lot sadder than exposing where the Tories get their money: 51 uninvestigated deaths are not just sad—they are a scandal and a disgrace on the Government.

The other reason why the Government do not want an inquiry is that they and their powerful friends are scared witless at the prospect of corporate manslaughter being accepted as the law of this land. That is why they do not want a full and thorough investigation. All the investigations into major disasters of recent times have been inadequate in one way or another. We need a review of the whole process. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I appeal to the Whips not to have conversations during a speech.

Mr. Dobson *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There must be no comments from a sedentary position.

Mr. Dobson: God bless you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

My final point is that the duty of the Government, and of the House, is not to protect corporate wealth and people who pay themselves well and say that they take great risks and bear great responsibilities but who do not want to take the blame when things go wrong in their organisations. That is not our duty; our duty is to the real people of this country—to the people who were drowned on the Marchioness, to their relatives, to the people who survived, and to the others who are concerned.

We owe it to them, and to all our constituents, to ensure that we have in place machinery that genuinely, properly, openly, honestly and competently investigates deaths, and presents reports that are acceptable because they are thorough and truthful. None of that can be said in the case of the Marchioness, and until it can we shall continue to support the survivors, and the relatives of those who died, and we shall join my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South in relentless pursuit of the slack, idle and incompetent Department of Transport.

1.20 am

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): First, I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) for seeking and using the opportunity of the debate to raise again the subject of what happened to the Marchioness. In Southwark cathedral there is a memorial to the 51 people who died on that August morning four and a bit years ago. A memorial is a fine thing, and it is a fine memorial, but those who survived that incident, and the families of those who died, would rather have a different memorial.

I hope that I can persuade Ministers that they need to revisit the series of decisions that have so far meant that there has not been what is conventionally understood to be a public inquiry. There has been no opportunity for the people with the greatest interest to ask the questions that they want to ask, and to have them answered. I cannot for the life of me understand why the Government should be at all reluctant to allow that to happen now, if that should still be the request of the families and the survivors. Indeed, there is an obvious reason why it should happen now. I had rather the Minister gave a cautious non-committal reply tonight, and said that he would at least consider the question with the Secretary of State, than a speedy cavalier reply to the effect that what we ask is not possible.

I note that in the report written on the general subject of river safety—as the House has been told several times tonight, that report is, as it were, the second report following the sinking of the Marchioness—Mr. Hayes, the representative of the Law Society who was asked to undertake the report, wrote in paragraphs 1.6 and 1.7:

> "I was aware that the Marchioness Group and others wanted a Public Inquiry which would have had wider terms of reference than those assigned to my investigation or that of the Marine Accident Investigation Branch. They argue that, with a full and public investigation into the tragedy, the whole story would have been out in the open and they could have come to terms with their loss and begun the process of grieving. They say that they cannot begin to live with their grief until a full public inquiry is held."

Mr. Wells: Why?

Mr. Hughes: I shall deal with that question in a moment.

Mr. Hayes's report continued:

> "When the disaster occurred I understand that the decision not to order a public inquiry was taken at No. 10 Downing Street on advice from the Department, although earlier transport disasters on a similar scale had received a different response. In this case it was decided to follow the procedure regularly adopted for the investigation of major air accidents."

The time that has passed since the Marchioness sank will have helped the process of healing in some way. It has never been the case, however, that people who unsuccessfully persist in their desire to get to the bottom of things come to accept that they have reached the end of their quest. We know from history that families will go on asking what happened until they feel that they have got the answers. Unless we give them that opportunity, they will go on asking and the questions will not go away. It would be better, more politic and fairer for the Government to accede to the request for a public inquiry.

An odd sequence of events followed the sinking of the Marchioness. First, the Government responded quickly and decided to ask the marine accident investigation branch, which had been established the month before, to carry out what was its first inquiry. The MAIB is an anomalous body. It is also an unsatisfactory agency in terms of objectivity because it operates in effect from within the Department of Transport and it is not perceived as being independent of the Department. I am not saying that there should not be an agency to do a job on behalf of that Department, but that is a different matter. The hon. Members for Newham, South and for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson)—the Opposition spokesman on transport—and I want another agency, entirely independent of the Government, to consider what happens when people die as a result of a public transport or other transport accident.

An independent inquiry investigated the accidents at Clapham and King's Cross and there is no reason on earth in terms of British law and administration why a similar inquiry should not be held into the sinking of the Marchioness. It is not enough for the Government to say that, after the MAIB report, they then commissioned Mr. Hayes to produce the report on river safety. That report was meant to consider the safety implications for the country of the sinking of the Marchioness and to cover wider issues than that accident, and Mr. Hayes made it clear that it would not deal with factual questions relating to the Marchioness.

The Government may say that a large number of inquiries of one sort or another have been conducted into the sinking of the Marchioness. Inquests were held, court cases were conducted and reports were published.

Before I was elected to the House, I appeared at inquests as a lawyer. I also appeared in court cases when people were prosecuted for breaching health and safety requirements and other professional and employment rules. In case I am accused of not recording a relevant fact, at some stages I was also instructed by Ready Mixed Concrete. That does not preclude me from being as critical of that company as I need to be for the purpose of this issue and debate.

None of the inquiries has been satisfactory and the procedure behind them is grossly unsatisfactory. After an accident, inquests are held, criminal prosecutions may be undertaken and it may be necessary to hold an inquiry. Society has not sorted out how those procedural systems interrelate. We should not ever put people through the living hell of an inquest that starts and never finishes, with potential prosecutions that may follow or precede the inquest and then interrelate them with a public inquiry which may or may not ever happen.

I beseech the Government—the matter is not just the responsibility of the Department of Transport—to relay the matter back to other departments, such as the Lord Chancellor's Department, the Home Office and the Law Officers Department, so that it can be looked at again. If I had ever been lucky enough to get a private Member's Bill into the top 20, I would have considered introducing a Bill to reform the inquest procedure so that this was sorted out once and for all, so that the sequence of events happened together and people were not discriminated against in terms of the danger of prosecution, that the facts are got at quickly, and matters resolved. There is a way through and that knot needs to be untied.

That has not happened, and the fact that we had an inquest, as we were bound to have, although it was never brought to a conclusion, and the fact that there was a prosecution, although there were arguments about what it should have been for, and that it was a rather anomalous prosecution, suggest that there still is a case that a public inquiry could answer.

I pay tribute to the crew who produced the "Despatches" report last week. The points that came up in that programme were those that they were prompted to investigate because the families and the survivors kept on pushing people to investigate them. I summarise them to make them clear. There were four factual ones, and a fifth substantive one that is also factual, but raises wider issues.

[Mr. Hughes]

The first was the visibility from the deck of the Bowbelle, which is now shown to have been poor. The ship was always too high to allow a view of river from its bow or control room. There was no view on the night in question. As the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras said, the whole saga up to that event shows how the Department of Transport did a poor job, which is why one suspects a cover-up. The Department was roundly criticised even by the MAIB and the Hayes report.

The Department's regulations state that the boat's maximum area of blindness should be no more than the length of two vessels. As the hon. Gentleman said, it was over 1,000 ft—twice the specified length. There was a recommendation that walkie-talkies should be used, but there was a refusal to issue them and there was no human lookout in place. The visibility question has not been adequately answered and dealt with.

The second is the telegraph system—the information system on the Bowbelle. The instructions from skipper to engine room were often inaudible and there had already been an incident involving the Bowbelle as a result of that failing. Although the crew had regularly asked for a fixed communication link, they had not received one. That must be negligence in the generic sense of the word, if nothing else. In the end, it was much more than that: such a link was not installed until 13 months after the first complaint.

Thirdly—this was alluded to all the time, and all of us who get the reports from the Port of London Authority knew it—there had been a whole series of incidents involving the Bowbelle and its sister craft. Any of us, whether on the shores of my constituency on the other side of the river, on the Southwark riparian edge, or whether from here on the Palace Terrace, have seen those long craft going up and down the river. Clearly, they are much more difficult to navigate, and they are much more liable to collision than a narrower or shorter craft.

The fourth matter, which was explicitly dealt with in the "Despatches" programme last week, and rightly alluded to by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, was the clear unsuitability of one of the crew to do the job. None of us would criticise someone for having a disability or a handicap, but it is a cause for criticism if that person, by virtue of that disability or handicap, is not able to do his job. If a crew member cannot hear properly in a post where he is required to hear to ensure that he crews his boat safely, there is something wrong. Indeed, Department of Transport regulations stated that hearing aid users should not be allowed on deck, and dealt with such disabilities or handicaps.

The last and most important issue was the location point. Where did the accident happen? What actually happened? The "Despatches" film made it clear that the marine consultant to the Department now accepts that passengers on the Marchioness would have felt something —a severe lurch to the left—if, as officially determined so far, the Bowbelle's path had been crossed by the Marchioness. In fact, both the skipper of the Hurlingham —the sister crew ship—and passengers say that the Marchioness was on a straight course. They say that it did not veer, lurch or suddenly shoot across the path of the Bowbelle in the early hours of that Sunday morning, and that it was therefore hit under Southwark bridge at the rear of the Marchioness—not amidships.

If that is true, we are presented with a crucially different fact. In a collision, the key question is, "How did the collision occur? Which bit of which vessel impacted on which bit of which other vessel, and what were the consequences?" Let me say this to the Minister: even if the other matters have been touched on, as they have, the evidence that is now clear about the point of collision suggests that the matter needs to be examined again.

I ask Ministers not to be proud about the decision to let the MAIB act or the decision to let Mr. Hayes have his report, and not to be defensive about the history of the Department of Transport, but to do the one thing that would meet the very straightforward, persistent and continuing requests of the families and the survivors: to allow someone unconnected with the incident to hear from whoever wants to give evidence, so that the answers to the question, "What happened to my brother, sister, girl friend, child or me?" can see the light of day.

Unless people who were there, or relatives or friends of people who were there, can ask those questions and every other difficult question until they receive answers, we shall continue to have debates like this. I hope that the Department will be generous enough to say that a public inquiry should be held sooner rather than later: the sooner it is held, the more accurate the answers will be, and the sooner the grief of those still suffering will be ended.

1.37 am

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Key): I thank the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) for raising this issue again. It is important for the House to act as a forum for important debates such as this. Let me repeat what I told the hon. Gentleman earlier this evening, when I explained why I would be answering the debate rather than my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris), the Minister for Transport in London: my hon. Friend will be replying to another debate later this evening.

In preparing for tonight's debate, I was much moved by the words of the hon. Member for Newham, South in his Adjournment debate last year. He repeated some of those comments this evening to set the scene. I come to this issue with an open mind; it is not a question of pride or defensiveness. I want to make that absolutely clear.

Let me respond to the comments in reverse order. What a contrast there was between the speech of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and the rantings of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). The hon. Gentleman asked specifically why No. 10 had decided to take a particular course without being certain that that was where the decision was made. It is perfectly obvious to me that, having just set up the MAIB to investigate this sort of accident, it would have been even more extraordinary if it had been bypassed and an alternative method had been chosen to investigate the disaster.

The inquest was not used to determine culpability. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey made some extremely telling points, and he carried me with him. I shall draw his remarks about inquests to the attention of my right hon. and hon. Friends. He made a good point that needs examination.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Key: No. I only have about 10 minutes left.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) asked whether the inquest would be resumed and if not, why not. An application to the divisional court for judicial review of the coroner's decision not to resume the inquest was dismissed on 9 July 1993. I understand that an appeal has been lodged, and it would be inappropriate for me to comment further on that.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras asked if I had seen the "Despatches" programme throughout. The answer is, no, but I have done better. I have had the opportunity of studying the transcripts in detail. That is rather better than the distraction which will inevitably occur when watching the programme right through. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that, in order to get to the heart of the problem, it is sufficient just to watch a television programme right through, I am surprised at him. He has sought to smear the judicial system and the official system and bring them into disrepute.

The MAIB report is not shoddy. It is an excellent report, carried out by professionals. I think that the hon. Gentleman will regret the gratuitous offensiveness in which he has indulged by attacking public servants. Tomorrow, I shall be attending the funeral of one such public servant, killed in the course of his duty of serving the interests of transport in this country. The hon. Gentleman's attack is totally misplaced and very ill timed.

We are facing a serious issue and hon. Members should take it sufficiently seriously. Anyone who has been involved in any tragedy involving loss of life, as I and I am sure other hon. Members have been, know the deep grief that it imposes on individuals, families and communities for many years to come. That is undeniable. The well-known concern of the hon. Member for Newham, South has again been aired. I express my condolences to those involved, because I come to the issue afresh. I know that the hon. Member for Newham, South has further interests in the disaster because of his considerable knowledge and experience, to which he has referred.

The aim of the television programme, which was to set out what it claimed was "exclusive new evidence" was not met. It told a story which was fundamentally at variance with the official version. There is nothing new in that. It asserted that the story deeply compromised the Government's claim that all the facts are known. The official version of the incident is the report by the chief inspector of the MAIB, which was published in August 1991. That report was a culmination of a detailed and thorough investigation carried out by inspectors from that branch.

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Key: No. I am sorry, but I was given 20 minutes to reply to a debate lasting an hour and a half. I must get on.

The inspectors were all well qualified. They are highly professional and experienced seafarers who are appointed to investigate accidents to or on ships.

The branch in which they serve is completely independent of those who regulate marine safety. The chief inspector reports directly to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on marine accident investigations.

The television programme's claim was that MAIB's investigation did not consider all the evidence and that the new evidence that the programme brought to light justified the call for a public inquiry.

The hon. Member for Newham, South will be aware that a public inquiry into a shipping accident is called a formal investigation. The procedures for such an inquiry are set out by statute, but the purpose of such an inquiry is particularly important. It is to establish what happened and to make recommendations to ensure that the accident or incident does not recur. Those terms of reference are no more and no less than those of an investigation carried out by the MAIB. They, too, are governed by statute and the Merchant Shipping (Accident Investigation) Regulations 1989 clearly set out, under regulation 4, the purpose of an investigation. So what would a public inquiry achieve that was not achieved by an MAIB investigation?

Let me pick out some of the points made in that television programme. First, it identified the problems of the Bowbelle's design, particularly in respect of how they affected the keeping of a proper and efficient lookout. It also indentified the communication problems between the fo'c'sle head and the bridge on those vessels and how three hand-held radios were on board the Bowbelle that night but were not in use.

The programme further commented on the fact that, traditionally, these vessels had been taken up river by pilots but that the practice had ceased some years before the Bowbelle-Marchioness accident. As regards the Marchioness, it identified the problems of keeping a proper and efficient lookout due to the vessel's design.

Although all those points were well presented in the programme, they were not new evidence. They were all dealt with in considerable detail in the MAIB report, although the programme makers omitted to say so.

The programme then listed a number of other points which, although their factual accuracy is not in question, were not relevant to the accident. One concerns the means of communication between the bridge and the engine room of the Bowbelle for the desired engine movement—the engine telegraph. It was described as an archaic system. Perhaps it is, but it had no relevance to the incident, as the captain of the Bowbelle made no attempt to alter the engine speed before the accident. Even after the accident, when he required a change in the engine speed, there is no suggestion that that archaic piece of equipment failed.

Another point raised in the programme and one that is dear to the heart of the hon. Gentleman was the Bowbelle's history. The fact that a significant number of incidents are recorded involving that vessel is not disputed, but they have no direct bearing on the collision that night. The MAIB report devotes a whole section to previous incidents and the actions taken, and clearly sets out those whose circumstances were distinctly similar to the accident under discussion.

The programme then devoted a considerable amount of time to looking into an accident that befell another of the Bow ships, the Bowsprite. That vessel broke in two in the southern North sea, sadly with the loss of four lives, approximately eight months before the Marchioness-Bowbelle collision. How that accident helps support the argument for a public enquiry into the Marchioness-Bowbelle accident is far from clear.

From there, the programme returned to the Marchioness-Bowbelle incident and began to focus on the involvement of the Hurlingham. That was another

[Mr. Key]

passenger launch, also on a night-time disco cruise, that was in the immediate vicinity of the accident and from which some people witnessed the accident. It explained in some detail the rescue efforts that were performed by those on board and stated that those efforts had never been recognised.

I do not question the fact that some of those passengers performed heroic deeds that night, and that fact is acknowledged in the MAIB report. In his introductory letter, the chief inspector states:

> "My report would not be complete without recognition of the acts of bravery and skill that were performed during the search and rescue operation. These were not limited to the crews of the vessels involved in this operation but included a number of passengers."

> With two thirds of the programme now completed, it finally began to introduce its aim to set out the new evidence. In the words of the commentary, it would produce the evidence of one group of witnesses that seemed to have been ignored——

> "The story the Government seems reluctant to hear".

That alleged new evidence was given by the skipper of the Hurlingham and two of her passengers. In essence, it was that the collision between the Marchioness and Bowbelle occurred either before the two vessels passed under Southwark bridge or as they passed through it. That evidence conflicts with the MAIB report, which considered that the collision occurred after the two vessels cleared Southwark bridge. The MAIB inspectors had access to that conflicting evidence and it was taken into account during the investigation, when the report was written.

The vast majority of witness evidence—completely ignored by the television programme—was that the collision occurred between Southwark and Cannon street bridges. That includes the evidence of passengers in the Hurlingham who saw the collision and who were sufficiently familiar with the river to recognise their whereabouts, of witnesses ashore and, perhaps most importantly, the mate of the Marchioness. It is particularly surprising that the programme made no mention of the mate's evidence on that subject.

The material evidence supports the same view. The wreck lay well to the east of Southwark bridge, and there was a strong flood tide. The programme presented the view of an expert that the alleged new evidence was supported by the nature of the damage sustained by the Marchioness. It was claimed that that indicated that she was struck near her stern, arguing that she was on a steady course and not heading across Bowbelle's bow—as the MAIB report found. That in turn would place more responsibility on the Bowbelle than implied in the published report.

The evidence provided by the damage to the Marchioness was fully considered by the MAIB, and careful examination of the relevant excerpt from the programme shows no inconsistency with the inspector's conclusions. There is no doubt that, as the expert said, the major damage amidships occurred when the Marchioness was rolled over, not at the time of initial impact. If anything, that supports the view that the Marchioness was heading slightly across the bow of the Bowbelle.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Key: I will, against my better judgment.

Mr. Dobson: If the Minister is so confident that there is evidence from witnesses to support the MAIB's conclusions, will he do that desired by relatives of victims and survivors—publish it? Until now, it has been secret.

Mr. Key: I was about to address that point.

The programme cited one further piece of evidence to support its conclusion—the transcript of radio messages received by the Port of London authority at Woolwich, and their timing. The inspectors were well aware of that transcript. The programme disregarded the effect of the collision on the progress of the Bowbelle and the fact that it led to her partly losing control of her steering and making contact with Cannon street bridge. When allowance is made for that, the timing is fully in accord with the collision having occurred where the report found.

To sum up that long review of the programme, I must advise the hon. Member for Newham, South that it did not produce any new evidence to warrant further inquiry. That cited in the programme covered no ground not examined during the MAIB investigation, and there is no case for a public inquiry into that accident, tragic though it was.

Ms Walley: In the last minute remaining, will the Minister say why he is not prepared to make public and to place in the Library a copy of the evidence——

In accordance with Mr. Speaker's ruling—[Official Report, 31 January 1983; Vol. 36, c. 19]—the debate was concluded.

Royal Marsden Hospital

1.53 am

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): There has been some speculation about the content of my speech, not least in certain parts of the media. I make it clear that I welcome the broad thrust of the Government's reforms. Although I believe that there have been dirty tricks; my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health is blameless. Rather, I seek to blame petty-minded regional health authorities. My right hon. Friend and her able team have seen through those inadequate bodies and announced, rightly, their abolition. I leave it to other right hon. and hon. Members to interpret the Department's views on regional health authorities by that action.

I take this opportunity to place on record my unswerving support for the reforms put in place by the Government. There are many difficult decisions to be taken and I do not envy my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State her difficult task. I am confident that she will continue to see her way through some of the murky undergrowth that is part and parcel of the advisory process. I am certain that she will ultimately make the right decisions for London and the nation as a whole.

I have chosen to talk about the provision of cancer services in London, particularly south-west and west London. Many hon. Members will know that the London implementation group set up a group to

"review specialist cancer services in London with the aim of achieving a more rational disposition, avoiding unwarranted duplication and providing a strong service and academic base for the future".

That specialty review group reported to the Secretary of State for Health and the London implementation group in June 1993. Seven months later, we are still waiting for the outcome. While the group's aims were admirable, its recommendations were not. The reviews are only advisory, and should be seen as such. The Secretary of State can choose to dismiss some of the recommendations, as she did with the Tomlinson report.

Cancer is a disease which affects all ages, both sexes and all areas of the body. The successful treatment of this complex and diverse disease has led many hospitals around the world to specialise in treating only cancer. Such specialist hospitals include the Memorial Sloan-Kettering cancer centre in New York city and the Gustave-Roussy institute in Villejuif, France.

We in London are the luckiest people, as we have the Royal Marsden hospital, with its associated Institute of Cancer Research, which provides treatment and relief from cancer for Londoners and those who live beyond. That hospital has been given as an example of one of the most successful in patient care, research and teaching by the respected Swiss-based International Union Against Cancer. That is the most prestigious international organisation involved in the fight against cancer. Among its many responsibilities, it sets standards on how to organise the fight against cancer.

As many hon. Members will know, I am one of the Royal Marsden's most ardent and loyal supporters in this place. Almost a year ago, I spoke against the threat to the Royal Marsden when it first became apparent in the Tomlinson report. Not long after that, the Secretary of State for Health declared that she could see no convincing financial case for relocating the Royal Marsden to Charing Cross. However, despite that reprieve, the threat resurfaced in the independent specialty review of cancer services in London that followed her statement. It proposes closing the Royal Marsden, Fulham road, by centring west London cancer services at Charing Cross, and incorporating the Royal Marsden, Sutton in St. George's trust hospital, Tooting. We would be fooling ourselves if we thought that that action alone could deliver the same level of services.

Each part of the Royal Marsden has a distinct specialist role in addition to the treatment of the more common cancers. The Fulham road site specialises in cancer of the head and neck, melanoma, sarcoma, chronic leukaemia, gynaecological and urological tumours. At the Sutton site, neuro-oncology, lung cancer, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease, thyroid cancer, acute leukaemia, myeloma, testicular tumours, childhood tumours, clinical pharmacology and gastro-intestinal are treated.

Both sites are supported by palliative medicine, psychological medicine, comprehensive diagnostic services and rehabilitation facilities. The hospital is not naturally divisible; each part complements the other. The proposal is no more acceptable now than it was when suggested in the Tomlinson report. I intend to fight it again, with, I hope, the same success.

Before discussing the reviews and their unacceptable recommendations, I shall take time to remind the House that we are talking about not merely another London hospital, but a national, or even specialist, international institution, whose importance in the worldwide battle against cancer cannot be overestimated.

I understand that almost 400 hon. Members have received representations from the hospital pointing out that a signficant number of their constituents were seen or treated by the Royal Marsden. That figure demonstrates the national importance of the institution in fighting cancer, when local district hospitals need a specialist centre of excellence for referral.

The Royal Marsden, with its associated Institute of Cancer Research, is at the forefront in pioneering research into the causes and treatment of the disease. Examples are too numerous to mention. The Royal Marsden is leading the way in its approach. Last year, it won the Queen's award for technological achievement. It was granted jointly to the Royal Marsden, the Johnson Matthey technological centre and the Institute of Cancer Research.

Only in the past two weeks, the Royal Marsden has made further strides. For example, regular doses of drugs given to sufferers of breast cancer through a round-the-clock electronic pump may reduce the need for surgery. Consultants at the hospital have just started the first large-scale trial in Britain of a new treatment using a pump about the size of a pocket tape recorder, which patients strap to their waists. Women in the trial all have large cancers, but with no evidence of spread that would normally require a mastectomy.

I have been told by Dr. Ian Smith from the Royal Marsden that they recently completed a pilot study that has encouraged them to believe that, by using a conventional anti-tumour drug administered in that way, they can significantly improve the effectiveness of treatment. Dr. Smith said that they were pleasantly surprised to find that the cancers disappeared completely in more than half the women studied. As a result, doctors were able to avoid surgery completely. In others, the size of the cancer was greatly reduced, making mastectomy unnecessary and requiring only limited surgery.

[Lady Olga Maitland]

Another example of that sort of work is the pioneering research by Dr. Trevor Powles and Professor Michael Baum into using the contraceptive drug Tamoxifen as an aid to lowering the risk of breast cancer. They ran a pilot study of 2,000 women with a family history of breast cancer. As a result of the encouraging figures from the original trial, it is now being extended to take in a further 15,000 healthy women who may be at risk because of their age.

The Royal Marsden believes that it may be saving 3,000 lives a year. An unexpected beneficial side effect of the drug is that it also appears to help combat heart disease. Such initiatives—and I have chosen just a couple to outline—are helping to improve the quality of life immeasurably for many of us.

It must be asked who, apart from a specialist cancer hospital with such resources, can invest in the future of women who may be healthy at the moment but who are doomed to die of breast or other cancers in 10 or 20 years. This is precisely the sort of work that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred to in her White Paper "Health of the Nation", when she stressed the need to tackle cancer as much by prevention as by cure.

That sort of work can be done only in a comprehensive cancer centre where treatment and research go hand in hand, or, as they say at the Royal Marsden, from bench to bed and back to bench. Can anyone really imagine that that sort of arrangement between two specialist sister institutions can be replicated in ordinary general hospitals?

Hon. Members will be interested to know that representations from all over the world have been sent to my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister expressing alarm and dismay that the United Kingdom could possibly dismantle a hospital of such status, given its outstanding work in the prevention and treatment of cancer—demonstrating yet again with its advances in treating breast cancer that it is at the leading edge of research. That development was heralded not only by the national press, medical journals and other institutions, but throughout the world.

I could reel off a list of dozens of internationally renowned institutions that are backing the Royal Marsden. However, I shall mention just a few. For example, there is the Ontario cancer institute in Canada, the Research Institute for Microbial Diseases in Japan, and the M.D. Anderson cancer centre attached to the university of Texas. Many institutions worldwide are chasing the same money for research. However, they realise the importance of the work of the Royal Marsden, and are therefore expressing their alarm.

I come now to the reviews whose outcomes have so explicitly resurrected the threat to the Royal Marsden. It is good to know that the Secretary of State has an independent mind. When she was faced with unwelcome decisions as a result of the Tomlinson report, she took them. However, she has also been prepared to ignore the more reckless and foolhardy advice coming from bureaucrats in the national health service.

That was demonstrated by the Royal Marsden as recently as February, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State rejected Professor Tomlinson's recommendation to relocate the Royal Marsden and Royal Brompton hospitals at a cost of £62 million. I am confident that my right hon. Friend will once again reject the same foolhardy recommendations.

The Labour party claims that those reviews are Government policy. They are not. They are reports of advice. But sometimes it is necessary to reject advice, however well intentioned it is, and follow one's instincts.

The first of the advisory reports was by the specialty review group which considered the provison of cancer services in London. That review group was required to produce its findings in a short time scale and has stated openly that the data collected presented difficulties in analysis and comparison.

I accept that, in some areas, inaccuracies may have innocently occurred due to those problems. However, the level of subjectivity, unattributable statements and misrepresentation of the information provided was not to be expected in a report of such importance.

The review group's argument against single specialty hospitals has not been substantiated, and its assertion that the Royal Marsden hospital cannot be considered as a comprehensive cancer centre is incorrect, using the review group's own criteria.

In fact, the Royal Marsden is the only hospital in London that is closest to meeting the review group's own criteria for the provision of cancer services. Why has no one questioned that contradiction within the report?

The report states that the bulk of the work at the Royal Marsden hospital is undertaken at Sutton, implying that the Fulham road site is underused and therefore dispensable. In fact, patient numbers are split 50:50. Both are integral to the comprehensive cancer service provided by the Royal Marsden hospital.

In considering the future of the Royal Marsden hospital, the review group looked at a number of options, but did not adequately or fairly explore the Royal Marsden's plans for the Chelsea health sciences scheme, which the London implementation group was given the task of examining by the Secretary of State in "Making London Better".

That idea has been expanded by Marmaduke Hussey and Sir Kenneth Stow, chairman of the Royal Marsden hospital and Institute of Cancer Research respectively, who have outlined their plan to make west London's medicine outstanding in every respect. Sir Ronald Oxburgh, the rector of Imperial College, has described the idea as a

> "once in a lifetime opportunity to create a grouping of medical capabilities and talent that could challenge any in the world in quality and size."

I question whether the benefits that currently exist in the relationship between the Royal Marsden, Sutton, St. George's and other hospitals would be enhanced or improved by the hospital merging with St. George's. That would more likely result in the interests of the Sutton site being lost within the priorities of the numerous services located within a large acute hospital.

It would make sense and be more beneficial if current supporting specialist links were maintained and, where possible, enhanced. The Royal Marsden should assume responsibility for the provision of cancer services at St. George's hospital on a contractual basis, as it already provides all of that hospital's radiotherapy. The identified benefits of merging the Royal Marsden, Sutton and St. George's in comparison with existing arrangements are grossly exaggerated and, more than that, unnecessarily expensive.

A further review called for by the Government looked into research carried out by the special health authorities, of which the Royal Marsden is one. Can it be coincidental that it shared common members with the specialty review and proceeded to come out with similarly damaging conclusions for the Royal Marsden? It was conducted by an expert advisory group the membership of which, in theory, should have been peer led. In fact, few members had knowledge of cancer and, even then, only in limited fields.

None of the review group had experience in managing research and development in a large organisation. However, at least three of the members were direct competitors with the Royal Marsden and the Institute of Cancer Research for research funds of their own. The Royal Marsden was also criticised in the report for being "inward looking and isolated" in the appointment of a joint director of clinical research.

Let me put the record straight. The appointment was intended from the outset to be external. Indeed, the search was conducted on a global basis. However, the indecision over the Tomlinson report blighted the post for external candidates. Professor Baum, who came to the Institute of Cancer Research in 1990 via a chair at King's, was appointed instead. Other outside candidates were considered. Even one member of the expert advisory group was approached for the post.

The search committee included two external professors, the scientific director of the Cancer Research Campaign, the second secretary of the Medical Research Council and the director of research and development at the Department of Health, Mr. Michael Peckham. That is hardly the action of an "isolated" institute, as the review team must have known.

As part of the review, international referees were approached and asked for their opinion of the Royal Marsden. Those international experts gave the hospital an outstanding rating. However, the members of the review group, none of whom were national experts, let alone international experts, took it upon themselves to ignore that advice and to downgrade it. Who on earth did they think they were? I find it surprising and irregular. One could go on to describe it as morally unjustifiable.

The whole report flies in the face of other independent reviews carried out. For example, the national research assessment exercise carried out on behalf of the Department for Education looked at 150 academic institutions. The institutions were graded on a scale of nought to five. Oxford university came first with a score of 4·8. The Royal Marsden hospital, with the Institute of Cancer Research, was graded sixth with a score of 4·4. Charing Cross hospital was graded 53rd with a score of just under 3.

Graham Hart, the permanent secretary at the Department of Health, has privately disowned parts of the expert advisory group research review on the Institute of Cancer Research which are of an adverse nature. Why, one must ask, has there been such a sustained attack on what most of us would agree is one of the finest cancer hospitals in the world and a hospital which I suggest should never have been part of the debate on acute services and overbedding in London? Let me tell the House the answer.

Many hon. Members will have driven down the Fulham road and seen as they passed the magnificent Chelsea and Westminster hospital. Its 665 beds are built around a naturally ventilated and glass-roofed atrium the size of Wembley stadium with a mall and eight courtyards. Trees and works of art were brought in and plays are staged on a raised platform. The view of the atrium opens up immediately from the hotel-like reception. Escalators run to the main reception and an out-patients area on the first floor. From there, banks of lifts take people to the upper floors. It is an estate agent's dream.

The cost of this luxury is a record £[illegible]02 million. The cost of beds averages out at nearly £250,000 each. Meanwhile, only two miles down the road, sits the Charing Cross hospital, which is only 20 years old.

Due to an act of bureaucratic vanity, not to mention bad planning, an unnecessary hospital was built at vast cost and in an area that already has sufficient hospital provision. If there had not been, there would be no problems now with the health authority casting around for a hospital to close.

After being severely castigated by the Public Accounts Committee last year for the massive planning blunder in allowing the Chelsea and Westminster to be built, North West Thames regional health authority has been determined to fabricate a role for the now redundant Charing Cross hospital to save its embarrassment. A health authority spokesman said:

> "We don't deny that our capital programme has been entirely eaten up by the Chelsea and Westminster during the past five years and will be again next year."

This is the same health authority which diverted money from literally hundreds of other health projects up and down the country to fill the black financial hole that is the Chelsea and Westminster on the Fulham road.

I am sure that many hon. Members will join me in congratulating the Secretary of State for Health on abolishing such wasteful health authorities, but should they be allowed to inflict such damage in their dying gasps?

I believe that much of the activity threatening the Royal Marsden has been orchestrated by the regional health authority. For example, I received a document on the future of Charing Cross hospital which included a one-page summary of key points that it wanted to convey. The document made remarks about the Royal Marsden that were factually incorrect and, as they could easily have been checked, could be subject to legal action.

I find it offensive that staff at Royal Marsden have been subjected to such indefensible slurs on their professional representations. Doctors and nurses at the Royal Marsden have spent many hours—some have spent their entire working lives—in combating cancer. For another hospital to stoop to this level shows no morals.

Several points are made that I find particularly objectionable, such as that Charing Cross

> "has a high reputation for serving the needs of decent everyday folk in West and Central London. We are not a hospital for the well-to-do. We have a few private patients compared to, say, the Royal Marsden Hospital where over 50 per cent. of the patients are private."

That is wrong. Only 10 per cent. of the Royal Marsden's patients are private.

The document continues:

> "Charing Cross Hospital is one of Britain's newest hospitals. . . Unlike the decaying 19th century or older hospital buildings you see in London."

The Royal Marsden has recently begun £25 million-worth of redevelopment, in particular a new clinical block at Chelsea and a purpose-built paediatric unit in Sutton. By North West Thames regional health authority's own admission, it will require £20 million of maintenance to bring Charing Cross up to an acceptable standard.

[Lady Olga Maitland]

The one-page summary goes on:

> "Charing Cross Hospital has a formidable international track record in providing specialist care in cancer . . . Single specialty hospitals are not equipped to deal with the numerous complications which may arise from cancer—e.g., renal failure, respiratory failure and neurological difficulties."

Unfortunately, Charing Cross does not have

> "a formidable international track record",

compared to the Royal Marsden, as witnessed by its poor rating in the recent University Funding Council research assessment exercise.

Cancer as a disease is not organ-specific. The hospital therefore has a large number of specialties on site. In addition, it has links with a wide range of other specialties through its honorary consultants. The summary continues:

> "£10 million is spent on cancer research every year by the Charing Cross Hospital."

The Royal Marsden, with its associated Institute of Cancer Research, spends more than treble this amount.

The report continues:

> "Charing Cross Hospital houses the biggest cancer unit in the South East of England".

That is factually incorrect and, in my opinion, a ludicrous statement. I think that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will understand my sadness and, unfortunately, my anger about the fact that the Riverside health authority, under the direction of the North West Thames regional health authority, has been allowed to put out such untruths.

What is my solution to the over-provision of services in west London? While not wishing to be drawn into a debate about whether Hammersmith hospital should move to Charing Cross hospital, or vice versa, I propose that Charing Cross's acute services should be located at the Chelsea and Westminster hospital to help to fill it, and that the provision of cancer services at Charing Cross and Hammersith hospitals should be moved to the Royal Marsden, which could then expand at marginal cost—estimated to be less than £1 million—to take on the extra patients.

That must be the least contentious solution; it would not only save the Royal Marsden but go some way to solving the problems facing the Chelsea and Westminster hospital. In effect, the Royal Marsden, with its institute, would continue to be dedicated to fighting cancer in its many forms at Chelsea and Sutton.

The Royal Marsden is not only held in the highest esteem here and abroad but is a much-loved institution. Many former patients have told me that, during the first terrifying days when their cancer was diagnosed, the very name "Royal Marsden" was a huge comfort to them. Dare I suggest that the name "Charing Cross", or even "Hammersmith", scarcely has the same resonance?

Time and again, the public have demonstrated their love for the Royal Marsden. Indeed, sometimes it has been impossible to hold them back. We have all been deluged with letters, some of which give very personal accounts. Let me put it on record, however, that I have received assurances from the chairman and the chief executive of the Royal Marsden that letter-writing campaigns by children or other groups of patients to hon. Members have in no way been orchestrated by the management of the hospital. They have been entirely spontaneous.

I was privileged recently to hand to the Prime Minister the largest petition that he has ever received. It consisted of nearly 1 million signatures asking for the Royal Marsden to be saved in its entirety. There have also been numerous letters from distinguished supporters here and abroad, the majority of whom are internationally renowned cancer experts.

However, I should expect the Secretary of State to base her decision not on mere emotional arguments but on a rational and cost basis. By rational, I mean facts such as those presented by Dr. Michael D'Souza and 44 of his fellow GP fundholders in south-west London. With the leave of the House, I shall read part of his letter which was published in *The Daily Telegraph*:

> "We are general practitioners who are currently placing our intentions to purchase health care in 1994 for a population of about 100,000.
>
> We are used to sending patients to the Royal Marsden and wish to go on doing so for many years to come. We declare our intention to place contracts with this hospital at its present Fulham Road site for the foreseeable future. Since it is the aim of the NHS reforms that taxpayers' money should follow where general practitioners decide to send patients, it would appear that those planning to close the Marsden now can only do so in open defiance of Government policy".

Dr. D'Souza eloquently sums up the arguments—that is what the reforms of the health service are all about.

Let us consider the moral issue of the £25 million of donations raised by the Royal Marsden from the public over the past two years. It has spent that, plus a further £13 million from the Government, on new, state-of-the-art facilities which have enabled the hospital to remain in the first division in the world. What will the generous donors think if their money ends up as rubble in the Fulham road?

Many hon. Members have told me that the Government do not want to close the Royal Marsden. Instead, they said, the Government wish to strengthen the hospital by consolidating its services on the Sutton site. Let me state now, as the Member of Parliament for Sutton and Cheam, that that is not the solution. The greatest strength of the Royal Marsden—and its associated institute—is its ability to work as one hospital from both Chelsea and Sutton, serving not only the population of west and south-west London but the country as a whole. Moreover, if the Chelsea site were closed, it would be impossible simply to rehouse all its facilities and patients at Sutton.

The Secretary of State has herself directed the Royal Marsden to prepare and submit an application for trust status. That has now been done. The Royal Marsden looks forward to the challenges of the internal market within the national health service, and believes that it will flourish. The Royal Marsden's confidence in its future as a successful trust hospital is based on the indicative contracts that it has with purchasing authorities nationwide, and the declared intentions of GP fundholders, who have complete faith in it.

The Government introduced the internal market into the national health service in the firm belief that market disciplines would radically overhaul the levels of efficiency within the NHS. It was also judged that the marketplace would be the best determinant of the nation's health needs. I welcome that wholeheartedly.

The Royal Marsden is asking for the opportunity to prove itself in the marketplace, in keeping with the Government's own philosophy. Surely it is the patients, as purchasers of hospital services, who should be trusted to decide which hospitals they want to use, thereby determining which hospitals will rightly survive in London and which will not. I leave the bureaucrats with one thought: who gains if the Royal Marsden is cut in half?

2.26 am

Ms Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): I congratulate the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) on initiating the debate—although I must say that I thought that it would be a more wide-ranging debate dealing with cancer services in London generally rather than simply with those offered at the Royal Marsden.

I must say that I was somewhat surprised by the hon. Lady's speech. By implication at least, she denounced the inadequacies of the internal market and its failure to protect the Royal Marsden, but she failed to recognise that the three reports on London undertaken over the past 12 months have helped to create the chaos that she described so well, and that that chaos is the result of Government policy.

The hon. Lady supports the Government's reforms—except in so far as they relate to her own hospital. I repeat that we are talking about the Government's health policy: it is simply not good enough to paint a picture in which the Secretary of State and her Ministers have no responsibility for, no idea of and no connection with the policies that they are pursuing. To try to blame it on civil servants who are responsible and accountable to those Ministers as if they had had a bad dream and decided to bring this chaos down on us is simply unacceptable.

The hon. Lady complained about and singled out Charing Cross. In doing so, she was again describing the way in which the market operates. In London, as elsewhere, the Government have been operating on the basis of a totally false premise. They promised the review of services, a planned transfer and investment in primary care. In London in particular, they have demonstrated their unique incompetence to deliver their objectives.

In describing the problems of the Royal Marsden, the hon. Lady might bear in mind the fact that they can be multiplied by 28 in London alone, where numerous hospitals are threatened with closure or mergers that they do not want. Cancer and its treatment and the importance of that treatment are, I hope, well understood by hon. Members. Cancer is the second major cause of death: one death in four is the result of it. In the age group 45 to 54, half of all female deaths are from cancer.

The Government undertook a review of facilities in London. Central London has 11 specialist cancer units, but it would be invidious to pick any one as a centre of excellence. The Royal Marsden has been mentioned, but equally, Bart's could have been mentioned, and its fate is currently unknown. The review was based on information about the number of expected cases, and the review groups made specific proposals about the north-east, south-east, south-west and west, and made recommendations about the Royal Marsden. As we have heard, there has been a massive campaign to try to protect the Royal Marsden and other hospitals from the ravages of that review.

What qualifications or abilities have the Government demonstrated to show that they understand the services that London or the rest of the country need? The answer may be found in parliamentary questions, and I shall quote from a few to show the Government's lack of understanding and knowledge.

I asked the Secretary of State for Health about the percentage of patients diagnosed as having cancer who see a cancer specialist. It is important that people have access to such services, and it is particularly important for the Government to plan those services, although we dispute their claim that they do. I was told that the information was not held centrally.

I asked what assessment had been made of the correlation between the degree of specialisation of consultants and the levels of morbidity and mortality among their patients. The Government confirmed, even though they do not know, the number of patients who see cancer specialists. They said that the likelihood of survival is greater if people see a specialist in the discipline. We asked about the ratio of specialists to population. That ratio is among the lowest in Europe. The Government know that people should see specialists and that we have the lowest number of specialists in Europe, but they do not know whether patients see them.

We asked about the waiting times for mastectomy in the past five years, and were told that the information was not held centrally. They do not know how many specialists there are and whether they are adequate; nor do they know whether people are seeing specialists or whether target waiting times are being satisfied. That is in spite of the fact that they issue guidance and know that, even after clinical diagnosis, women have to wait from three weeks to three months for treatment.

We decided to test the Government further, and asked the Secretary of State to list the London teaching hospitals with professors of general practice. She told us that the information was not held centrally. We asked her to list the hospitals in London that had been closed since 1989. She told us that the information was not held centrally. We asked her to name the hospitals that had been closed in each of the past 10 years. She told us that the information was not held centrally.

Finally, we asked the right hon. Lady what her plans were for restructuring the national health service in London. She referred us to "Making London Better", and said that the resources would be available so that change took place

> "in an orderly fashion and no proposal will be agreed unless it offers a sound basis for delivering a high quality and cost-effective service to patients."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1993; Vol. 233, c. *463*.]

I asked myself what the Government know about health. Do they understand that there is chaos in London, with hospitals being undermined by their policy? Do they understand that they have sacked more nurses and created more management posts than any other Government—and that in three years they have created 18,000 or more new management posts, which is more than our total number of consultants? I think that they do not.

Do the Government understand that they are now being challenged over their most basic proposal for London—investment in primary care? Doctors' leaders are contesting the Government's claim that they will bring London's primary care provision up to a national standard. You may remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that is supposed to be why the chaos exists in London; the idea is that, at the end of it all, we shall have better primary care. However, having studied the FHSA development plans, doctors are saying that there are no improvements, and that drastically needed improvements will not come about next year. The general medical services committee negotiators and the Tomlinson task force doctors are considering lobbying the Minister and health managers because the situation is so bad.

[Ms Dawn Primarolo]

What will the Government do about all that? There is a growing number of hospital hit lists and a soaring number of bureaucrats, with new jobs being created all the time. The British Medical Association tells us that the GP fundholder system has led to fast-tracking and queue-jumping. There is a cash crisis, with a £100 million gap between what is needed in London and what is available. That puts London's care at risk.

The flagship hospital, the Chelsea and Westminster, faces a loss of £1 million and has 112 empty beds, which the management describe as spare capacity:

> "This is entirely consistent with our plans for the future".

Presumably, when people get lost among the many facilities now offered at the hospital and start to suffer from exhaustion, they will be admitted to one of the 112 empty beds—but the people on the waiting lists will not be allowed to use them. The atmosphere among staff at that hospital is described as desperately low, because staff do not know what their future will be.

What about staff in the other hospitals? How do they know what their future will be? How are people in London to believe that the Government understand the cancer services we need, and have based their plans on proper information? The Marsden and the Institute of Cancer Research are excellent clinical and academic institutions, yet the Government are inflicting random damage on them by letting loose an internal market.

Earlier this week, a Government spokesperson admitted the chaos and problems being caused. Lady Cumberblatch said:

> "I recognise that it is impossible to avoid a period of uncertainty, which affects staff morale and the Government is committed to bring that uncertainty to an end as soon as possible".

That is not in sight. We have no information about when the plans will be introduced.

The Minister must tell us what the future will be for the 29 hospitals blighted in London. What is the future of cancer services? When will the additional resources for primary care be made available? When will the Government make up their mind on the three reviews? When can we expect the establishment of a health authority for London that plans London's health needs? How do the Government expect strategic planning of a health service to be undertaken while the internal market operates and destroys that planning?

Until the Government can address those questions, we can only see a future in which our centres of excellence continue to be undermined. People will receive cheap treatment, but it will not be the best treatment.

2.40 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) for her contribution. You may have thought, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that dawn was breaking early, but, alas, it was a mirage. The hon. Lady referred to Lady Cumberblatch and thus managed to combine the names of two of my noble Friends in an interesting way.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) for initiating the debate. Her constituency includes one of the Royal Marsden sites, so she is well versed in the issues surrounding the future of that hospital. That is why, to answer the point raised by the hon. Member for Bristol, South, my hon. Friend dwelt on that hospital.

My hon. Friend had an Adjournment debate on the same subject earlier this year, to which my hon. Friend the Minister for Health responded. My hon. Friend is aware that the NHS trust status application for the Royal Marsden is out for consultation until next month and she will be aware that I can say nothing which might pre-empt or prejudice that consultation or the decision of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State which will follow.

The hon. Member for Bristol, South referred to planning blight. The Government recognise the difficulties that uncertainty about the future of health services in London can cause, but my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam will appreciate that such decisions cannot and should not be rushed: they must be right.

The Royal Marsden hospital is one of the eight London postgraduate teaching special health authorities. Its prime role, in partnership with the Institute of Cancer Research, is research and development—ranging from basic science to clinical research and health services, dissemination of good practice to the wider health service, and postgraduate and post-basic teaching and training of doctors, nurses and others. In recognition of that special role, and unlike other provider units, the hospital has for some years been managed and funded directly by the NHS Management Executive.

Before any decision is made on the Royal Marsden, the report of Professor Tomlinson, and the Government's response in "Making London Better", the recommendations of the cancer specialty review, Sir Michael Thompson's review of research at the SHAs, the decisions on the future funding of the special health authorities and the decision of the Royal Marsden to apply for trust status will all be taken into account.

I do not wish to repeat in detail the analysis that the Tomlinson report contained. Suffice it to say that although he recommended that the Royal Marsden's services on the Chelsea site should form the basis of an integrated and rationalised west London cancer service at the Charing Cross site, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said to the House earlier in the year:

> "On the basis of the information before me, I have decided that there is no financial case for relocating . . . the Royal Marsden hospitals to the Charing Cross hospital."—[*Official Report*, 16 February 1993; Vol. 219, c. 135.]

My hon. Friend noted and paid tribute to that decision.

The Government responded in February with the publication of "Making London Better". That set out a clear framework for change. It was not the purpose of that report to lay down a blueprint for the future. We therefore established a special implementation group under the chairmanship of Sir Tim Chessels, to carry forward a structured programme of change and, as part of that change, to consult widely, openly and genuinely. The group will advise the Secretaries of State for Health and for Education on the implentation of decisions on the future development of health services in London and on the implications for medical education and research, will secure agreement among interest parties and oversee implementation of the changes.

Ms Primarolo: While the Minister is explaining the review procedure, will he tell us what steps the Government will take to protect all the hospitals while the reviews are being undertaken and there is all the speculation about their future, so that any decisions that might be taken by the Secretary of State are not pre-empted by an internal market that has already forced the hospital into reduction or closure?

Mr. Bowis: If the hon. Lady will listen and wait, we shall come through the procedures. I have already said that nothing that I say tonight must prejudice or pre-empt anything where decisions are being taken now, or are to be delivered shortly.

A key element informing the moves towards a more streamlined hospital service is the recommendations of the six speciality reviews that were set up on the recommendation of the Tomlinson report. The specialty review reports were published in June this year and are the latest in a long line of reports to highlight the problems of duplication of specialist services in London. That duplication works against patient care and can lead to undersized units possessing resources that are not fully used.

The aim of the reviews was to recommend a more rational disposition of services in six specialties—cancer, cardiac, neurosciences, plastics and burns, renal, and children's specialist services. The primary concerns were quality of care, value for money and ensuring that London remains a centre of clinical, teaching and research excellence. The review believed that change was needed and that excellence in service, research and educational terms was more likely to be sustained in larger multi-specialty units with strong multi-faculty links. The outcome of the SHA research review also needs to be considered.

The review teams were independent, and led by eminent clinicians from the specialties concerned. Their membership included London purchasers, GPs, nurses and patient representatives. The recommendations were made following an extensive programme of visits to the hospitals that might be affected by change and took into account previous studies and written submissions from a wide range of sources. The specialty review teams each developed a specification for a specialist centre, on the basis of which they evaluated current service provision and made recommendations for the future pattern of services. Their assessments took into account available information on the scope and scale of the specialty, appropriate models of care, criteria for a tertiary centre—including size, staffing levels, facilities and links with other services—academic links and performance—including undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and research—the quality of service and convenience for patients, and the financial viability and comparative costs of hospital sites. The two main themes that emerge from the reviews' recommendations are first, London's tertiary services need rationalising to sustain excellence in service, teaching and research and to deliver good value for money and, secondly, the large number of relatively small tertiary centres in London are increasingly constrained by their small size.

It is important to remember that the specialty review reports are advice to Ministers and the service. They will help to inform decisions about the future pattern of services in London and will be considered alongside the site option appraisals. The review of research in the special health authorities, which was published in July as strategy, is being developed by purchasers of local services. The last element is particularly important if services are to be genuinely targeted at patients' needs.

The London implementation group, which is part of the NHS Management Executive, has collated responses to the specialty reviews from the Thames RHAs, London purchasers and the hospitals affected. Those responses will also be important in informing decisions about the future configuration of hospital services, including those provided by the Royal Marsden.

The cancer specialty review was independent advice to the Government, and also to the NHS more generally. I assure my hon. Friend that it is not policy, nor was ever intended to be, and will not on its own shape the future of the Royal Marsden hospital. I can further assure her that no proposals to change cancer services in London will be agreed unless they offer a sound basis for delivering high-quality, cost-effective services to patients.

To show how seriously the Government take issues involving research and teaching, we commissioned a comprehensive review of the special health authorities' research programmes. The Royal Marsden, in line with the other special health authorities, provided evidence to an independent review group of both national and international experts set up by Professor Peckham, the NHS Management Executive's director of research and development. That distinguished review committee, led by Sir Michael Thompson, vice-chancellor of Birmingham university, reported in the summer.

My hon. Friend referred to the expert advisory group that considered the quality of research at the Royal Marsden. The group reported in confidence to Sir Michael Thompson's review committee and a copy of the report was given—also in confidence—to the chairman of the Royal Marsden special health authority. Any subsequent correspondence with the SHA was also in confidence, and it would be quite wrong for me—and not in the best interests of the hospital—to refer to the contents of that report, or indeed such correspondence, today.

In the light of the committee's report, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has approved substantial central support to protect high-quality research. By 1997, nearly two thirds of SHA funding will be provided centrally, under contracts that will offer considerable protection to these hospitals as they join the internal market from next April.

It has been Government policy for some time that the special health authorities should join the NHS internal market in April 1994 and that they should apply to become trusts—subject, of course, to public consultation and the normal assessment process. The Royal Marsden's trust application is currently out to public consultation, which ends on 3 January 1994. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State should then be in a position to consider making a decision on whether to allow the hospital to proceed to trust status.

I am conscious that the Royal Marsden has been generously supported by many charitable sources. As a result, it has been able to invest millions of pounds in new equipment and bricks and mortar, which could not have taken place without this special commitment to the hospital. We certainly do not intend to put that generosity and good will at risk. Therefore, I can assure my hon. Friend that if any major change were proposed, there would be discussion with the charitable donors who have recently contributed large amounts to the hospital. The aim

[Mr. Bowis]

would be to reach agreement on reusing donated assets elsewhere to the very best advantage. That assurance would, of course, apply not only to the Marsden but to any other hospital faced with a programme of major change.

Ms Primarolo: How would resources in one hospital be moved to another, and who would pay for the relocation?

Mr. Bowis: We are not talking about specific proposals to move anything anywhere; we are talking about discussing with the donors the results of their past donations and whether some of those resources could be moved and reused elsewhere—or perhaps used in a different way in their present location That is a matter for discussion with the donors and, whether it is the Royal Marsden or any other hospital, that is what we would expect to do.

The Government value tradition and recognise the respect and affection in which the Royal Marsden is held both nationally and internationally. However, it is not sufficient to rest on past glories. We are determined to maintain and reinforce the best research and teaching of postgraduate students in all disciplines.

Much of the NHS work in the special health authority meets specific patient needs and can be funded in part through the internal market with support for the extra service costs of research and teaching. I can assure my hon. Friend that we shall exercise the greatest care in ensuring that the decisions that we make on the future of the hospital and of cancer services generally will reinforce the best research in those centres while allowing high-quality institutions outside London to benefit from NHS support for research.

The Government are concerned to ensure the provision of a consistently high standard of care and treatment for cancer patients. The Department of Health has promulgated guidance on a number of issues, including in 1984, the organisation of acute services for cancer, in 1988, the minimum viable populations for radiotherapy centres, in May 1991, quality assurance in radiotherapy and in November 1991, the treatment of ovarian cancer. It is intended to produce new guidelines on the clinical management of lung cancer in the new year.

Cancer services are funded through general allocations to health authorities. However, the Government have provided additional special funding to help develop cancer services, including £15 million in 1992-93 as the first phase of a three-year capital programme to provide linear accelerators for cancer treatment and scanners and other cancer equipment, including mammography equipment for X-ray departments. The Government have provided more than £150,000 per year for United Kingdom action in support of the Europe against cancer programme. We provided £43 million in 1993-94 for voluntary hospices, the bulk of whose patients have cancer, and supra-regional funding for four specialist cancer services to the tune of £8·6 million in 1992-93.

As my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Bristol, South have said, cancer is a major cause of illness and premature death. One in three people will develop cancer at some time in their life. That is why the Government have made cancer prevention a priority in the health of the nation and have set targets to reduce incidence and death from four major cancers—lung, skin, breast and cervix. Prevention alone is not enough. Treatment, care and palliation are also vital in working to improve public health and to reduce morbidity and mortality relating to cancer. That is why the chief medical officer has established an advisory group of acknowledged United Kingdom cancer experts to advise him on the treatment and care of patients with cancer and on the organisation and delivery of cancer services of the highest possible quality, with the aim of improving care and treatment outcomes.

It has been argued that the United Kingdom has a smaller number of cancer specialists—oncologists—per head of population than any other country. It must be understood that many clinicians—surgeons, radiotherapists, physicians and general practitioners—have a role to play in the treatment and care of cancer. Crude comparisons of the numbers of oncologists is a misleading way of trying to estimate levels of service for cancer treatment. We are concerned to ensure that people with cancer, as with all other conditions, receive flexible and responsive treatment to meet their health needs, preferably close to home so that they have the day-to-day support of their family and friends.

The Government are encouraging health authorities to increase the numbers of consultants by 2 per cent. per year to ensure a consistently high standard of care around the country. However, in increasing consultant numbers, it is for health authorities to decide the balance between specialties in the light of demands on services.

Unlike other medical specialities, radiotherapy is devoted exclusively to cancer care. It requires a critical mass of professional and scientific equipment. The recommended minimum population for a radiotherapy centre is two thirds of a million. The Government are concerned at suggestions that patient services might suffer because of outdated radiotherapy and other specialist equipment. That is why we have made £15 million available over three years—1992-93 to 1994-95—as part of a rolling programme to help replace equipment. That concentrates largely on the provision of linear accelerators and other equipment. We encourage very high standards of quality and safety, and we promulgated guidance on quality assurance in radiotherapy in November 1991. Some equipment is old and is already being replaced, but it still gives safe and effective treatment.

Funding was provided from this programme for hospitals in London in 1992-93. Linear accelerators were provided to the Charing Cross hospital and the London hospital, as well as to Mount Vernon hospital and the Royal Marsden hospital at Sutton, Surrey. Both the latter provide services for patients from London and the surrounding area.

There are a number of specialist cancer centres around the country, such as the Christie hospital, Manchester as well as the Royal Marsden SHA.

There is no quantitative evidence to support the claim that people treated for commonly occurring cancers in general hospitals do badly and may die unnecessarily. Such claims only cause anxiety to patients and relatives. The claim that patients do better in specialist cancer centres is also unquantified, except for comparatively rare conditions such as certain bone tumours, retinoblastoma, large eye tumours, and children's cancers. Where the need for specialist centres is established, the Government have provided additional funding. Concentrating all cancer treatment in specialist centres would require patients to travel further than they do now for regular treatment. There is a clear need to evaluate the relative effectiveness and outcomes of treatment and care in specialist units and in district general hospitals, to evaluate the most effective pattern of cancer services for patients and the public health. Any assessment of outcome should consider not only the length of survival but quality of life. These are highly complex issues. That is why the chief medical officer has asked a group of cancer experts to look at this, as I said earlier. We await that advice with interest.

Ms Primarolo: I was told in a written answer:

> "Confidential audit work supported by the Department of Health, and international studies, indicate that consultants with specialist skills and experience achieve better outcomes".—[*Official Report*, 29 November 1993; Vol. 233, c. *302*.]

Why do the Government give such a written answer when the Minister has just told the House that there was no proof? Can the Minister explain that?

Mr. Bowis: The hon. Lady is talking about people and I was talking about centres.

The key to successful treatment for many cancers is early detection. That is why we have put so much effort into cancer prevention and education to improve awareness of cancer and early symptoms and to encourage people to come forward for treatment. Cancer is a key area in the "Health of the Nation" and we have set firm targets for four cancers. The United Kingdom firmly supports the Europe against cancer programme and we lead Europe in having established national screening programmes for breast and cervical cancer.

The NHS breast and cervical screening programmes are very successful. Uptake of screening in London may be lower than the national average, but this pattern is mirrored in other large inner-city areas such as Birmingham, and reflects to a large extent the problems of providing primary care services in areas with a substantial number of homeless or transient people and an ethnic minority community for whom English is not a first language.

To answer the hon. Lady's point, that is why we are spending an additional £40 million on primary care in inner London health districts and a further £7 million on voluntary sector initiatives. I hope that she will join me in welcoming the moves already in the graph on cancer in the first full year of "Health of the Nation", where we see a 1·2 per cent. reduction in lung cancer deaths for women under the age of 75, a 3 per cent. reduction for men under the age of 75, and a 2·7 per cent. reduction in deaths from breast cancer. Those are steps in the right direction towards the targets that we have set.

The hon. Lady also mentioned statistics, and cancer registration data are vital to monitor trends in the incidence of cancer over the years. As she knows, the data are collected regionally and consolidated nationally by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. There have been criticisms in recent years that data are incomplete and sometimes out of date, which is why the Department of Health set up a review of improvements recommended to the national cancer registration system to enable better monitoring of the effectiveness of measures to combat cancer. The OPCS has made real progress in improving computerisation of the national system and a senior doctor in the Department of Health chairs a steering group to oversee improvements, which includes representatives from registries and the relevant professional bodies. The outcome will be more accurate data provided more speedily.

Research is the lifeblood of the NHS. London is at the leading edge and we have taken positive steps to ensure that it remains so. In the 1992-93 financial year, the Department spent approximately £1·4 million on cancer research through its health and personal social services centrally commissioned programme. That includes research undertaken in London, such as that of the cancer screening evaluation unit, clinical operational research unit, and social medicine and health services research into cervical and breast cancer.

The Thompson report identified special health authority research of high scientific quality and importance to the NHS generally. Right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House will be delighted, as I am, that the work of some research teams was rated among the best in the same field internationally or in the lead nationally. Following the research review, we announced substantial central support over the next three years to protect high-quality research and development in SHAs.

The second recent initiative was the creation last month of a research and development task force under the chairmanship of Professor Anthony Culyer, pro-vice chancellor of York university, to review the ways in which the NHS currently funds its own research and development and supports that funded by others. Its findings are expected next spring. That is another demonstration of our determination to preserve and to extend our enviable record in health research.

An advisory group under the NHS research and development programme was formed to review areas of need relating to cancer. It will make recommendations about priorities to the director of research and development next summer, focusing primarily on the needs of the NHS. That guidance will be particularly important to providers of research that the NHS needs, and that must include all research teams in London.

In a broader sense, London plays a particular and important role in the national research and development programme for cancer that fully involves NHS research and development, major charities and also many smaller ones, the Medical Research Council, SHAs and London university.

If London is to be best equipped to undertake world-beating cancer research in future, a great number of factors must be considered. For example, advice on the future organisation of cancer research suggests that basic research will become more complex and rely more on expensive equipment and specialised technical staff. We were advised by the specialty review that much of that research is likely to involve techniques beyond the cancer field and that there is growing importance in postgraduate training of a multidisciplinary—that is, integrated care—approach to cancer care. We know, too, that clinical research is heavily dependent on a sufficiently high throughput of patients.

We must build on the current strengths of London's research institutions, developing existing links and collaborative working. To take one example from the cancer specialty review report, cancer research at Middlesex and University College hospitals in association with University college is highly regarded nationally. It is substantial in volume and wide ranging—from basic science and molecular medicine to clinical research and development. Strong research activity is found in surgical, clinical and medical oncology. Recent research investment in that respect totals £16 million.

[Mr. Bowis]

London's influence on research nationally is immense. We are determined to strengthen the capital's international reputation for medical research, including cancer research.

Child Support Agency

3.7 am

Mr. George Mudie (Leeds, East): I am grateful for this opportunity to debate the operation of the Child Support Agency on the Floor of the House, but I am sad that the hour is such that few hon. Members are present. I hope, with other hon. Members, to impress on the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security the devastating effect of the Child Support Act 1991 on thousands of constituents throughout the country represented by right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House. As the hon. Gentleman is one of the most sensitive, if not more intelligent, Ministers in the Department of Social Security, I am sure that he will take the absence of right hon. and hon. Members as reflecting only the late hour and the heavy day that the House had yesterday.

I sought this debate for three reasons. First, the 1991 Act is having a fearsome effect on a large number of individuals and families.

They are not errant parents and youths, but responsible adults, most of whom have already made maintenance orders through the court and are making a contribution to their child. They are being hit out of the blue with demands that may keep some Treasury accountant happy, but make the individuals feel helpless and powerless. They see standards of life that they have rebuilt taken away from them, leaving them with no opportunity to appeal.

My second reason is that, despite the fact that the Government seem aware of the growing problems thrown up as a result of the Child Support Act 1991, there seems to be a difference of opinion on how to deal with them. In the Chamber, the Prime Minister promised a review which he seemingly forced on a reluctant Department of Social Security. But the Department is apparently hostile to the idea of changes and defensive about the agency, and gives the impression that it wants to stall for as long as possible to see whether the pressure will blow itself away.

When the agency's director came before the Select Committee on Social Security, she spoke of an even longer time scale for the review than had been mentioned in the House. She said:

> "The Department of Social Security will deal with the evaluation of the Act, and it will probably be over an eight to 10 year period."

If that is a sign of what lies behind the Prime Minister's promise of an early review, it will be extremely bad news to thousands of people throughout the country.

My third reason involves the protests that have arisen from the first 36,000 maintenance assessments—the total number sent out by the CSA to the end of September. We have seen the pressure that has arisen from, and the response to, those assessments. But, as the Minister is aware, that figure is only the tip of the iceberg. By the end of the year's operations—April next year—the agency predicts that it will have made 1 million approaches, and 750,000 assessments will have been made by agreement or otherwise. Hon. Members have encountered such pressure after 36,000 assessments, but, by next April, 750,000 families will have received such news.

Harm is being done to people. There is apparent indecision on the part of the Government about how to respond. The numbers will explode in the next few months. Those are sensible enough reasons for bringing the subject to the Floor of the House.

The basis of the Act is not contested. Neither here nor in my constituency have I heard any challenges being made to the Act's central aim—that, when a relationship ends, the father or mother, who become, in the slightly offensive terms of the Act, the "absent parent", should continue to provide financially for the well-being of the children from the relationship.

It is accepted that, for whatever reasons—Government cuts in staff have played a major part—the old system was falling into disrepute. The numbers of lone parents receiving maintenance was continuing to fall, and the amounts paid varied to such a degree as to deny adequate defence. However, the replacement of the flexibility of the court system with an administrative formula with no flexibility has, for many people, meant the exchange of one extreme for another.

When the previous Under-Secretary of State for Social Security replied to the Second Reading debate on 4 June 1991, he said:

> "I pledge to the House that we shall continue to listen carefully to sensible ideas for improving the Bill in Committee and its remaining stages. We shall honour our obligations to consult widely on the preparation and content of the regulations that will be occasioned by the Bill.
>
> The Bill relates to complex areas of social relationships, and we recognise that it would not be an easy task to get the Bill entirely right at the first attempt.
>
> "That is why many of its procedural details have been framed in the form of regulations. Should we need to change any of those regulations in the light of experience, that can be done in such a way that it will not affect the Bill's primary purpose of putting children first."—[*Official Report*, 4 June 1991; Vol. 192, c. 242.]

Perusal of the Committee proceedings after that speech shows that there was a feeling that the Government had not listened, but, as is customary in the Committee Corridor, saw any challenge to the details of the Bill not as a helpful response—even from an Opposition who had welcomed the principle—but as a hostile act. Therefore, the opportunity was lost as the Bill passed through the House. The question now is whether the Minister will have the humility to make changes or the Act will fall into disrepute and the fine central aim of providing for children be lost.

What must be done? For a start, hon. Members and people in the country need some assurance that the hijacking of the Act by the Treasury will be resisted in future. Because of various events over the past few months, it is clear that the primary purpose of the Act—to provide for children—has taken second place to replacing Government money to lone parents on income support and family credit by absent parents' contributions.

If any hon. Member feels that that is an exaggeration, he should consider a number of facts. It is clear that, whatever lip service is paid to providing lone parents with help, the overriding priority has been to save the Exchequer money. Some £530 million is to be extracted from absent parents this financial year, yet only £50 million will find its way to care parents. That is quite a division of the spoils—which, according to the Minister's evidence in the Select Committee, will rise to £900 million within four years.

Further evidence emerged in July, when the Child Support Agency discovered from the first quarter's figures that, on assessments and, more importantly, benefit savings, it would have a massive shortfall. *The Guardian* reported a July strategy meeting and outlined what was subsequently confirmed as the new strategy. That consisted of three tactics—first, concentrating on middle-class fathers; secondly, maximising maintenance yield; and thirdly, that this was not the time for cases that should receive early attention.

I shall read specific statements made at the Select Committee, which the Committee accepted as genuine. The first is:

> "staff of the Child Support Agency were being told to concentrate on extracting maintenance payments from middle-class fathers because the agency is in danger of failing to hit its first-year target of saving the taxpayer £530 million."

The second is:

> "The name of the game is maximising the maintenance yield —don't waste a lot of time on non-profitable stuff."

The third is:

> "This is not the time for the cases we know should get early attention but which will need a lot of effort to extract money."

I ask the Minister to examine those statements and tell the House where the children or children's welfare is mentioned. Do those phrases and sentiments suggest concern for children, or a desperate attempt to meet financial targets imposed by the Treasury?

Take a look at the title proudly volunteered to the Select Committee and proudly given by the CSA to its July strategy—"closing the gap". Does that refer to a delicate attempt to redistribute money between partners while keeping an already damaged relationship together? I think not. It is more a case of bridging the gap between forecast and budget outcome at the Treasury's request.

Thirdly, only good taste, for which I am famed, prevents me from exploring the disgracefully insensitive performance-related salary awarded to the agency's director. Only continuing good taste prevents me from speculating on the part that that played in the panic July measures. Were the measures foisted on the director by the Treasury or the politicians, or were they the director's measures to protect her salary? What a disgraceful situation in which to place a public servant in such a delicate and sensitive area of public service work.

Lastly, there is confusion over who is being targeted by the agency. When the measure was first raised by Baroness Thatcher, it was in the context of errant fathers, as she so quaintly phrased it. Yet the priority spelled out by the director to the Select Committee suggested that the hunt for errant fathers had been dropped in favour of those absent parents who had already agreed maintenance payments and who were easy to find because of their sense of responsibility.

Days later, the Minister sought to assure the Select Committee that that was not the policy, but the leaked memo in *The Guardian* and the exigencies of the Treasury targets suggest that the easy target was being selected, above all for financial reasons, and that gave rise to the rush of letters from angry constituents complaining of that strategy.

There are good reasons for believing that the entirely acceptable principle in the Act has been pragmatically corrupted for financial reasons, and that should end before it brings further anger from the targeted responsible parents.

But even if that were to happen, a number of detailed matters require urgent action. A number are dealt with in the admirable Select Committee report published last week. I say "admirable", because it has many good suggestions, but it does not detail the maximum changes required; rather, it suggests the areas requiring urgent movement.

[Mr. George Mudie]

The major matter requiring attention is the inflexibility of the calculations. The different amounts awarded by the courts were a major reason for the changed system. Because of that, flexibility seems to be regarded as something to be avoided at all times. The calculation for exempt income—that is, the amount that the absent parent requires for his or her essential expenses—is so rigid and limited that it will cause genuine problems in the short term and in the future.

Interestingly enough, the Select Committee suggested that the £8 disregard might be increased to £40, and that would be a welcome step for many parents who have been hit by that inflexibility.

The Select Committee lists a number of genuine items that are not taken into account—the cost of travel to work; the expense of visiting children or vice versa; the inescapable costs of caring for stepchildren; the parent-in-care element in the maintenance requirement; and fees for collection and assessment of child maintenance. Travel-to-work costs are important and can be a vital element in keeping the absent parent in work and so able to pay the benefit. That may be important, yet it is not permitted or seen as important enough to include in the formula.

Each of the points that I have outlined can be argued away, but if they are not taken into account, they can jeopardise the ability of the absent parent to contribute to the upkeep of the child. By not allowing for expenses connected with the parent visiting the children or vice versa, the formula can damage or even destroy the continuing relationship between the child and absent parent.

Then there is the human difficulty caused by hitting the absent parent with the result of the assessment without warning, without giving the parent any opportunity to adjust his finances and without any real regard for the second family. I should like to demonstrate this by giving some details of a family in Leeds. I have sent to the Prime Minister a copy of a letter that the family sent to me. It quietly spells out what, in the name of a good idea, but one administered soullessly and with no finesse, the Act is doing to ordinary, responsible citizens.

The man's marriage broke up 11 years ago. He handed over the house and a capital sum. He has continued for the past 11 years, on request, to buy clothes and presents and to pay for holidays, as well as paying a sum agreed by the county court. All those facts have been ignored by the CSA. Three years ago, before the Act was a twinkle in the Minister's eye—before it was introduced in the House—the man extended his mortgage. It is now £189 per month. The CSA will recognise £60 a month.

This August, before the assessment landed on the man's doormat, before he was even aware that he was being assessed, his partner, who works in her own right, agreed that, with her finances as they were, she could buy a car. They got a loan and she bought a car. When couple approached the CSA to say that they would no longer be able to afford the car, the CSA's advice was, "Sell it. The loan is not considered." The endowment mortgage will not be considered either. Among his essential housing costs which the CSA and the Act refuse to acknowledge is his community charge. It is not regarded as essential. If he does not pay, he will go to gaol, but to the CSA it is not an essential housing cost.

From that one individual's case, similar to so many throughout the country, I hope that someone in government recognises what the Government are doing to hard-working individuals who simply do not understand what is hitting them and why. The calculations may be correct; they may flow from an acceptable wish to see more paid to the child; but does no one understand the need to give people time to adjust their spending so that they can cope? Can no one in government understand the bitterness which is potentially generated in the second family as a result of the assessment landing on the doormat?

I sent the man's letter to the Prime Minister, asking specifically that he should not follow his usual and acceptable practice of passing the letter to the Department of Social Security for answer. I did not want a heartless defence of an insensitive Act. I felt that the Prime Minister should read the details himself and decide whether he could defend a machine that was getting dangerously out of control.

I do not know about the Minister's experience, but my experience over a long life—too long for my happiness—is that people spend up to their income. On my Member of Parliament's salary, I cannot understand how someone survives on £15,000. When I was on £15,000, I could not understand how someone could survive on £8,000. People tend to spend to their income. In fact, nowadays people tend to spend beyond their income. Against the background of that natural fact of life, do not the Government understand what the effect is when the agency makes an assessment so devastating in its financial consequences? Do they not understand the need for some phasing in?

Another change that would increase the chances of the Act being accepted is if the parent with care received a share of the extra money. Earlier, I gave the proportions that go to the state and parent. For every £11 that is gained from absent parents, £10 goes to the state and only £1 goes to the parent with care. Any money that is taken from the absent parent will only substitute for income support, and will probably lose that parent his or her passport to other benefits, such as school dinners. The Government could sensibly allow a financial disregard, which would improve resources for the child. The Australian system divides money raised from absent parents 50:50 between state and parent, and evidence suggests that carers and absent parents accept the arrangement in much better humour.

The Government must stop the retrospective attack on clean-break settlements. There is no logical reason why they cannot be computed, so the Government should stop their attack on people who acted in good faith in the past. It must now be accepted that this highly regarded method of keeping the parent with care and children in the family home in familiar circumstances, among friends and familiar neighbours and, probably most important, permitting the child to continue at the same school with their friends while the family goes through one of the most traumatic things that can happen to a family has been destroyed by the working of the Act.

The least that the Government can do, therefore, is overcome the lazy, unfeeling, bureaucratic opposition to making such settlements a financial factor for past awards.

Even if they only draw a line before which clean-break settlements will be acceptable, at least they will keep good faith with people who have acted in extremely good faith.

I have attempted to outline briefly the difficulties that the Act is causing. I emphasise the central point: what is at issue is not the provision of further financial assistance to children but the inflexibility of the method, the lack of notice and the Government's refusal to share money so that children gain a direct benefit.

I am grateful for your patience, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and for this opportunity, even at this terrible hour, to state the case for so many of my constituents who find themselves singled out for such heartless treatment. Their ordeal is being shared by many throughout the land. I welcome the opportunity of speaking quietly about their predicament. They—and, I fervently hope, someone in government—are listening.

3.32 am

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie) on an excellent, well-researched speech. By raising the subject, he has done a tremendous service to men and families outside the House who are suffering from the Government's actions.

I do not speak quietly: I make no bones about it—I have never had a quiet voice. The other week, a man and woman came into my surgery with two kids. They are trying to do their best, but the Government are ploughing them into an early grave. They both broke down in front of me. If the Minister had seen that, it would have broken his heart. He would have seen two young kids grasping at their parents's legs, not understanding what was happening but breaking their hearts crying. My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) knows a little about the case because it is partly based in his constituency. I did not know what to do because I was heartbroken myself to see a family shrivel and nearly die before me because of the Child Support Agency and the way it hounds people for extra money. In this case, it is hounding a man who has been to court and agreed a payment and thought that that was the end of the matter. He has never run away from his commitment to his previous family. There was no question of his doing that, but he was at my surgery pleading for help.

I have written to the Minister and his Department about many such cases, so they are not new to him. I shall not cite all the similar examples but I will refresh the Minister's memory. In one case, the payment was set at £57·51 per week—let us not forget the 51p—and was due to be paid from 22 October 1993. The Government's attitude is hilarious, especially when one thinks of the previous Cabinet, with which I shall deal in a moment. The man's average wage ranged from £87 to £174. I have a list of similar cases. The Government have the list, as has the CSA.

The case that I have cited is that of a man working overtime and doing all that he can to try to make a few bob while the CSA is trying to take £57 a week from him. It is crazy. The man came to see me, at his wits' end. He does not know whether to dive into the Tay or the Clyde or to stow away on a boat to another country—perhaps Yugoslavia, where he would probably receive more care and attention than the Government have given him.

I remember when the previous Prime Minister said that we should pursue absent fathers. There is no question but that there was some sympathy for that view—no one wants to see a guy deserting his family without paying—but the harrying and hounding now taking place belongs to the Dark Ages.

It is like the Spanish Inquisition and the hunting of witches who were burnt at the stake. It is unbelievable. When I think of the Cabinet, I remember a great song that we have in Scotland called "Donald, Where's your Trousers?" This lot do not know how to keep their trousers on, with the result that they spend too much time fornicating in bloody London. The country has debts of £50 billion because this mob cannot run the country and they are now going to hound everyone to get money, but they are chasing men who have made commitments through the courts.

I deal now with the case that really gets to me. It concerns a man who wrote to me but who is not my constituent, although his father is. I do not want to say a great deal tonight, but I want the opportunity to read out a series of letters from one family. The Minister's people have the letter that I am about to read. It may not be the biggest heartbreaker that I have ever heard, but it goes straight to my heart and I hope that the Minister's head can fix it.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): My hon. Friend has hit on a very important point. Part of the problem is that the Minister does not see these letters, because as soon as they hit his desk he refers them to the executive agency and we cannot get a reply from him.

Mr. Graham: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. As he said, letters sent to the Prime Minister are passed on to someone else. I am beginning to wonder whether the Prime Minister has difficulty reading. Perhaps he should take a wee bit of time to read some of those letters; if he did, I am sure that some ministerial proposals would never reach Government level.

I hope that the Minister will accept that our constituents' words sometimes speak more clearly than fancy words or jargon. The letter that I received reads:

> "I am writing from the above address which is my son's house, and on his behalf I would like to explain his problem.
>
> Basically it concerns the Child Support Agency. My son"—

I shall not use the man's or the family's name—

> "has been driven to despair by the worry it"—

the Child Support Agency—

> "is bringing."

My constituent's father goes on:

> "Two years ago his wife walked out with another man taking the two children. Although she is the guilty party I realise this cuts no ice with the CSA.
>
> However only the youngest boy . . . is his child, so in consultation with the DSS it was decided he would pay £20 per week for the one son. About four months ago the DSS allowed him to cut this to £10 per week on the grounds of his financial situation".

His rent is £46 and his community charge £9 a week. Once he has paid for his light, heating, food and travelling expenses, he is left with nothing out of his £150 take-home pay.

The letter goes on:

> "Now the CSA will be hounding him for about £40 per week and they want £44 administration costs and £66 for arranging for the money to be paid to his wife, which at the moment costs him nothing as he has the children (two boys) for approximately three days every fortnight. It used to be weekly but he had to cut it down owing to cost. He hands the money over fortnightly and

[Mr. Graham]

gets her to sign for it. Incidentally, my son is asthmatic and pays £9 to £10 a time for his medicine. He is also being taxed as a single man. Everyone wants blood!

Sorry to be so long winded but this is a horror story.

I myself am a 72-year-old pensioner".

I shall not go into all the details, but the man goes on about how his son Dennis has changed his job to a firm in Port Glasgow to try to better himself financially. His father tries to help by running him to work, and so on. He works continental shifts. As the House will be able to imagine, it is almost impossible to co-ordinate buses and trains from Erskine to Port Glasgow. I represent the constituency and know the difficulties.

The man lists a catalogue of problems that his son has, concluding:

"The bottom line is if we give him our car or buy him a cheap banger he will not be able to run it because this CSA only allows rent, community charge and a small amount for food set against take home pay. Nothing is allowed for travelling, medicine, etc. In other words, it is persecuting reasonable fathers who are already paying what they can and also making them pay for the missing fathers who they do not aim to trace.

The tragic result of this ill thought out and wicked scheme is that my son is seriously thinking that he may give up his work altogether and come to stay"—

with his mum and dad, that is. The letter points out:

"at least he would have food and bed and less worry. What a future. And the CSA would get nothing.

I imagine there must be a lot of other people in this position but I am hoping that you can air this situation in the House of Commons."

When I have finished my speech, I will pass the letter to the Minister so that he will know about the case.

I replied to that letter and received another, which stated:

"Thank you for your two letters pertaining to my son's problems. Obviously you are trying hard to help him—much appreciated although it seems likely to be falling on deaf ears at the CSA, sorry the KGB".

The man has taken to calling it the KGB. The letter continues:

"Time is running out for Dennis, they want £41·50 weekly from him, so leaving him £11·50 a week to feed himself and buy essentials for the house.

As a last resort, he will pack in his job and condemn himself to years on the dole . . ."

I received a letter from the man's son, and it is heart breaking. I shall pass those letters to the Minister.

This situation is arising because of the Government's mismanagement of the economy. They are driving folk to an early grave. Men who have made a commitment in court are easy targets and the attitude is, "Let's chase them." The Government must stop this hounding and harrowing and must direct the CSA to do its job properly. It must not take the easy option of trying to take £531 million from such people. If the Government continue in this way, it will cost much more.

What will happen if these folk go unemployed or go underground? Who will pick up the tab if that happens? It will be the ratepayer and the taxpayer. Once again, this bankrupt Government's policies will drive us into insane situations. These men and women are not hiding from the system: they have been exposed to it and it is burying them. The Minister must listen to us when we raise these cases and give us a reply that will give these folk some hope that they can live from day to day without thinking of putting their head in an oven.

If the Government do not listen, they will reap the bitter harvest of many parents abandoning all hope. I do not think that the Government's purpose was to see men and women abandoning hope and children denied loving parents, even though those parents are separated. Surely that is not what the agency is about.

3.47 am

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): On Saturday, I conducted one of the largest surgeries that I can remember since becoming a Member of Parliament. When I turned up with my list of people whom I had to see, I was surprised to find that fully one third of them would complain about the Child Support Agency. All those people were already paying maintenance and were in respectable occupations. They were police officers, special constables, local government officers and skilled workers in local industries —people who had a stake in society and who were working hard and doing their best to make ends meet. On the figures that they gave, they seemed to be faced with highly unreasonable demands from the CSA.

When I voted for the Child Support Act 1991, it was on the basis that we would pursue the three quarters of fathers who make no contribution whatever to the welfare of their children. I have seen the figures in the brief, but it appears that the agency is first going after those who made a contribution or are making continuing contributions. The agency is not making a distinction between cases in which a court has made a settlement of a one-off payment of equity in a house or the full value of a house or a lump sum, pension arrangement or contribution from bonuses, clothing and so on, and other types of case.

We are seeing the implementation of a purely mechanistic approach to the problem of obtaining maintenance payments from fathers. The automaticity of the mechanism is causing great concern. Some women are seriously thinking of leaving their husbands because they had a son or daughter in a previous marriage, and their children are now being prejudiced by the possible outcome of an assessment given over the telephone by a junior official in the Child Support Agency. That official may show absolutely no sympathy for the way in which current arrangements have been fixed and may say that no transitional arrangements are possible.

As the hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie) said, there are no transitional arrangements or allowances to help people to readjust to their circumstances. Worse, people may even be asked to contribute a lump sum in back payments from a date specified by the agency, without any reference to those concerned.

When I had seen the eight or nine people who came to see me about that problem last Saturday, I did not realise that I would have an opportunity to raise the matter in the House so soon. I must tell my hon. Friend the Minister that all the people whom I saw on Saturday professed—I believe them—to be Conservative voters. They are all people who had previously seen our party as the party which would track down the feckless and chase up the people who make no contribution. Yet they now find themselves in the peculiar position of being faced with bills that they simply cannot pay.

The formula being applied does not take account of everyday payments that we all have to make, such as council tax, telephone bills, bills for lighting and heating, and other fixed costs that we all normally have to pick up in our everyday lives. The only payments taken into account are mortgage payments. Of course, many people have taken on mortgages, thinking themselves safe in the knowledge that, having settled a one-off arrangement with their first wives, they no longer have to make a greater contribution than that fixed by the court. I was interested to hear that when one of the first cases went back to the court recently, the court, which has a much great discretion than Child Support Agency officials, refixed the original maintenance payments. That must have been possible because the court had the inherent ability to be much more flexible and to take into account the individual case. I do not say that the agency is therefore a bad thing; I believe that it is a good thing, and should be supported. But it needs to be more flexibile and to take more account of individual circumstances. That is not what it is doing at the moment.

Another aspect that we should consider is the idea of a transitional arrangement to help people to readjust. Allied to that is the £44 administration cost that one has to pay when first assessed. If the assessment is wrong and one wants to be reassessed, one has to pay another £44; if one's circumstances change again and one needs to be reassessed again, one has to pay another——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): No.

Mr. Devlin: That is what I have been told is being said to fathers in my constituency by the agency officials. If that is not true, I should be grateful if my hon. Friend, who knows a great deal about the subject, would put that fact on the record so that I can direct agency officials to his answer as a piece of guidance.

Mr. Graham: I can help the hon. Gentleman there. I have a list of all the stuff that was sent out that proves that he is right and that people do have to pay the money.

Mr. Devlin: That is what I am told and that certainly seemed to be what was happening to the nine or so people whom I saw on Saturday.

Finally, I shall draw the attention of the House to the mechanism for cutting the benefit of mothers who refuse to name the father of their child, if they know who the father is. Several people have told me that here have been cases in which the father refunds the cut—it is about £8 a week—to the mother on the understanding that she will not name him. I do not know what can be done to tackle that practice, but I consider it to be a straightforward social security fraud, on which we must crack down. I do not want the Child Support Agency to have to behave like the Spanish inquisition, or any of the other organisations that have been cited, but it is important that we gain some contribution from fathers who desert their children or who, for one reason or another, are separated from them.

That people should make some contribution for their children is a question of individual responsibility. An urgent review of the work of the agency should be carried out to ensure that greater flexibility is shown in individual circumstances, so that an equitable solution is arrived at in each case.

3.54 am

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): I congratulate all the hon. Members who have spoken in this important debate. They have all said much the same thing and I do not apologise for the fact that I will do the same. We have all identified the problems that have been revealed to us daily at our surgeries, constituency offices and in messages sent to the House.

In common with those who have spoken, I nail my colours to the mast in support of the good principle behind the Child Support Agency. If the 1991 Act was designed to make parents who have separated take joint responsibility for their children, it has singularly failed in that objective. More and more people have reached the conclusion that that is not the purpose of the Act. They believe that it is Treasury driven.

The Child Support Agency is not closing the gap between separated families but widening the gulf between them. It is common for people to tell hon. Members that, prior to the establishment of the agency, they had enjoyed quite amicable relations with their estranged partners. Now those estranged partners are at each other's throats and are contemplating all sorts of legal actions against one and another—all because of that agency.

I wrote to the Minister about the policy behind the Child Support Agency. I resent the fact that he referred my letter to a paid official of an executive agency, who then wrote to tell me about that policy. I knew what that policy was when I wrote to the Minister in the first place. I wanted to get the Minister to listen and to change it. When I intervened earlier, I said that I was worried that letters that hit the Minister's desk were transferred immediately to those in the executive agency. If that is not the case, I should like the Minister to reply to a specific question. How do I get to him? How do I get a constituency case to him, so that he intervenes rather than merely refers it to the chief executive of the agency?

I could highlight many cases that reveal the problems caused by the Child Support Agency, but I will quote just two that happen to spring to mind. A consultant who lives near me, and who works in a hospital in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham), has married for the second time. He and his second wife have reasonably good incomes. They had planned to have a second family, but he now finds that his first wife, who had never made contact with the agency, is now challenging the support that he provides. That support is the subject of an assessment. That consultant, who uses his great expertise and skills in a hospital, has told me that if he took into account housing benefit and all the other benefits to which he might be entitled were he out of work, he might be marginally better off it he gave up the ghost. I will tell the House why in a moment.

The second case concerns a man whom I happen to have known for a long time. He and his wife became estranged because his wife suffers from an alcohol-related problem, which she is trying to overcome. When they separated, his wife moved into a home that she had inherited from a relative, so it was paid for. The husband paid the mortgage and has discharged, or is discharging, all the other debts. Now, he is worrying whether, by paying so much money to his wife, he is giving her the most appropriate support, given her alcohol problem. That is also the advice that he is getting from the clinic that she attends. I know that such cases are hard to regulate, and that is why all hon. Members have spoken of the need for flexibility and a bit of common sense.

I am already spoken of my concern about the referrals of our letters to the executive agency. If the Minister saw the volume of cases that come across all our desks—I

[Mr. Gordon McMaster]

assume that it is all 651 desks—he would see the common thread of that demand for flexibility. We could all quote dozens of agencies, all mirror images of each other, and all the tales of misery and woe. This should not be overstated or said glibly, but, in letters and face to face, people tell us that they have never been so distraught and despondent and they feel like giving up jobs. They even talk about suicide. The reason for all this misery is not financial but the children, and the emotional link with them.

All hon. Members who have spoken have referred to those who are being chased. I heard the Minister say on television some weeks ago—he may have changed his view now, and I hope that he has—that there was no truth in the allegation that the CSA was chasing those most easily chased. I should like an answer on that because it seems that those most easily fingered are the ones getting fingered. That is fairly common; it is not unique to the CSA. For example, I know that the only performance measurement for the new PACT teams in the Department of Employment, which assist in the employment of disabled people, is volume of cases. Therefore, they tend to go for cases that are most easily chased. The same principle is being applied here.

There are several common threads, of which the first is inflexibility. Property and discharged debts are not taken into account when an assessment is made. The second problem is access, when estranged couples live many miles apart. If this policy is about building family ties and making parents take responsibility for their children, why deny fathers or mothers the money that it takes to give them access to children who live many miles away? That is happening in many cases.

Another factor that has not been taken into account is second families. Many people who have come to my surgery have said that they cannot provide properly for their second families. The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) made a valid point for his constituency, although not for mine, when he said that the people coming to him are Conservative voters. If I were sitting in the Minister's position, I would think that it was bad politics to pursue the policy in that way, because the people whom he is most likely to damage are those who are most likely to support him. Not only is the whole scheme fundamentally flawed but the Minister is targeting his own people. Let me assure him that they are fast moving over to our side of the argument.

We have all pleaded not for the principle to be done away with but for an amendment to the Act to make it work more sensibly. The Government have taken a very good principle and discredited it.

4.4 am

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie) on obtaining this debate. I also congratulate him on his appointment to the Public Accounts Committee. His speech tonight showed why he was given that appointment and I am sure that he will prove to be a valuable member of the Committee.

We cannot doubt the importance of the issue raised by my hon. Friend. It is unlikely that any hon. Member—even the Prime Minister—has not received representations on the subject. It is probable that all those representations have been critical of the Child Support Act, and, in opening the debate, my hon. Friend articulated those criticisms accurately.

In his inimitable way, my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) spelt out what he knew to be happening to his constituents, from his experience. My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) re-emphasised many of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East. I am almost inclined to call the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) an hon. Friend tonight, but if I were to go through the litany of all the Conservative Members who have criticised the Act, we should be short of time—even with an hour and a half. I shall confine myself to saying that all the Back-Bench contributions have restated many of the trenchant criticisms made of the legislation since its enactment.

I am sure that the nation will not be listening now, in the wee small hours; however, what has been said in the debate so far—and, more important, what the Minister will say later—will be scrutinised carefully by all the families and individuals who have been adversely affected by the Act. We must all remember the people—many of them on low incomes, with high outgoings—who have been asked to pay under the provisions of the Act.

As I have said, hon. Members have made trenchant criticisms of the Act and it has been subject to many detailed criticisms in the House and elsewhere. No one is arguing that its underlying principles are unsound. No one is arguing that there is no need for absent parents—to use the terminology used by the agency—to contribute to the upkeep of their children. No one is arguing that those absent parents should be allowed to walk away from their responsibilities.

What is being said—the Government appear not to be listening—is that the application of the Child Support Act is too inflexible and rigid. It does not take proper account of the impact of the high assessments on absent parents, many of whom care deeply about the children from whom they are separated. Perhaps we could change the terminology to "separated parents" rather than "absent parents"—the current language deeply hurts many parents who contribute to families with whom they are no longer involved. The term "absent parent" is a form of criticism which is not justified.

During Social Security questions on 6 December, the Under-Secretary of State, replying to one of his hon. Friends—incidentally another who was critical of the Act —said:

> "Today has been a good day for the Child Support Agency".—[*Official Report*, 6 December 1993; Vol. 234, c. 12.]

Clearly, he thought that the agency had been given an early Christmas present. I ask him, in his reply, to elaborate on what he meant by that statement. Why was 6 December a good day for the Child Support Agency?

One interpretation placed on his statement was that he was overjoyed by the conclusions and recommendations of the Select Committee on Social Security and that somehow he had been let off the hook. Was he really implying that nothing substantial needed to be done to amend the working of the Act? If that is what he was saying, it will be a great disappointment to his hon. Friends who are looking for quick action from the Government.

I am sure that the many thousands of complainants who have been subjected to the workings of the Act will not share his joy, either on 6 December or subsequently. They will not claim that it was a good day for them. It will not do for the Minister to seek to sweep away the many criticisms of the Act in such a flippant and complacent way.

It is interesting to note that in a written answer, also on 6 December, the Minister said:

> "The Child Support Agency is still very new, but it has made a determined start on its important task of ensuring that more children receive more maintenance, more reliably."—[*Official Report*, 6 December 1993; Vol. 234, c. 108.]

I am sure that everyone agrees that the agency has made a determined start. If it had not made such a determined start, I do not think that the debate would be taking place. Is the Minister really claiming that more children receive more maintenance, more reliably, because of the Act? Where is the evidence for that? Surely it would have been more honest for the Minister to say that it will be the Treasury that will receive more money more quickly, not the children.

Mention has been made of the findings and recommendations of the Select Committee. Time does not permit me to go into the details of those recommendations. I have no doubt that the House will return to that report at a later stage. The debate will not go away after tonight. The Committee's recommendations are to be welcomed. They are a useful beginning on which to base subsequent amendments to the Act. I do not think that I will offend my hon. Friends who served on the Committee if I say that although the report is a useful beginning, it does not go far enough. More needs to be done if we are to bring about meaningful and acceptable changes to the legislation. What must be recognised is that the responsibility for change lies with the Government, not the Select Committee. It will not do for the Government to pick up and implement only the less radical options in the Select Committee report. They must look beyond the report.

If the Minister really believes that children will receive more maintenance, more reliably, he must change the Act to introduce a disregard for parents with care so that the children of parents on income support receive some of the cash from the increased maintenance obtained from the separated parent.

Do the Government mean to take account of the fundamental criticisms that have been made of the Act on both sides of the House about, for example the need for transitional payment arrangements and clean break settlements? I want to draw the attention of the House to the Government's Green Paper on the new divorce procedures. Paragraph 7.31, under the heading "How would the Child Support Agency and mediation fit together?" says:

> "The Child Support Act will considerably simplify the calculation of child maintenance because the same formula for assessment is used in all cases. The formula takes account of each parent's income and essential outgoings at the time of assessment and, because it deals with the financial consequences of any property transfer, takes account of the practical outcome of 'clean break' settlements."

I am not sure that the Government know what is going on. One document says that clean break settlements are taken into account, whereas the Minister welcomed the fact that the Select Committee said that an easy solution could not be found to clean break settlements. Will the Minister explain that contradiction?

I was going through a list of the fundamental criticisms that have been made of the Act. Other areas that hon. Members have asked to be taken into account, on the basis of representations from constituents, include travel to work costs, travel for access to children costs, costs of looking after children during holidays and at weekends and, at this time of the year, the additional cost of Christmas and presents for the children.

If the Government are serious about taking those issues on board, they must build into the assessment process a more flexible approach by introducing a new system that allows discretion to review decisions by officers and, within a reformed appeals system, to grant a departure from the standard financial formula. I am sure that the Minister is only too well aware that the Child Support Agency has been re-christened the "Treasury Support Agency". That phrase will continue to haunt him and the Government until something substantial is done about it.

As we are at Christmas time, when financial pressures are at their greatest on all families, the best Christmas present that the Minister can give to children in families affected by the Act is a commitment to their parents to undertake serious consideration of the points so eloquently argued by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East. Nothing less will do.

4.15 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): I begin by echoing the congratulations of all Members who have spoken to the hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie) on securing this debate and I thank him for the way in which he put his points. No lack of concern was shown by him or by any of the hon. Members who have spoken, and I appreciate how they have all put their cases in a variety of different styles, reflecting the worries that they have experienced. I also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) for his contribution.

All hon. Members have made a number of valuable comments, to which I shall come shortly. First, I will say a few words about some of the fundamental principles of the scheme, to which everyone who has spoken in the debate has signed up, although what they have said has sometimes belied that. Those principles also have the unequivocal support of the Select Committee on Social Security. The hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) is right. The day in question was devoted to social security questions; it was also the day of the report's publication. The significance of that was simply that a number of the criticisms directed at the Child Support Agency, which have been specifically raised again tonight, were dealt with by the Select Committee. I note what the hon. Gentleman said, but, because the Select Committee did not back some of those criticisms, he seems to want to pick and choose what the Select Committee said and did. I shall deal with all the Select Committee's criticisms and recommendations. I accept what it said it terms of showing us some of the directions in which it would like to go in the future, but some specific points of principle must then be carried through into action and legislation to see the consequences, to which the Committee also referred.

Some of the issues mentioned tonight and the criticisms made outside do not take that step. They pay lip service to the principles, but where the principles bite it is a different matter. That is a hard issue and I shall try to deal with its nub as best I can.

The main aim of the Child Support Agency is to obtain more maintenance more reliably for more children and improve on a discretionary court-based system that had

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failed to stem a decline in the payment of maintenance. The scheme is designed to ensure that, where they can afford to do so, parents take responsibility for maintaining their own children. It is not right that taxpayers, many of whom are bringing up children of their own, should be asked to foot the bill.

The principle, which is not new, was strongly endorsed by the Select Committee, and widely welcomed by Members of all parties and by the relevant lobby groups when the child support proposals were first discussed in 1990. The need for a change from the previous system was adequately illustrated by the fact that, before 1991, fewer than one third of lone parents received maintenance from the absent parent. By 1997, our aim is to have increased that proportion to half.

That is how more children will receive more maintenance, more reliably. Research shows that many lone parents currently receiving income support want to enter employment.

Mr. Ingram: How many more children will receive how much more money?

Mr. Burt: We estimate that maintenance was not previously paid in 50 per cent. of current CSA cases. We believe that proportion will be higher by the end of the year —roughly 600,000 of the 1 million cases that the agency will have taken on. That is quite an improvement.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): For the Treasury?

Mr. Burt: I will deal with the Treasury in a moment.

Recently, the CSA received much coverage in the press, as it did in the business of the House. Much of the media coverage was less than even handed, with the majority of commentators concentrating on the plight of absent parents. Little attention is paid to the substantial benefits for children derived from regular maintenance payments. I am grateful to the Social Security Select Committee for highlighting that particular point.

We always knew, and made no secret of the fact, that the new scheme was expected to increase the amount of maintenance paid by absent parents. That was made clear in the White Paper, in debates on the Child Support Act 1991 and regulations and on numerous other occasions —and that point was endorsed by the Select Committee, which concluded that it is right for the Government to increase the level of financial support paid in respect of children.

We realised that absent parents would express concern about the amounts that they would be required to pay—and we are seeing that concern as the agency's assessments begin to take effect. I emphasise, however, that although absent parents are asked to pay more, many parents with care are now receiving realistic amounts of maintenance for the first time.

A point often overlooked is that many of those absent parents, albeit often unknowingly, made settlements that involved any maintenance that they paid being supplemented by the taxpayer. It is clearly desirable that those absent parents who can afford to do so should make a more realistic contribution towards the cost of maintaining their children and relieve the taxpayer of an unnecessary burden. I hope that all right hon. and hon. Members support that view. It is only to be expected that some absent parents who in the past paid little or no child maintenance will not welcome being made to pay more.

The amount of maintenance is determined by a formula that was extensively discussed inside and outside Parliament and put into legislation. The purpose of the standard formula is to help eradicate many of the inconsistencies that prevailed under the discretionary court system. I am pleased that the Select Committee remains convinced that a formula-based approach that will produce consistent results is the right one.

An important point invariably overlooked by the media is that the formula ensures that both parents, where they can afford to do so, contribute to the maintenance of their child and that both parents are subject to the formula calculation, if they have sufficient income. To that end, the formula is redressing the balance between the relative incomes of parents with care and absent parents.

Incidentally, the terminology is not meant to be in any way critical. It has been around for five years and merely differentiates between the parent with physical care of the child the majority of the time and the parent who is physically absent the majority of the time. The word "absent" does not mean errant and should not be taken to mean that.

All too often in the past, parents with care lived at benefit levels while absent parents were able to remain comparatively better off. It is significant that more than 96 per cent. of cases currently on the agency's books concern parents with care and children with benefit. Not one hon. Member who spoke tonight mentioned that in almost every absent parent case cited it is highly likely that the parent with care is on benefit. It is worth emphasising that the majority of absent parents will be left with 70 to 85 per cent. of their net income after paying maintenance, and those with low incomes will usually be left with an even higher percentage.

I am glad to say that we are now seeing some sections of the media beginning to explore the other side of the equation and present a more balanced picture so that the public can see some of the true benefits to children that are being derived from the scheme. I hope that others will follow suit.

I recognise that, despite support for the principle, people have genuine concerns about how the detail of the scheme has affected them. I have undertaken to examine those concerns—as have my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State—and I am closely examining the specific recommendations of the Select Committee. However, I share the Committee's concerns and in my deliberations I shall be weighing carefully the potential gains to absent parents against any adverse effects on parents with care. I will not delay in my considerations. I am treating the matter with urgency, but I will not allow myself to be railroaded into hasty decisions.

I shall deal with some of the specific issues that have been raised and start at the heart of the matter. It is important that I refer to the Select Committee's work. Paragraphs 16 and 17 of the Committee's report deal with basic issues. I shall read from the report because the issues are important. The report states:

> "In our previous reports we stated our belief that the system of maintenance for children was long overdue for improvement. We continue to take the view that it is right that parents of children should provide realistic financial support for their children wherever possible, and we also consider it right that the

> costs to the taxpayer, which may be caused when families split leaving one partner to bring up children on a low income, should be reduced where possible."

That is the view, not of the Government, but of the Select Committee. It recognised the taxpayer's position. The report continued:

> "The aim of the Child Support Act was to increase the level of child maintenance paid by parents, and it is to a degree inevitable that there will be protests from those who are asked to contribute more. While we place on record our immediate concerns about certain aspects of the operation of the new child support arrangements in this report, it is notable that a very large group has been left almost unheard in the present debate"—

and in tonight's. The report continued:

> "A small proportion of the letters we received came from women who supported the objectives of the Act. One woman wrote:
>
> 'As a single mother who receives no maintenance from the father of her child I was pleased and relieved when the Child Support Agency was set up. I am at present living on Income Support after having to give up work when my son was born because I could not afford child care. I thought the CSA would ensure that I received enough maintenance to enable me to afford the child care I need for my pre-school child so that I could return to work'.
>
> Another woman asked us not to be unduly influenced by the representations of one group:
>
> 'Please don't allow the well-orchestrated babble of complaints from aggrieved men to persuade you that the parent who leaves his (or her) children is entitled to turn his (or her) back on them.'.
>
> We have kept these views in mind during our short inquiry."

We have talked at length about real people and I accept that hon. Members have made their points firmly and raised real cases, but there is another side to the coin to which they have rarely turned their minds tonight. The members of the Select Committee did not turn their minds from that side of the argument, and the Government have not done so either.

Mr. Mudie: Does the Minister agree that the Select Committee positively recommended changes to everything but the clean-break settlement? Despite the fact that the Minister has plucked those two paragraphs from the report, the Select Committee—with the exception of one Labour Member—voted solidly for changes in everything other than the clean-break settlement.

Mr. Burt: I shall come to that, and I have plucked out more paragraphs from the report. The Select Committee certainly made recommendations that I have undertaken to consider. However, the Select Committee has referred not to fundamental issues of principle, but to amendments to the basic structure of the Act that they supported. I am not certain that it necessarily follows from everything that hon. Members have said tonight that they understand how the principles apply and the fact that they will cause some degree of upset as they begin to work.

I have a quote from a woman who was not interviewed for the "World in Action" programme, but who put her case well to a journalist from *The Sunday Times*. She said:

> "In the past, when I was working and desperate for money, the courts used to listen to the fathers' excuses about why they couldn't afford to pay, and women got a pittance. The CSA seems like a good thing, and I just wish it had been there for me."

[Interruption.] The hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) is laughing. I did not laugh at the stories told by Labour Members tonight about the real concerns of some of their constituents. I do not expect them to laugh when they hear about the other side of the coin, which is all too rarely put. We must not be nostalgic for what the court system was—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Barnsley, Central asks me to reveal a particular name. I will not do so, but if he looks at *The Sunday Times* of 21 November he will see the article written by Liz Lightfoot about the "World in Action" programme in which she gives names.

Hon. Members tonight again raised the question of targeting payers. I have to say that it is not correct to allege that the agency is concentrating on absent parents who are already paying maintenance, to the exclusion of others. We have always made it clear that all types of case will be dealt with. In fact, in its first year the agency will have devoted considerable effort to cases where little or no maintenance has been paid in the past.

The agency has also had considerable early success in finding missing absent parents—those parents who have shirked their responsibilities and, in many cases, disappeared without trace. In the cases completed so far, there is a 90 per cent. success record in tracing those difficult cases which in the past would simply have disappeared. Again, that fact is not given much prominence.

This year the agency expects to deal with just over 1 million cases, of which almost 640,000 will involve absent parents who do not currently pay any maintenance. It is so important to get the balance right. I recognise the concern about the take-on of cases where people are already paying. However, other cases are being taken on and I hope that hon. Members recognise that.

The complaint was made again tonight that the CSA benefits only the Treasury. I see nothing wrong with the allegation that a sizeable proportion of the maintenance will relieve the burden on the taxpayer. The question that we should ask is not whether we should have introduced an Act to save the taxpayer money, but whether the taxpayer should have been involved in the first place. Where the absent parent can afford to pay, the answer must be no.

That principle was strongly endorsed in the report of the Social Security Select Committee, which reaffirmed that one of the main driving forces behind the reform of the child maintenance system was to return financial responsibility for children from the social security system to absent parents. Again, if we believe in the principle, we have to believe in the action that will put the principle into practice. I am not entirely certain that the House is, as yet, prepared to accept that.

I quote again from the Select Committee report. Paragraph 18 states:

> "A large part of the public debate about the Child Support Agency has centred on the accusation that it was picking unfairly on 'soft targets', that is, those absent parents who were already making maintenance payments. Behind this accusation has been an allegation that the Agency's work is governed by the requirement to make substantial savings in the social security budget. We believe this objective to be an important one. The Committee believes that taxpayers have for too long been asked, in effect, to pick up maintenance bills that should have been met by absent parents."

The committee read the letters sent to it and understood the feelings behind them, but it still backed the principle that this House previously endorsed—that the taxpayer has an interest and that it is legitimate for the agency to reflect that and to do something about it. I believe that hon. Members should do the same.

The hon. Member for Leeds, East referred to the closing the gap initiative. It was always expected that there would be a gradual build-up in performance as the agency is a new organisation operating new legislation and procedures with new staff. We were also aware that the level of

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information needed before an assessment could be completed meant that there would be a period of time between the issue of an application form and the completion of an assessment. Nevertheless, at the end of June the agency concluded that the numbers of cases being cleared were relatively low and inconsistent with the planned six to 12 weeks clearance time for straightforward cases. It therefore decided to use its locally based staff to deal with the early stages of the processing of applications where the parent with care was claiming or receiving income support.

That exercise, the transfer of work between agency centres and the field, with the resulting amendments to procedures, became known as the closing the gap project. The project was also charged with considering any procedural simplifications for the agency which would speed up the processing of cases. It should be remembered that the speeding up of the process enables the parent caring for the child to receive money earlier.

The closing the gap project has made a big impact on agency performance. In the four months to the end of October, the agency's productivity increased significantly as a result of that initiative. In the second quarter of the financial year, by comparison with the first, agency staff issued two and a half times as many application forms and more than three times as many maintenance inquiry forms to absent parents and completed eight times as many assessments.

The oft-quoted document that the hon. Gentleman mentioned refers to the view of one member of staff who was clearly unprepared for major change. The great majority of the agency's staff welcomed the changes brought about by the closing the gap project. They had always wanted to be more involved in the basic processing, and the project gave them the opportunity. They have made a significant contribution to the big increase in productivity that has been achieved as a result of the initiative.

I would need an hour to say all that I have to say, but, alas, I do not have that amount of time. A common concern raised by hon. Members tonight has been raised by others, including the Select Committee, and that relates to the assessment formula and how it takes account of specific expenses, such as existing debts or the cost of travel to work and contact with children. We believe that the formula makes provision for essential living expenses and, additionally, absent parents are left with a significant proportion of their net income after paying maintenance.

We do not think it right to allow for specific expenses in the formula, as that gives them precedence over the basic needs of the children. The Select Committee correctly realised that to make provision for a shopping list of essential expenses would push child maintenance further and further down the priority order. The ultimate result would be a return to the unrealistically low sums that were common under the previous system.

I recognise that the Select Committee, in endorsing the principles behind the agency, made recommendations on phasing and on trying to ensure that protected income would be larger to cover some of the issues raised by hon. Members tonight. We have those matters very much in mind. I cannot tell the House tonight what conclusion we have come to, but I hope that some of the things that I have said tonight will be helpful.

I recognise the pain that hon. Members experience when they speak to their constituents. I have the same experience with my own constituents. We will consider carefully what is to be done. We should not underestimate the difficulties of the previous system, the decline in the payment of maintenance and the failure to provide decent maintenance for many children——

In accordance with Mr. Speaker's ruling—[Official Report, 31 January 1983; Vol. 36, c. 19]*—the debate was concluded.*

Crown Prosecution Service

4.37 am

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I am most grateful for this opportunity to debate the operation of the Crown Prosecution Service. I am particularly grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) and for Monmouth (Mr. Evans), who have joined me to speak in the debate, and to my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General, who has chosen to reply to the debate in person at this rather unearthly hour.

The Government have embarked on a remarkable package of reforms to the criminal justice system. One might even describe it as the crime management system. The Home Secretary's 27-point plan for the criminal justice system will make an enormous difference and involve a great deal of legislation.

At the same time, we have two different sets of proposals for the police, one stemming from the Sheehy report, which is in modified form, and one coming in the police White Paper, and measures that apply to the relationship between the public and the forces of law and order, ranging from improvements to the special constabulary through to greater emphasis on neighbourhood watch schemes and witness protection schemes.

Curiously, the one part of the crime management system that has been almost entirely exempted from that process is the CPS. The one major change that it has undergone has been a reduction in the number of areas, the reasons for which are not immediately obvious.

If just one link in a chain is left largely unchanged when the others are being greatly altered, it would be reasonable to suppose that that one link was the strongest link. In fact, I shall argue tonight that it is by far and away the weakest link. I do not want to dwell on the various personal attacks that have been made on the Director of Public Prosecutions or, indeed, on the wider attacks that have been made from time to time on individual Crown prosecutors. They form no part of my case. I want to focus on the facts.

Since the establishment of the CPS in 1985, crime of all types has risen dramatically, according to the official figures. The British crime survey, which is based on opinion polling, suggests that the numbers of offences in certain categories of crime against property, including burglary and offences involving motor cars, have risen slightly faster than the official figures suggest. The numbers in other categories have risen less quickly.

Over the seven years from 1985 to 1992, the police have succeeded in clearing up more offences. The number of notifiable offences cleared up has risen from 1·1 million to 1·39 million—an increase of one quarter—yet the number of convictions for indictable offences has fallen by 9 per cent., from 362,000 to 339,000. At the same time, the success rate in prosecutions for indictable offences has fallen from 96 per cent. in the last year before the CPS came into operation to just over 90 per cent. last year. That is according not to the CPS figures but to the figures from the Home Office and the Lord Chancellor's Department, which have a more consistent basis. They are figures provided by the Library, based on the Government's figures.

Those figures, which are poor in themselves, understate the grave deterioration in the prosecution service. In that period, plea bargaining has steadily extended so that many prosecutions have been secured at the price of accepting a lower charge. Research by several neutral bodies has confirmed at the qualitative level that the figures correctly show a marked deterioration in the service. I shall mention just two bodies. In 1987, just after the CPS came into operation, the National Audit Office did a survey of, among others, judges, magistrates and clerks to justices of the peace. That survey suggested that far more people thought that the service had got worse than thought that it had got better.

Just two years ago, Home Affairs Select Commmittee investigations found quote after quote from almost every possible agency. People felt that the CPS was inferior to the old system in which the police were in charge of prosecutions. Quotes were obtained from magistrates, barristers and policemen. The chairman of the Magistrates Association said that he

> "could not think of a single good thing"

that had been done for justice as a result of the introduction of the CPS. At the same time, costs have spiralled. The Comptroller and Auditor General's review of the Crown Prosecution Service in 1989 said:

> "In August 1986, the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Home Office attempted to compare the cost of the CPS with the cost of the previous regime. They estimated broadly that the old arrangements would have cost £70 million for 1987-88 as against estimated expenditure of £110 million for the Service. But they accepted that this might not take full account of the costs of accommodation and general admistration, and concluded that the difference in costs was due mainly to the increase in staff numbers. The actual cost of the Service in 1987-88 was £134 million."

By 1991-92—remember that this is a period of extremely low inflation—while the service had continued to deteriorate, total expenditure had reached £226·15 million. Even if one makes the generous assumption that the whole of the initial increase was due to accounting changes for accommodation and so on, the service's costs had doubled. It did not stop there. Costs have continued to rise sharply.

In the current year alone, in my county of Kent, new arrangements for the handling of paperwork will cost an extra £750,000 this year, with a continuing charge of £500,000 a year for paperwork that was wholly unnecessary before the CPS came into being. Delays in major criminal cases result in witnesses no longer being able to recall what happened, reducing the chances of a successful prosecution being made; equally, there are delays at the bottom end of the scale. I have spent much time talking to my local police. Indeed, I was out in a police car all night last month.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Was the hon. Gentleman in the cells?

Mr. Brazier: I was a voluntary visitor to the cells. Policemen have told me time and again that, in the past, they could arrest someone for committing a minor offence —for example, shoplifting—and, because the paperwork involved was minimal, if there was no queue in the magistrates court a case could sometimes be completely cleared through to sentence within 24 hours. Simply getting the file prepared and processed by the CPS takes a minimum of a fortnight, with all the costs that that entails.

The result is demoralisation of policemen, who see cases being dropped, experience delays and increasing costs and spend hour after hour with earphones on their

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heads summarising cases for the CPS. That would not be necessary if they were prosecuting cases themselves and it would be far less bureaucratic.

I do not want to quote the wretched forms that are pouring increasingly out of the DPP's office, imposing increasing burdens on the police force. The CPS is vastly more expensive than the previous arrangements. Long delays and a huge increase in paperwork are involved—an increase that the PA study into police paperwork was not allowed to consider. Its terms of reference were specifically confined to areas under the control of the police, although it was able to recommend better co-ordination and regular reviews of the relationship between the police and the CPS. Policemen tell me that the CPS is the biggest single factor accounting for the fall in morale among policemen, not only in my area but in others.

I am not suggesting that we need improved practice in the CPS, although obvious examples of where improvements need to be made can be given. Policemen in my constituency are full of praise for local Crown prosecutors. In the past six months, only two cases that local police would have liked to proceed with were dropped, and both were relatively minor. The point that the police make to me again and again is that the system is profoundly wrong and that where Crown prosecutors are doing a good job they are doing it in spite of the system, not because of it.

The system has no objectives to encourage Crown prosecutors to take up difficult cases where they believe defendants to be guilty but where there is a real chance of losing. The pursuit of such cases is important not only to victims but to the public's perception of justice being done. The system does not have any penalty for dropping such cases. Indeed, it rewards the cautious Crown prosecutor because he appears to get a better result by dodging the more difficult cases. That problem arises under any system in which there is divided responsibility, as there is in the present system. The police complain about the CPS and the CPS complain about the police. It is not clear who is responsible if a case is not successful.

There is another aspect that is undervalued and missed —I say that with the greatest respect to the majority of hon. Members in the Chamber at the moment, who are lawyers. Of the intelligent and articulate complaints made against the CPS, the one that is missed is the damage that the service is doing to the individual policeman by removing the vital opportunity for training as a witness which the prosecution of minor cases provided for young policemen.

In the old days, policemen who prosecuted in shoplifting cases gained experience in the court room by being cross-examined in difficult circumstances. I am now told that, all too often, when policemen without that experience are witnesses in major criminal cases in the Crown court, they are unable to make a convincing case compared with their peers of 10 years ago.

In practice, policemen are not released back on the beat. As there is no longer a policeman present to prosecute each case, magistrates have had to insist that one is present as a security guard, so we are paying twice—once for the chap who is prosecuting and once for the policeman merely providing security in the court. From a management angle —for my sins, I was a management consultant—the point runs even deeper. If a policeman has had experience of having to frame a case before magistrates, that in itself will have knock-on effects on his practice out there, at the sharp end. By knowing exactly how one has to present a case and what arguments will or will not cut any ice in court, and from gathering evidence and undertaking the other procedures involved in down-to-earth policing, a policeman is likely to be that much sharper on the beat.

Surely we are not naive enough to believe that policing is simply about putting thousands of extra people back on the beat. We do not want to return to the 1930s when there were three Royal Commissions on policing in three years and when there were 120,000 uneducated policemen on the beat, marching up and down looking for criminals. Policing is about skills and quality. It has repeatedly been stressed to me—by detectives, funnily enough—that the experience gained by prosecuting minor cases in magistrates courts was vital in teaching policemen about their wider duties.

My next objection is that the source of policy formulation is profoundly confused. Other hon. Members wish to intervene so I shall not elaborate too much, but I cite one particular example. The recent case of Regina *v.* Fergus, which was a matter of mistaken identity, has led to the director of prosecutions in London issuing new guidelines on witness material. The guidelines are confusing in any event because they conflict with an earlier ruling by the Court of Appeal on the protection of people who are subsequently acquitted. That is a detail, but the key point is that the director of prosecutions in London has issued fresh guidelines that are out of line with those in the rest of the country.

The only argument for having a centralised service that seemed to carry any weight was that it would produce uniform standards. If there are no uniform standards, and if individual regional directors can set their own rules—in this case, one that involves a great deal of extra work—even that argument falls.

What should we conclude from the original reasons for setting up the CPS? I believe that they boil down to three points, one of which is mistaken, one of which is pernicious and the third of which holds some water but its scope has been taken too wide. The mistaken argument is that an independent CPS enhances the credibility of the prosecuting authority because people believe that cases rest on more than the police having it in for someone or fitting someone up.

It must be said that, while public confidence in the police has declined in the past few years—a recent *Reader's Digest* survey suggested that it is now down to 73 per cent.—confidence in the criminal justice system has also plummeted and, indeed, it now stands at below 50 per cent. in the courts. More important, the fact that the successful prosecution rate has fallen even though large numbers of cases have been dropped since the introduction of the CPS illustrates that that argument simply does not hold water.

The second argument, which I believe to be utterly pernicious, is that the CPS provides a safety net against miscarriages of justice. As an old-fashioned Tory, I believe that argument to be constitutionally monstrous. Let us look at the figures. In the second quarter of this year, 43,000 cases were discontinued—just over half were discontinued on evidential grounds. The second largest category—almost a third of the total, or more than 12,000 cases—were discontinued in the so-called public interest. What kind of philosophy of justice says that bureaucrats operating in secrecy behind closed doors should be allowed to discontinue vast numbers of cases in the public interest? Twelve thousand victims out there have been told that their cases have been discontinued in the public interest, without any public debate. If a case is to be discontinued—unless that happens in the most exceptional circumstances—it should be discontinued either as a result of committal proceedings, which are in the open, or at a trial, where the judge has the power to scrub a case as early as he wants to do so.

The third argument—the argument that convinces me that there is a case for having independent prosecution in some areas—is the resources argument. Many of the cases that used to start—and, in the case of the Serious Fraud Office, continue to start—cost absurd sums. Public money could be saved if expensive cases unlikely to succeed could be called off at an early stage. It is surely manifestly clear that we are talking not about summary or even hybrid offences but about major criminal cases.

That brings me to my four conclusions. First, I recommend that the prosecution of summary and hybrid offences should be returned to the police—simply given back to the old system. That would be massively cheaper and massively faster. Moreover, and eminently, it would restore that vital training function to the police in the case of minor cases while allowing them to appoint whatever solicitors they chose for cases that were on the borderline or too complicated for them to follow themselves.

Let me give a little plug to Christopher Frazer's excellent CPS pamphlet "Privatise the Prosecutors", in which I believe my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth had a hand. Christopher Frazer recommends an elaborate scheme for privatising the CPS on a local basis, basically arguing that the DPP should appoint local solicitors to carry out prosecutions in individual areas. Their contracts should be renewable every few years and the firms in question should not be allowed to take on defence work. That is a splendid suggestion, subject to the important condition that I mentioned, which is that I do not think that it should extend to summary and hybrid cases.

My third recommendation is that major policy areas should be the responsibility of the DPP, answerable to the Attorney-General, alone. I would envisage the regional structure disappearing anyway. The idea that a major new demand can suddenly be imposed locally without clearance from the centre is absolutely wrong.

The fourth recommendation applies to whatever system of prosecution we have. Tapes play an important part under the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984—an Act with which I have a lot of difficulty—and their use is widely supported, at least in major criminal cases. The summaries of those tapes, which create so much paperwork for the police, should be made by the CPS. There is a body of academic evidence suggesting that policemen are the wrong people to make the summaries anyway. They are not trained for it and, more important from my angle as a former management consultant, if the CPS were responsible for the summaries, it would be much less demanding than it is under the present arrangements. I am assured by policemen that that single measure would save vastly more paperwork than the total batch of recommendations that came out of the excellent report on police paperwork.

We are steadily reforming all the links in the chain of the criminal justice system—except the weakest one. I welcome the reforms in the system and in police relationships with the public. We must tackle the CPS, the weakest link, and I commend my four simple recommendations to my right hon. and learned Friend.

4.59 am

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): This is perhaps the earliest time of day at which I have spoken in a debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) on securing this important debate. It occurs at a time when the eyes of the nation are focused on law and order and on the way in which we tackle crime.

I recently held three meetings in my constituency—at Fulwood, Clitheroe and Longridge—on law and order. At them, the voice of the public was as one in wishing the Government to get tougher with criminals and wanting those responsible for crime punished and, where necessary, put behind bars where they could inflict no more misery on society. I was therefore delighted when the Home Secretary announced his 27 points at the Conservative party conference and included them in the Queen's Speech. They fully underlined his commitment to pushing through legislation that will redress the balance in favour of the victim and against the criminal.

For too long, we have been hoodwinked by those who favour leniency and submissiveness in dealing with the part of society that chooses to live outside the law. There is no doubt that the nation wants to see persistent young thugs properly punished, and not sent on holiday jaunts to the Algarve. I was delighted by the recent Home Department pronouncement against such "punishment", especially by local authorities that are for ever saying that they are starved of cash.

People want better support for the victims of crime and new powers to revoke bail for persistent offenders. They also want new prisons that will keep criminals out of the community.

In our battle to beat crime, the Crown Prosecution Service will be called on to take a lead role to ensure that those suspected of offences come before the courts to face their peers. That is the outcome which I seek, but I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury that, in its current state, the CPS is greatly handicapped in its ability to perform to the highest standards. That is a tragedy, because the service has no shortage of worthwhile work to protect law-abiding citizens from the ravages of thugs, robbers and violent criminals. However, because of the mountain of bureaucracy in which it has become entangled, it seems unable to function to its full potential. In *The Guardian* last week, a lawyer stated:

> "We are bombarded with bumf from headquarters. I came thinking I was in Perry Mason and I ended up in 'Yes Minister'."

The cost of this bureaucracy is great. It has created low morale among those in the organisation and tension between them and those who are at the sharp end of law enforcement—the police. That has led to an erosion of public confidence in its ability to protect their interests, and it is costing the taxpayer a great deal of money.

Morale among CPS staff seems to be at an all-time low as, increasingly, they feel that they are being asked to prosecute only in cases in which there is a high probability of winning and dropping those that are more difficult. It is generally accepted that the Crown Prosecution Service will prosecute a case when it feels that it has a more than even chance of winning. However, in the past a Crown Prosecution Service officer working in York was reported as saying that, in reality, the percentage was closer to 70

[Mr. Nigel Evans]

than to 50. That policy, whether written or implied by the powers in charge, is misguided and dangerous. It will lead, and undoubtedly has led, to guilty people walking away from their crimes without being made to pay for the consequences of their actions.

A senior lawyer in the Crown Prosecution Service, who wished to remain anonymous, wrote in the *Daily Mail* on Thursday 21 October:

> "All lawyers need to be willing to fight difficult cases at times and good lawyers can win against all the odds. Unfortunately the CPS gives no encouragement to good lawyers or to courageous prosecuting.
>
> If a prosecutor drops a difficult case then nobody in the CPS criticises him on the grounds that the case could have been won. If he takes one on and wins, nobody praises him.
>
> But if he takes on a difficult case and loses, he could face criticism for accepting a weak case, and knows his career could be affected. So it is simpler and safer to drop a difficult case rather than fight it. And drop them prosecutors do—every day."

That would be a serious indictment whoever levelled it at the CPS, but when one of its own employees does so it becomes a cause for great concern. We cannot afford a system that accepts only cast-iron cases to the exclusion of everything else. The "if in doubt, drop it" mentality has not gone unnoticed by the police or by the public, and it is causing both groups to lose confidence in the CPS.

Too many times, a serious charge has been reduced to secure a conviction, or even dropped altogether. Defence lawyers are quick to take advantage of that weakness, and use it to good effect in protecting their clients' interests. For example, they will often encourage their clients, where possible, to opt for a Crown court trial and the extra costs that that would incur are used as a lever to get the prosecutor to reduce the severity of the charges so that the case may be heard in a magistrates court, which will lower the costs that the CPS will incur.

In other cases, because its desire for a conviction has become so overriding, the CPS has been known to reduce the charges itself before going to court. To many, that may seem good practice, but that is of little consolation to a victim of rape who sees the charge for that serious crime reduced to indecent assault. If convicted in a magistrates court, the perpetrator will receive at most a sentence of six months in prison. There is no recourse for the victim to appeal to the Attorney-General for a more severe sentence to be passed, because the attacker was never tried for the rape. That lack of desire to prosecute is causing concern.

For example, it cannot be right that we ask our policemen to risk their lives daily to protect the public, when in a recent case a policeman who had a knife pulled on him by a drunken driver saw the CPS alter the charge to the offence of carrying a bladed article—an offence not punishable by a prison sentence. Another case reported in *The Daily Telegraph* on Friday involved a policeman—PC Tony Stallard, with 27 years' service on the beat—who was assaulted by two teenagers whom he approached for stealing pub glasses. After being pushed to the ground and attacked, he was saved from a sustained assault only by two of his fellow officers, who restrained the attackers. Even with that seemingly overwhelming evidence, the CPS dropped the charges and Mr. Stallard has been forced to hire a solicitor and a barrister at a cost of several thousand pounds to mount a civil prosecution.

After the CPS refused to prosecute a man who battered a police officer in Streatham, an inspector wrote:

> "This type of incident does nothing for the morale of officers who are at the butt end".

In *The Times* recently, Stephen Wedd, the secretary of the Criminal Law Solicitors Association, said that the CPS was now better run, but that

> "what strikes me as extraordinary is that cases which we as defence solicitors can see are losers—losers for us—the CPS discontinues. They always play safe".

Those are alarming examples, which must eat away at the confidence of police officers in their ability to do the job. I could give many other examples from newspaper articles. The *Police Gazette* of 15 October reports an attack on an officer that left him with a punctured lung and six broken ribs, yet still the CPS refused to prosecute.

I am aware that the Police Federation has raised the concerns of its members with the Home Secretary, and I trust that the matter will be taken further. In the light of the examples that I have cited—they are by no means isolated—we need to ask ourselves how we can constructively tackle the problems facing the CPS, an organisation which employs more than 2,000 lawyers, 141 legal trainees and more than 4,000 support staff.

To start with, we need to build bridges between the CPS and the lower levels of the police force. A senior officer in my constituency informed me that, although he and the Lancashire constabulary enjoyed a good relationship with the CPS, other police forces reported a great deal of antagonism between the CPS and officers at the grass roots. He claimed that much of that frustration is due to the fact that the police and the CPS have failed to establish a sound channel of communication.

A major source of friction is the number of cases that the CPS decides not to prosecute after the police have handed over their findings. In 1992-93, the CPS decided against prosecuting 193,000 cases—equivalent to one in seven of the completed files referred to it by the police. The 193,000 victims are also important. The number of case dismissals was 20,000 up on the year before. Thousands of officers who worked tirelessly to complete the investigations feel aggrieved by that total and question the motives behind the dismissal of so many cases. Such is their sense of grievance, never mind the feelings of the victims who sit haplessly by, waiting for justice to be done, only to discover at a later date that their cases never reached the courts and their assailants walked free.

The police are already operating a sifting procedure through their increased use of the caution. If the police think that a case has little chance of going far, they caution those charged. In 1992-93, some 41,000 fewer cases were referred to the CPS by the police; the number of completed cases at the magistrates court fell by 36,000 and the number of defendants going to Crown court fell by 9,000. At a time of rising crime, that is not good enough.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury that a review of the working of the CPS would be welcome. I am sure that much of demoralisation suffered by its employees stems from the massive case loads with which they are forced to deal. Defendants wait until the last moment before they change their plea of not guilty, but the work load of the CPS could be reduced if they were encouraged to lodge a plea of guilty at an earlier stage. Of those defendants who elected for jury trial, 82 per cent. pleaded guilty. The majority did so on the day of the trial. We must encourage those who are guilty so to plead at a much earlier stage in the proceedings. In that way, the time of the police, the CPS, the courts and the witnesses would not be wasted.

The current procedures are a sham. I was in Preston magistrates court the other day when a person changed his plea from not guilty to guilty. Two police officers who had each wasted three hours in the court then had to leave. If that guilty plea had been lodged earlier a lot of wasted time could have been saved. We should consider a system under which discounted sentences could be encouraged if a guilty plea was recorded earlier in the proceedings. That would free tens of thousands of CPS man hours which could be used to deal with more serious cases. That change might offer a new incentive to prosecute difficult cases where the outcome might go either way.

I am seeking not to find scapegoats, but to bring to the attention of the House the problems faced by the CPS. Although I do not believe that those problems could cause the terminal illness of the CPS, they must not be allowed to fester dangerously, as that causes misunderstanding and mistrust. Employees in the CPS are losing confidence in their ability to do their jobs.

I look forward to the report of the CPS into why cases are being dropped—we should have it before Christmas. I hope that it will be able to answer some of the criticisms made of it relating to the number of cases dropped and those in which the charge is reduced. As my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury has said, is all the burgeoning paperwork absolutely necessary to enable the police to conduct their business?

I urge the Attorney-General to take the necessary action to correct the obvious problems. Let us make the system work for the victims; let us put them first, where they belong, and the criminals in the dock, where they belong. Then justice will not only be done, but be seen to be done.

5.14 am

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): One of the more exotic mysteries to which scholarship will, in 100 years, apply itself is how the Government of Baroness Thatcher managed in the 1980s to set up a new nationalised industry in the form of the Crown Prosecution Service, in lieu of a privatised system and one that involved compulsory competitive tendering as a matter of practice throughout the rural counties. How did that extraordinary state of affairs come about? The explanation, inevitably, is that the great and good, in the form of the Philips commission, suggested a scheme, which was transmuted into an even grander scheme by civil servants. That led to the creation of a system designed to implement the abstract idea that, somehow, the last few centuries of our legal history were inadequate because there was no independent prosecutor, independent of the police, applying itself in virtually every case that was dealt with. The difficulty is that when abstract ideas are applied, they do not work in the way intended.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) on analysing, in great and devastating detail, the dissatisfaction that is general at the moment, particularly among the police. The problem goes well beyond that. The judiciary, the legal profession and the public at large, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) explained in great detail, are grievously concerned at the present state of affairs.

I commend to my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General Mr. Christopher Frazer's recent book "Privatise the Prosecutors", which analyses the problem in detail and makes a compelling case for urgent change. Let us see why that urgent change is necessary. The idea behind having an independent prosecutor was that the police could not be trusted and that such an independent prosecutor would ensure a uniform and higher standard of decision making in prosecuting and a higher execution in quality of prosecuting. Plainly, that does not happen. Whatever its difficulties, the old system achieved much more public satisfaction.

he first disastrous consequence of the Crown prosecuting system—it is the system that is at fault, not the people who operate it—is demoralisation of the police force. When the two roles of investigating officer and independent prosecuting authority are split, there is an immediate need for communication between the two, which means an explosion of paperwork and, in the inevitable course of the civil service, an extraordinary explosion in the type of forms required.

It is worse than that. PC Dixon, the officer in the case under the old system, had a personal responsibility. He was subject to his supervising officer, but he had to investigate the case, get the evidence together, make sure that there was enough evidence, get his witnesses to court and, if they were simple cases, get them prosecuted himself. He had direct personal responsibility; he was accountable. If he made a mistake, the magistrates would throw the case out, with costs against the police. There was simple accountability, simple responsibility and simple retribution if he got it wrong.

If it were a more complicated case, involving trial on indictment, PC Dixon could go to his own solicitor—that was true in many rural areas, right up to the end of the old system. For example, in Herefordshire, private firms of solicitors did the prosecuting, and they were chosen for their professional qualities and their expertise. The prosecuting solicitor was a prestigious appointment. In the country, provincial firms were anxious to compete to be awarded that task. In other parts of the country, there was an in-house policy prosecuting solicitor. In Gwent and in Gloucestershire, of which I had professional experience many years ago, the system worked well and was effective. The important thing was that even if there was an in-house police solicitor, PC Dixon knew that he was dealing with that solicitor, not with some separate individual force that would override, overturn or ignore his views and not carry out the priorities that he understood.

Since then, there has been a split or division between the police officer in a case and the independent prosecutor. Neither is entirely responsible. The witnesses do not turn up; the evidence is not secured. In simpler cases, the level of expert decision making is in question. It sounds wonderful to have an expert lawyer involved in every case, but that is not how the system works. Relatively junior staff deal with relatively junior police officers, and increasingly—as my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury explained—with junior PC Dixons who have not had the experience of being responsible for a case and knowing how to present it. It is no good the Government saying that they want to reduce the amount of paperwork and simplify the obligations of the police unless they deal with the fundamental suggestion that the Crown prosecuting solicitor is an unnecessary shackle and an attack on the integrity of the police, and that he does not help.

[Mr. Roger Evans]

It may be said that, in the old days in Bow street magistrates court, quite a lot of policemen were milling about waiting for their cases to come on as each PC Dixon brought his case to be dealt with. Should not those policemen be on the beat, rather than presenting cases in court? That, however, is a superficial argument.

I do not accept for a moment that any time was wasted on that exercise, because it was devoted to ensuring that a case was brought to court, dealt with and disposed of. Nowadays, PC Dixon is wasting very much more time preparing written material for the CPS—or, as has been pointed out, his colleagues are providing the security service in magistrates courts that was taken for granted in the old days. Indeed, at one stage in our history, those courts were known as police courts. There was never any suggestion that there were not enough police officers to ensure that the system operated properly. That arrangement was necessary for the dignity and integrity of the court system, and it was astonishing that it should be removed. This issue matters so much to the morale and effectiveness of our police force that it must be dealt with effectively.

Let me make another point, echoing my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury. A very important constitutional issue has been fudged. The older view was that, where there was evidence, there was a duty to prosecute. When the late Mr. Raymond Blackburn—a distinguished former Member of Parliament—went boldly to court to challenge the then policy of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis not to prosecute pornographers in Soho, Lord Denning and the courts made it clear that there was a duty to prosecute. The only exception in the 1960s was a case involving several thousand examples of breaches of food and drugs regulations; someone suggested that it was not necessary to prosecute each and every one.

No one would have doubted, in the whole of our constitutional history—from the Glorious Revolution until the introduction of the CPS—that it was possible for public bodies not to prosecute when there was something of a case. What has happened? To what was the Bill of Rights directed? It forbids the suspending and dispensing of the law of the land in individual cases, but, under new prosecuting guidelines, an elastic and slippery test of the public interest has now been applied. That test enables the CPS to drop the astonishing cases of which my hon. Friends have given details.

In a less happy, honourable and great land than ours, that would have led to corruption and tyranny. In this country, it leads only to inefficiency, unfairness and a sense of public outrage that honourable public servants are behaving in a way that is eccentric and unhelpful.

Mr. Brazier: I shall not go into individual cases, but my hon. Friend must be aware that, in areas where there are racial tensions, if there is any racist aspect of a case that is subsequently dropped—whether the racial group comprises Asians resenting a racial attack by whites, whites resenting an allegedly racial attack by West Indians or others—word starts immediately to spread that the decision was made for racial reasons.

Mr. Evans: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is corroding and corrosive and it undermines public confidence in the administration of the law.

The point that really matters—it is an outrage in our free country—is that decisions whether to prosecute should not be taken, to use pejorative language, by state prosecutors acting in private. That is the behaviour of a Minister of the Interior in a nasty foreign country that does not understand liberty as we have known it since 1688. I am being more generous than my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury in that I think that that system is driven largely by muddle and inefficiency. However, it is wrong in principle and it should stop.

As a member of the Bar, my further professional unhappiness with modern arrangements is that we now have full-time independent Crown prosecutors, which leads to polarisation in the legal profession. The glory of the Bar and of country solicitors was, and is, the fact that they dealt with every case that came to them, whatever the side. A country solicitor could be prosecuting for PC Dixon one day and defending the local villain the next. There was independent professional judgment and solicitors were expected to be fair. Nobody suggested that they would not be fair. Now, we have state prosecutors under siege from public criticism and, the most unattractive feature of the modern legal profession, the type of civil libertarian practitioner who seems to believe that every guilty case is plainly not so. The older system led to higher professional standards and offered openness and opportunities for practitioners to appear for the public.

I must deal with the remedies for this serious and unhappy situation. There is such an accumulation of dissatisfaction that nothing less than severe and serious action is called for urgently. I endorse and welcome what I believe to be the most important point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury, that the police should be given back their exclusive role of dealing with and prosecuting summary and hybrid offences. If they need legal advice, they can obtain it from private solicitors. If they need more than that, they can, at worst, obtain it from an in-house solicitor. That was the system that created responsibility and direct accountability and promoted standards.

The fundamental mistake in the new system is that decisions on whether to prosecute are taken in private by state prosecutors. A proper sifting system should be open, judicial and public. In our country prior to 1931, a grand jury would have formed a view as to the appropriateness of a prosecution, which is what happens in the United States now. Until 1968, in a trial on indictment, there was no question of involving any paperwork. PC Dixon had to produce each and every relevant witness to tell the justices the story so that they could form a view on whether there was sufficient material to bring a prosecution. There was a judicial determination of whether a case should be dealt with by trial by jury.

In 1967, somebody thought of saving public money —it is always dangerous in the law to reduce standards, allegedly to save money. The idea now is to serve a bundle of statements. The justices have no duty to consider whether there is anything in them. They simply act as a postbag. That is the farce of the modern committal system. All the cases end up going to the Crown court and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley said, making up one's mind at the last possible moment when faced with the ultimate threat of the prison doors is endemic in the criminal world. People will not make up their minds conveniently to suit the police or the prosecution or for the convenience of the courts. Someone like Bill Sykes makes up his mind at the last possible moment when there is no alternative other than to go to prison. Vast numbers of cases have gone to the Crown court because there is no proper committal system, due to the foolishness of the 1967 legislation which led to the modern system. I do not urge one arrangement or another, but either the magistrates or the Crown court judge should have a preliminary summary sifting process to determine, on express open criteria, whether a case should be allowed to proceed.

One remedy is recommended by Mr. Christopher Frazer in the book that I mentioned. If we must retain an independent Crown prosecutor, he should, at most, be a part-time local solicitor in private practice—somebody of professional distinction who is honoured to be made an important figure in the community. That would deal with the small number of cases in which the police said that they needed legal advice. It would leave it entirely to the police to decide whether they wanted to go to such a local Crown prosecutor or to bring in their own independent solicitor.

As we well know, there are exceptions. The police are shackled with having to use the Crown Prosecution Service. That is not the case for certain Departments which, if they want to prosecute, can go to their own legal advisers. The Government always exclude their servants from the monopoly that they create.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General and the Director of Public Prosecutions should return to the traditional role of dealing with a small number of particularly sensitive and important public issues.

The talents of the people who work in the Crown Prosecution Service are being failed by the system. There is a premium on timidity, which my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury explained. They would be better off in private practice. As soon as we have a national civil service, with a salary scale applying from one end of the land to another, it is difficult to get people to do the job in inner London, where it is more expensive to live. The system should be ended.

Above all, because of the importance of the morale and effectiveness of the police and of the Government's policies for getting to grips with the problem of rising crime, I urge my right hon. and learned Friend to take urgent and early action to deal with the crisis in the Crown Prosecution Service, which should never have been set up as it was. The country will be satisfied only when it is abolished—and the sooner, the better.

5.31 am

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I congratulate the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) on achieving this debate and starting a stimulating discussion, to which I hope to add.

The hon. Gentleman's criticisms of the Crown Prosecution Service were curious because he sought to excuse the Government's appalling failure to tackle crime while identifying real concern about the failure of the Crown Prosecution Service. Those failures must be seen against the background of the criminal justice system as a whole. He described the Home Secretary as the author of a remarkable package on crime. The package is remarkable mainly in its failure to tackle crime and the causes of crime. The so-called "27-point plan" exposed in parliamentary questions lacks in detail, is short on time scale, limited in scope, lacks a strategy for crime prevention and reform, and, in the past fortnight, has been exposed by the Budget figures as lacking cash and resources.

The hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) showed a similar tendency to ignore the Government's general failure on crime while criticising the Crown Prosecution Service as though its failures had nothing to do with Conservative policies. He referred to late pleas entered by defendants. There are ways in which the whole system could be streamlined and timetabled if only Ministers would listen to the advice that has been offered to them in recent years and particularly in recent months.

I am appalled to learn that civil servants are saying that the Criminal Justice Bill, which we shall debate shortly, is full and that inter-agency advice from bodies like the working group on pre-trial issues is to be ignored. That should be of concern to Members on both sides of the House.

The hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) was devastating in his criticism of Baroness Thatcher's Government and the demoralisation of police and others in the criminal justice system that has developed during the past 14 years, but restrained himself from putting blame on the shoulders of Ministers who are still in office. I sympathise with his point about the contribution of police officers in courts under the previous system. From my experience as a juvenile court magistrate in particular, I can say that removing PC Ron Ashe from Cardiff juvenile court was the most disastrous decision in juvenile justice that I have encountered.

I ask the hon. Member for Monmouth to keep an eye on the Home Secretary's tendency to undervalue the skills of police officers in a range of other duties and the dangers inherent in the forthcoming Magistrates Courts and Police Bill. The Home Secretary, in common with his predecessor, wants to be the sort of nasty Minister for the interior that the hon. Member for Monmouth rightly scorned. I ask only that he balances his views.

The hon. Member for Monmouth should acknowledge that the accumulation of dissatisfaction with the Crown Prosecution Service that he rightly identified is directed equally and with similar passion at other elements of the criminal justice system. There is no doubt that the public have lost confidence in that system. The fact that someone is punished by a court in only one crime in 50 is itself an incredible indictment of the Government's failure to deal with crime and its causes.

This debate addresses the specific problem of the CPS's failure to deliver the goods, but Ministers should recognise that that is only one aspect of a general failure.

Mr. Brazier: I find myself listening to the hon. Gentleman's remarks with increasing disbelief. He is taking the debate extremely wide with a series of attacks on the Government, but he has not made one constructive policy suggestion. I hope that he will do so shortly.

Mr. Michael: That is a scurrilous remark and untrue. Conservative Members, including the hon. Member for Canterbury, took the debate well wide of the CPS. I have already made a significant constructive contribution, in saying that advice from inter-agency bodies such as the working party that I mentioned—to which, apparently, Ministers and civil servants are not prepared to listen—should be embodied in the criminal justice legislation that will come before the House shortly. That would assist the

[Mr. Michael]

CPS, courts and criminal justice system generally. If the hon. Member for Canterbury thinks that I am not making constructive points, he does not understand the topic that he raised.

Ministers continually tinker with the wrong parts of the system and the way in which prosecutions are brought in particular. We expect this week the appearance of the Magistrates Courts and Police Bill, which is based on an ill-judged White Paper and will reduce accountability and the local nature of police forces. The Home Secretary continually offers fancy words and yet more legislation, when he would be better occupied preventing and reducing crime, using measures to support the police for which no new legislation is needed and recognising that the Conservative party can enjoy no credibility when the right hon. and learned Gentleman has reneged on a manifesto promise of an extra 1,000 on the police establishment this year by cutting it by 224 posts since the general election.

In common with the hon. Member for Canterbury, I spent an evening in a city centre and I was appalled at how thin is the thin blue line. The paperwork to which Conservative Members referred is certainly a contributory factor in drawing that line so thin.

Against that background, we must consider the dismal story of the CPS and the scandal of dropped prosecutions, which is letting down victims and the public. Fewer cases are going to court and more cases are discontinued. Throughout the country, police officers of every rank—from constables and sergeants to chief constables—have expressed to me over the past year their anger and frustration at being let down when the CPS fails to proceed with a prosecution. That frustration is causing enormous damage to public confidence as well as to police morale.

Ministers may say that the public interest has to be observed. Conservative Members have also expressed a reservation about the way in which the concept of public interest is being used or misused. They may say that a case should not go ahead where there is no chance of success. I wish that I could be confident that it is only in such circumstances that cases are dropped, but I do not believe that. I am now convinced that the pressure to drop cases to save money is too great. We know that managers and bureaucrats put pressure on lawyers in the Crown Prosecution Service to reduce charges against their better judgment. Pressure is specifically applied to convince lawyers to reduce all section 47 charges of causing actual bodily harm to charges of common assault. That pressure is distorting justice. Ministers must carry the can for that approach, and should promise the House to put a stop to it forthwith.

There is also a failure to obtain the practical effective liaison that is needed between the police and the CPS. References have been made to the organisation of the CPS. Its reorganisation on the basis of larger areas was wrong. It would have been far better for the service to be based on the areas of the court that it served and the boundaries of a single police authority. There would be much more direct accountability and co-operation between the two agencies in those circumstances. Such organisational issues need to be addressed. The last reorganisation was carried out with far too little thought—lines were drawn up on a central map rather than on the knowledge of the CPS and the police service on the ground.

Above all, there is a need to put the victim at the centre of the consideration of the CPS. I still feel unhappy about the case of one of my constituents, even after investigating all the circumstances. The son of my constituent was attacked in a bar and a glass was smashed into his face causing the loss of an eye. The attacker was identified and the file passed to the CPS for action. The prosecution decided to accept a guilty plea to a lower charge and drop the more serious charges, which meant that the evidence was not called. The family was shocked to hear a plea in mitigation that the young man had provoked the attack—a suggestion which had not previously been made. As evidence was not heard, the suggestion could not be challenged. I am sure that Conservative Members will share my distaste for such an occurrence, which is not unusual.

That case resulted in a relatively trivial sentence for an offence far less serious than the one originally framed, and a victim, family and witnesses who still feel frustrated and angry a considerable time after the event. They might have felt unhappy had the court heard all the evidence and reached that decision, but they feel cheated because the court had no chance to judge the evidence.

There are many ways in which the victim, the family and even the community can, on occasion, be made to feel that they have been treated as a marginal irrelevance in the prosecution process. That feeling is voiced by the police with worrying regularity and has been reflected in hon. Members' speeches in tonight's debate.

The system of prosecution is bureaucratic and slow whereas crime happens fast, is often nasty and creates victims who are then given inadequate consideration. That is why, this spring, I proposed an amendment to the Criminal Justice Act 1993 to put the victim at the centre of the process and to require the CPS to consult victims on the nature of the offences to be put. My amendment was particularly designed to require the CPS to consult the victims or nearest relatives before agreeing to downgrade or withdraw charges.

That proposal would not give the victim the power of veto, but the requirement to explain the decision to a victim and to the police would be a powerful means of ensuring that the events were properly assessed and that the victim's view was heard and properly considered. It was such a simple, fair and practical concept that I was amazed when the Government rejected it. That demonstrated the contempt of the Conservative party for victims when it has a chance to put matters right. Last week my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) made fresh proposals on the issue, and the Government would be well advised to accept them without further delay.

The Government are about to produce proposals on the scheme to compensate the victims of crime, which will result in considerable unfairness. They have not done enough to help victims through the victim support scheme, through witness support and through changing the ethos of the courts to show greater respect and consideration for the victims and witnesses.

The failure in prosecutions is only one part of a dismal picture——

Mr. Nigel Evans: The hon. Gentleman is talking about the victim and about what should be done so that he feels that justice has been done. In many cases where attacks have been made on individuals, especially by persistent offenders, the victim might feel that such a person should receive a custodial sentence. However, the hon. Gentleman and his party believe that the new prisons announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary should not be built. How does he square that with care for the victim?

Mr. Michael: Obviously, the hon. Gentleman has not been listening. We have criticised the Home Secretary's one-track approach. He believes that only prison works. He will drain the rest of the Home Office budget to put the money into prisons, the need for which is made greater by the Government's failure over the last few years to prevent and to tackle crime and to reduce the number of offenders who need prison sentences. The increase in the number of victims has arisen because of the Government's failure during recent years. It was one of the things that made me angry enough to stand for Parliament. The hon. Gentleman should study the history with some care before seeking to defend it.

I want to detail the facts of the one particular part of the picture with which we are dealing in this debate. In a year during which we have heard a great deal from the Home Secretary about crime, the number of cases coming to the Crown court continues to fall. Recorded crime has risen by 124 per cent. since the Conservative party came to power, yet in the year to April 1992 the number of cases received into the Crown court was 105,248 while in the year ended October 1992 it had fallen to just over 102,000, and by the year ended October 1993 was down to 87,164. That is a drop of 17 per cent. in 18 months and a staggering drop of 15 per cent. in the last 12 months.

For more than six months, my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield has been demanding an inquiry into the reasons for the drop in the number of cases coming to court at a time of such a dramatic rise in crime. It is bizarre that the Government are unwilling to undertake such an inquiry or, better still, to recognise that Labour identified the problem long before the summer recess and offered practical ways forward that the Government should now accept. Similarly, the number of cases disposed of by the courts is showing a worrying decline—also down 17 per cent. in 18 months.

Our investigations also show the extent of the current crisis in the criminal justice system. I shall cite four particular facts. First, the number of cases coming to the magistrates court has actually fallen from 1,574,000 in 1988-89 to 1,530,000 last year. Secondly, the number of cases withdrawn or dismissed from magistrates courts has increased by 50 per cent. since 1987 while convictions have fallen by more than 40,000. Thirdly, the number of cases discontinued before they came to court has risen by 78 per cent. since 1987-88, yet delays are getting worse, with the average time for cases in the magistrates court to be completed up by 20 per cent. since 1986.

Those statistics are worrying and should have been enough to stir Ministers into action. However, I shall highlight one further problem. There is more than anecdotal evidence that charges are being downgraded just to keep them out of the Crown court. In one magistrates court in London, 75 per cent. of cases of actual bodily harm were downgraded to the lesser charge of common assault. However, when my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield asked the Attorney-General for the exact figures of cases being downgraded, they were not available. That, too, should be part of a general Government investigation.

The fact is that we know, even without more detailed information, that there is a real and growing problem. Too many offenders are laughing at the Home Secretary and the Attorney-General because their agents in the Crown Prosecution Service are driven by cost rather than justice.

Every time a case is dropped for convenience or cost, there is a danger that an offender will conclude that he can get away with it and he may offend again. On that point, I am at one with hon. Members who contributed earlier. The victim will feel let down and degraded, the police will feel let down, and, in truth, the public have a right to feel betrayed.

The victims and those involved in the fight against crime deserve better than that. The proper conclusion of tonight's debate would be a promise from the Attorney-General that he will investigate the failures of the system and the failings of the CPS, that he will bring the whole sorry business out for proper public scrutiny, and that he will change the constraints on the CPS to put the victims at centre stage and to ensure that fewer people get away with crimes, particularly crimes of violence, on grounds of bureaucratic convenience and cost-cutting.

As I have said, that promise will not solve all the problems, but it will be a start. The Government need to introduce a major package to restore confidence in the whole system, and there are many ways in which costs can be cut while the speed and quality of justice are improved.

The Opposition will continue to press for such improvements, and to help with positive suggestions and concrete proposals, but for tonight we shall be content if the Attorney-General promises to take a grip on the failings of policies and management in the CPS.

The survey published by the Association of First Division Civil Servants, which Ministers have attempted to brush aside, merely confirms what has been obvious for a long time—that Government policy and financial pressures are distorting justice by undermining the effectiveness of prosecutors. That is properly a subject of ministerial accountability, not just a question of administrative responsibility within the agency, and I urge the Attorney-General to give the House the promises that we need.

5.51 am

The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): First, I join in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) on instituting this debate on an important subject which is highly topical, and rightly so. I also congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) and for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) on joining in, and I look forward to answering the points made by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael).

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury made some critical remarks about the CPS, but I am grateful to him for not attacking individual Crown prosecutors. I wish to open the debate by explaining briefly to the House what a tough job the individual Crown prosecutors have, how well they do it and what strides the CPS and its Crown prosecutors, all 2,100 of them today, have made in recent years.

I have now been a Law Officer for six and half years and during that period I have visited the CPS throughout the country. As we know, it was understaffed and somewhat underfunded when it began its life and in those days there

[Sir Nicholas Lyell]

were many young Crown prosecutors as well as much more experienced Crown prosecutors from the old county prosecuting service.

Today, as one visits the CPS in different parts—in the past few weeks I have visited the CPS in the west midlands and in the Reading area—one is met by highly experienced professional prosecutors, younger and older, doing an extremely tough job very effectively.

A Crown prosecutor can expect to arrive at a large multiple court with several courts running at the same time, day in, day out, carrying anything between 30 and 70 cases, and perhaps be divested, for the convenience of the court, of five or 10 of those cases, and have put into his hand to deal with professionally, straight away, three, four or five extra cases, which he has to pick up and take on the hoof, not because of any deficiency in the CPS but because we are dealing with busy courts operating busy and tight schedules. They are highly professional people and they deserve our thanks.

It is worth looking at the overall number of cases handled by the CPS, not just for statistics on discontinuance, to which I shall come in detail. The CPS receives about 1,500,000 cases each year, to be handled by 2,100 Crown prosecutors on behalf of 120,000 police officers, with just under 100,000 of those cases being dealt with in the Crown court, with all the preparation that that properly requires.

It should be remembered that the process of prosecution over the past 10 years has become significantly more complex, for reasons which we know and understand and of which we fundamentally approve. Advance disclosure to the defence requires preparation of statements so that they can be given in advance. Tape recording and the requirements of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 put burdens, with respect to the safeguarding of justice, on the police.

I cannot agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth that we should go back to a world in which there is no Police and Criminal Evidence Act. Prosecutors also have responsibility for making available unused material. That is the background of the highly professional service that we must now examine.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury suggested, following the paper written by Mr. Christopher Frazer, entitled "Privatise the Prosecutors", that we should abandon the Crown Prosecution Service which has been so carefully built up in the past several years and go back to using the ordinary high street solicitor. I have a high regard for high street solicitors. I grew up in the world of quarter sessions. I think that that is the world to which all my hon. Friends hark back, but I must warn them against putting on rose-tinted spectacles. I honestly believe that the weight of prosecution today is too heavy for a system of that nature.

Although I have no doubt that the middle-ranking high street solicitor referred to by Mr. Frazer in his pamphlet would seek to do a gallant job, I beg to doubt whether it would be possible to run the service anything like as efficiently and effectively as it is run by the CPS under the direction and control of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Mrs. Barbara Mills.

Mr. Brazier: Even if one were to concede all my right hon. and learned Friend's points, surely, given the training, the expertise and, inevitably, the cost of the people whom he mentions, the CPS cannot be an appropriate body to deal with offences such as shoplifting, which could simply be dealt with, as they were in the old days, by policemen.

The Attorney-General: Yes, a simple shoplifting case was dealt with effectively by police officers. Some police officers and court inspectors became extremely experienced and effective prosecutors in their own right. However, I have just mentioned the weight and volume of cases that have to be not only dealt with in court but prepared. I invite my hon. Friend to go around either his local office of the Crown Prosecution Service or one of the larger offices in London to see exactly what we are talking about.

I must move on, because there are only 10 minutes before the end of the debate and I have some positive things to say to the House, to my hon. Friends and to the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth about the subject of the debate. First, I wish to say a word about the origin of the Crown Prosecution Service and why it was put in place. The Crown Prosecution Service was established by the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 and became fully operational in October 1986. Its creation was the result of recommendations made in 1981 by the Philips Royal Commission on criminal procedure. That royal commission found that prosecution arrangements across the country were haphazard. It criticised the lack of any consistent prosecution policy and the lack of an independent element in the prosecution process.

With the exception of the Director of Public Prosecutions, prosecutors worked in a solicitor-client relationship with the police. The royal commission found that too many weak cases were being prosecuted and that there was an attendant risk of miscarriages of justice occurring. Like the recent Runciman Royal Commission on criminal justice, the Philips royal commission followed a serious miscarriage of justice that arose from the death of Maxwell Confait and the wrongful conviction of three young men for homicide. The case had to be investigated a number of times, and I remember that when I became a Member it was very much in our minds. That is the background to the establishment of the Crown Prosecution Service.

I want to move straight on to the key topics of the debate and put before the House the announcements that I must make. The key topics focus on discontinuance. We are all aware that the number of discontinued cases has increased, but hon. Members must recall that the CPS was established to review cases. It is neither surprising nor wrong, therefore, that a significant proportion of the cases that it reviews will be weeded out. It may be significant, although almost anything can be done with statistics, that the number of cases dismissed in magistrates courts has remained fairly static in recent years. I do not want to put too much weight on any statistic, but it may be that a significant proportion of discontinued cases are rightly discontinued.

I have personally looked into some individual cases. If a case worries hon. Members, they should bring it to me or to the Director of Public Prosecutions and it will be looked into. I have looked into a large number of cases. Nevertheless, I recognise that there is a problem. The CPS does not set out to discontinue cases unreasonably. It aims to ensure that the right cases get to court and to avoid unfairness to defendants. Initiating a case unnecessarily is a very invasive process, with all the worry that it causes victims and the wasting of court time. We want to bring cases that can be carried to conviction.

In November 1993—this takes up what the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said—a study of all cases discontinued that month was conducted at the behest of the Director of Public Prosecutions. It was designed to obtain as much information as possible on the reasons for discontinuance. That statistical study is being analysed and I will inform the House, probably in the new year, of such results as one can draw from it.

The Director of Public Prosecutions has put in place a new structure designed to monitor the quality of prosecution decisions throughout the country. As the House knows, the CPS is now divided into 13 areas. In each area, under a national director of casework, an assistant chief Crown prosecutor is charged expressly with monitoring standards of discontinuance and with organising training for Crown prosecutors in this important matter.

The second announcement that I wish to make—and this is new—is in relation to the code for Crown prosecutors. At the heart of the code are the requirements, first, that before a prosecution is brought there must be a sufficiency of evidence to give a realistic prospect of conviction and, secondly, that the prosecution, which normally can be expected to follow if there is a sufficiency of evidence, should be in the public interest. That code is to be reviewed, and the aim of the review will be to simplify the language of the code and to put it into plain English to make it a document more easily understood by police officers and members of the public who are not lawyers. That is to be widely welcomed. The DPP is confident that the fundamental principles of the code remain sound, but she believes—and I believe—that the evidential criterion and the requirement for a realistic prospect of conviction can be clarified and that the public interest factors in favour of a prosecution can be brought out more clearly.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth will not, I hope, take it amiss if I remind him and the House that through the decades—down the centuries, almost—those two criteria have been an essential part of any prosecution decision. I refer him to the classic statement by one of my predecessors, Sir Hartley Shawcross, about the fact that one takes into account not only the evidential sufficiency but the public interest. Of course, it can be taken at a simple, domestic level.

We all remember the tragic case of Lady Isobel Barnet who, sadly, became a kleptomaniac and was prosecuted for shoplifting, for reasons of illness. She killed herself. It is not in the public interest to prosecute every elderly and infirm person who commits an offence. At the other end of the spectrum, prosecutions can be discontinued in the public interest for reasons of the greatest national security. My predecessor rightly answered questions in the House about that, and I should be willing to do so.

I have only a minute left, but I want to mention victims. The CPS is intensely aware of its duty to victims. When a case is reviewed, it is our objective that the reason for the review and any potential discontinuance is not restricted to the Crown prosecutor but is fed not only to police headquarters but, through the police's administration support unit, to the officer on the beat dealing with the case so that the victim can be informed and consulted. The DPP was speaking about this issue only last weekend at the Lamplugh Trust seminar at the same time as the shadow Home Secretary. She has been taking the lead for a considerable time——

In accordance with Mr. Speaker's ruling—[Official Report, 31 January 1983; Vol. 36, c. 19]—the debate was concluded.

Mr John Marshall (Hendon South): I beg to move, That strangers do withdraw.

Notice being taken that strangers were present, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 143 (Withdrawal of Strangers from the House), put forthwith the Question,* That strangers do withdraw:—

The House proceeded to a Division——

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich) (*seated and covered*): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It seems to me that there are no strangers present, and I question the appropriateness of a Division being called on this issue.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): My recollection is that, at the time, one or two people were present.

Mr. Raynsford: Further to the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. When you called the Division, there was no stranger present in the Gallery.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Whether that is the case or not, I have no discretion, provided the procedures are followed.

The House having divided: Ayes Nil, Noes 2.

Division No. 42 **[6.07 am**

AYES

Nil

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Fabricant and
Mr John Marshall.

NOES

Arbuthnot, James
Kirkhope, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Shaw and
Mr. Bill Walker.

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. While I am on my feet, I do not expect to take points of order.

It appearing on the report of the Division that fewer than 40 Members had taken part in the Division, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *declared that the Question was not decided, and the business under consideration stood over until the next sitting of the House.*

Ms Lynne: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for an hon. Member to call "I spy strangers" when apparently there are no strangers in the Gallery?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Chair has no discretion in putting the Question. I understand that it is a matter of dispute as to whether there were strangers. It is not a matter for me.

Mr. Sedgemore: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Effectively, the business of the House has been brought to a close by an "I spy strangers" by an hon.

[Mr. Sedgemore]

Member who has neither charm, dignity nor sense. Indeed, he has shown contempt for Londoners, who were about to hear a debate on London's transport, contempt for the House of Commons and contempt for the parliamentary process. I hope that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will express concern about public schoolboys playing such silly games.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a matter for the Chair. I observe only that I had to undergo the same procedure last Friday morning.

Resolved,

That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Adjourned accordingly at nineteen minutes past Six o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 15 December 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON UNDERGROUND (GREEN PARK) BILL
Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Community Enlargement

1. **Mr. Roger Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the enlargement of the European Community.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): Good progress has been made in negotiations with the four EFTAn applicants for membership—Norway, Sweden, Austria and Finland. But some difficult issues remain to be settled, particularly in the areas of agriculture and regional policy. Decisive progress is needed in the next few months if we are to meet the target of entry into the Community by those four states by 1 January 1995.

Mr. Evans: I welcome my hon. Friend's statement. Given the gathering clouds in the east and in Russia, and given the imperative of extending the blessings of liberty, free trade and open markets to as wide a Europe as possible, will my hon. Friend confirm that the British Government are possibly at last succeeding in persuading an increasing number of our European partners of the benefits of an expansion of the European Community?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Yes, I confirm that it has always been a British priority to open our doors to applicants from all European states, provided that they can fulfil the requirements and obligations of membership. That is why we were pleased that recent European Council conclusions have endorsed the possibility of eventual membership by states, including those from central and eastern Europe in due course.

Mr. Enright: The Minister did not mention Cyprus among the applicants. Cyprus has received initially a favourable response from both the Council and Commission. But, in reverist mode, will the Minister think for one moment of how he will get rid of the Turkish occupying army if Cyprus is accepted into the Community?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that the Cypriot application for membership has received favourable consideration, although it is not imminent and is certainly not being considered in the same time scale as the states that I mentioned in my first answer. I should also remind him that the partition of the island is not a prohibition on eventual accession. That matter is to be reconsidered in 1995.

Mr. Streeter: I welcome my hon. Friend's earlier comments about enlargement. Will he give a view about the prospects of success of the application of Malta to become a member of the European Union?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Yes, we welcome the prospect of accession by Malta. Preliminary discussions are already under way. Certain adjustments will be needed in the economy of Malta so that it can take on the responsibilities of membership, but we recognise that there are important historic connections between this country and Malta, and, for that reason as well, we believe that Malta's eventual destiny lies in Europe.

Sir Russell Johnston: Will the Minister confirm that he sees no conflict between the concepts of widening and deepening in the Community?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Certainly not. We believe that a wider and larger European Community will also be a stronger one.

Mr. David Nicholson: My hon. Friend will know that there will be a widespread welcome in this country for the remaining Scandinavian countries joining the European Community. Will he do all that he can to encourage the Community in due course to include the former Baltic states of the Soviet Union, particularly Estonia, which I visited a couple of months ago, and which is the most go-ahead of all the countries of the former Soviet Union?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: That prospect is somewhat further away. I can confirm, however, that we wish to see a free trade area concluded with the Baltic states, including Estonia. That is part of the negotiations with the Scandinavian EFTA states, which already have substantial free trade with those other countries.

Mr. Rogers: Further to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) about Cyprus's application for membership of the European Community, I understand that on 20 December the Council of Ministers will consider a request from the republic of Cyprus to appoint a European Union monitor to the discussions between Cyprus and the occupied territory of northern Cyprus, which will be held in January under the aegis of the United Nations. Will the Government give a favourable response to that request and, in the Council of Ministers, ensure that a monitor is appointed?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We shall examine that proposal on its merits. The overriding need is to give a fair wind to the confidence-building measures that are being promoted by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Provided that the appointment of an EC observer does not conflict with those aims, we shall give it favourable consideration.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Has my hon. Friend seen the opinion polls in Scandinavian countries, which unfortunately show a decline in the popularity of the view that they should enter the European Community? I hope that I am not being reverist by suggesting—*[Interruption.]* I hope that I am not talking balderdash or being reverist by suggesting that the European Commission should be working to demonstrate that the European Community——

Mr. Flynn: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Points of order will be taken after questions and the statements. I shall call the hon. Gentleman then.

Mr. Bruce: The European Commission should be working to ensure that people realise that the Community can be to the advantage of the Scandinavian countries.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Each state must comply with and approve the eventual agreement in accordance with its own constitutional requirements. We believe that the kind of European Union that we are building is agreeable and attractive to the Scandinavian states. We hope that they will find a way to accede in the time scale that I have outlined.

Palestine National Authority

2. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Chairman of the Palestine National Authority; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I held substantive talks with Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO, yesterday and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister saw him today. Yesterday, we discussed the implementation of the 13 September Israel/PLO agreement, to which we are giving both political and economic support.

Mr. Galloway: Will the Secretary of State accept my —and I believe the whole House's—congratulations on his and the Prime Minister's meetings yesterday and today with the Chairman of the Palestine National Authority and on at long last recognising the leadership of the Palestinian people? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that if there is a failure, on 22 December, to implement the accord signed in Washington, as there was on 13 December, there is a grave risk of the area disintegrating into even further and greater chaos? Will the right hon. Gentleman convey that fear to the appropriate quarters at this critical juncture?

Might we be able to afford to the Palestinian people something that they greatly admire—the tradition of public service and an impartial civil service—in which we, at least until recently, gloried in this country? Will he make that expertise available to the Palestinians in the period ahead?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, it is important that the agreement should be honoured. Yes, we will give what help we can. For example, we have offered to train senior policemen in the new Palestinian force and Chairman Arafat accepted that offer yesterday.

Mr. Batiste: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the only way in which a viable peace will be achieved in the long term is if the two sides reach an accommodation between themselves? Outsiders can be helpful and supportive, but it must be for the Palestinians and Israelis to reach an agreement with which they can both live.

Mr. Hurd: That is exactly right, and that is why it is such a breakthrough that they are discussing those matters face to face, in detail.

Mr. Janner: May I join in welcoming the visit of Chairman Arafat, whom I shall see later this afternoon with a Jewish delegation? Will the Secretary of State do everything in his power to help the parties to promote the peace process, first, by helping the Palestinians economically and, secondly, by recognising the deep and real sensitivities of the Israeli people for the security of their land?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman for joining me and Chairman Arafat at lunch yesterday, thus lending fresh respectability to the occasion.

The hon. and learned Gentleman is perfectly right. There are two issues that Chairman Arafat explained to us as points of difficulty. One is the boundaries of the new Jericho—part of the agreement—and the second is who should control the border points on the Jordanian and Egyptian borders. Those are difficult matters; they are difficult for Israel and they are difficult for the Palestinians. We have some ideas on how they might be resolved. My hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) was quite right; in the end, the two have to resolve the difficulties together. It is in the interests of both that they should do so.

Mr. Fabricant: Was my right hon. Friend able to raise with Mr. Arafat the question of the Israeli hostages who are being held by terrorist groups? I am thinking in particular of people such as Ron Arad.

Mr. Hurd: We raised that matter in various places and at various times when we thought that it would be helpful to do so. My hon. Friend is right: there is also the matter of the many Palestinians still held in Israel, which is one of the matters that the two sides are discussing. I hope to go to Israel, to the occupied territories and to Jordan during the Christmas recess. I will do so in the spirit that my hon. Friend suggested—trying to be helpful when we can on practical matters of technical assistance and judging for myself how things are going.

Dr. John Cunningham: The Foreign Secretary's comments are welcome, as was the visit of Mr. Arafat to Britain yesterday and today. In his discussions, Chairman Arafat raised with the right hon. Gentleman, as he did with my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition and myself, the question of an international presence in the West Bank and the Gaza area—the occupied territories—to help the transition. Has the right hon. Gentleman formed a view of that proposal? Does he believe that it could make a positive contribution to the smooth transition?

The Palestinians have proposed that they should be given financial assistance to help the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction to engage British and European economists and industrial expertise to guide and advise them in the redevelopment and reconstruction of the occupied territories. Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the Government make a positive response, as the amounts of money involved are relatively modest?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman's presence at the lunch yesterday put its respectability beyond doubt.

On the right hon. Gentleman's first point, Chairman Arafat has raised the possibility of international observers helping to deal with the frontier question—the problem of border controls, which I mentioned—alongside Israelis and Palestinians. No formal proposition has been made, because there is no agreement between the two sides on that point, but I certainly do not exclude our participating in such an effort, which would be on only a modest scale, if that proves to be necessary.

On the right hon. Gentleman's second point, we need to look at all the ideas so that we can help, with the things that we do well, the Palestinians in their new needs. I have mentioned police training, which is one thing, and economic advice would be another. The European Community, to which, of course, we contribute 16 per cent. of the 20 mecu voted for the first year to help the Palestinians, has been asked to keep the universities going. That is very important, and a large part of that European money to which we contribute will go for that purpose.

South Africa

3. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had about progress towards democracy in South Africa.

Mr. Hurd: We fully support the transition to non-racial democracy in South Africa, and we keep in close contact with the main political leaders. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister held talks with President de Klerk on 8 December, and with Mr. Nelson Mandela on 12 October. My right hon. and noble Friend Lady Chalker of Wallasey visited South Africa last week and met leaders of all the main parties.

Mr. Canavan: Will the Secretary of State take the opportunity to congratulate Nelson Mandela and President de Klerk on being presented with the Nobel peace prize at the weekend? Will he further congratulate them on managing to reach an agreement on a constitutional settlement to end apartheid?

Does the Secretary of State agree that there are no grounds for complacency between now and next April's elections? Will he use whatever influence he has to try to persuade people such as Chief Buthelezi to accept the constitutional settlement? Would not that undoubtedly help to bring about a peaceful transition towards a democracy based on one person, one vote in a unified South Africa?

Mr. Hurd: The transitional executive council, as the hon. Gentleman certainly will know, held its first meeting in Cape Town on 7 December, and Lady Chalker attended it. That was a big step forward, and the next major step will be the holding of the first democratic elections on 27 April next year.

The hon. Gentleman is right that it is important that those who have held themselves aloof from the process —I think particularly of Inkatha—should find a way to associate themselves with it. No one is asking them to eat words or to go back on stands that they have taken. It should be possible, and it is highly desirable, for all those parties who have held aloof for one reason or another to find a way to participate.

Mr. John Carlisle: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the progress towards democracy in South Africa has been much encouraged by sporting contacts between South Africa and ourselves and the rest of the world? In that context, will he send a message of best wishes to the England A cricket eleven, which has had a highly successful tour, despite certain medical problems? It has already played a game in Alexandra, a South African township, and is to play another tomorrow in Port Elizabeth. It is doing a splendid job, and I am sure that it would be grateful if my right hon. Friend sent his encouragement.

Mr. Hurd: The team might be grateful, and I am certainly glad to do so. I went to Alexandra last year with cricket equipment for a local team playing on a ground that it was putting together. I am glad to hear that Alexandra is continuing its devotion to cricket.

Libya

4. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Libyan Government directly or indirectly about Libyan citizens held in United Kingdom prisons.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): There have been no such discussions.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that, in pressing the Libyan Government to hand over people who are accused of atrocities in this country, it is important to show that Libyan nationals have received justice in this country? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware of the case of Hosni Farhat, who was convicted of attempted murder? Much of the evidence that was given at his trial is now considered to be suspect and, in addition, he received a sentence that reflected the political situation between Britain and Libya at the time, rather than the severity of the offences that he committed. He was denied the opportunity to appear at his appeal or to be legally represented.

Is not it important that such cases are investigated speedily by the British Government and that any injustice is put right before representations are made to the Libyan Government to bring other people before the British courts?

Mr. Hogg: I am aware of the case to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but I should not like to suggest that the offences committed were minor. This character was convicted on four counts of attempted murder and, not surprisingly, was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1981. He subsequently appealed, but the Court of Appeal refused him leave to appeal against the conviction.

I do not have a clue whether there are any grounds to doubt the validity of the conviction. The Court of Appeal thought otherwise, but if the hon. Gentleman has doubts I suggest that he raises them with my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that Libya is one of the most offensive regimes in the world and that it ill behoves hon. Members to cast doubts on the fairness of British justice, which is much greater than that in most countries of the world?

Mr. Hogg: I agree that I certainly would not want to live in Libya.

Angola

5. **Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking through the international community to make the UNITA forces comply with the Angolan peace accords.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): We have been active in the Security Council, bilaterally with the Angolan Government and UNITA.

Mr. Pickthall: In view of the staggering number of deaths in Angola, estimated by the United Nations at 1,000 a day and by the Angolan Government at approximately 5 per cent. of the total population, will the Foreign Office ensure that our representatives at the United Nations Security Council meeting later today urge on the rest of the United Nations the necessity of the full implementation of the sanctions already in place and of a new package of sanctions? Does the Minister agree that UNITA has played cat and mouse with the United Nations for far too long and that the disaster that it is causing in that country warrants the strongest possible international action?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is perfectly true that there has been the most appalling suffering in Angola. The sanctions instituted in September have worked to a considerable extent. UNITA is now discussing matters and negotiating seriously. I believe that today's resolution will recognise that and, of course, will leave open the possibility of further sanctions should UNITA ever renege on the current negotiations.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my hon. Friend agree that a great deal of embololalia is talked about Angola, not least by the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) and that there are faults on both sides?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I suspect that that is always true in great disputes throughout the world.

Mr. Worthington: The Minister did not tell us what the Government will urge at the Security Council. Will they urge the application of full sanctions? Was anything done in the Lusaka talks to invalidate the results of last year's elections? Furthermore, what action are the Government taking to stop the supplies of arms and oil to UNITA by the South Africans and by the people from Zaire?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government's position will be to argue that the sanctions introduced in September and the mandate of the United Nations Angola verification mission —UNAVEM—should be continued. We hope that the United Nations special representatives and negotiators will proceed with the negotiation successfully. We understand that some agreement has been reached between the parties, which remains to be implemented, but there will be a statement this afternoon or this evening from the United Nations Secretary-General.

Iraq

6. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in representations over prisoners of war held in Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This is an important issue and I have to concede that we have made jolly little progress. We raised the matter at every review of sanctions, most recently on 18 November. It is an important matter and we will continue to press it.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his answer. Will he join me in congratulating our right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) on his success in bringing back the detainees from Iraq? Does he accept, however, that this is not the end of the matter? Three and a half years after the Gulf war, prisoners of war are still held in Iraq, including 625 Kuwaitis. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that we should not lift sanctions on Iraq until the detainees have been released?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is quite right to pay tribute to the former Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath). What he did was extraordinarily helpful; the families of the prisoners will be extremely grateful to him. My hon. Friend is also entirely right to highlight the plight of the 627 or so Kuwaiti detainees. She can be assured that we will raise their plight with the Iraqis on every possible occasion. It is an important element in our contacts with Iraq that that country should comply in every respect with the mandatory requirements of the Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Minister agree that there are other prisoners of war in Iraq, including many Kurds and Shias? Is it not time that we should consider international action to prevent the terrible suffering that is caused by Saddam Hussein's relentless attacks on the Shias in the marshes?

Mr. Hogg: There are a number of prisoners of war— Kurds, certainly; Shia from the marshes; and Iranians. It is important that we do all that we can to ensure that Iraq and Saddam Hussein's regime do not continue to oppress their people. That is why we have no-fly zones in north and south Iraq. I should have some difficulty in telling the hon. Gentleman that there would be support within the Security Council for any more forward action in south Iraq.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

7. **Mr. Milligan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on progress in the GATT trade negotiations.

Mr. Hurd: I believe that we are nearly there.

Mr. Milligan: Does my right hon. Friend agree that later today we can expect some exceptionally good news, on a day of exceptionally good news? Seldom in the course of human history can so few have lost so much sleep in the interests of so many. Does my right hon. Friend agree also that GATT is likely to bring practical benefits to every household in Britain, with sharp cuts in food prices and upwards of 400,000 new jobs over the next 10 years? When does my right hon. Friend plan to uncork the champagne?

Mr. Hurd: I hope that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will make a statement on that matter tomorrow. I have just returned from Brussels, where I heard Sir Leon Brittan—who handled the negotiations with great skill—report to the European Council. There are bound to be loose ends. As I left, there was still an argument or discussion in progress about Portuguese textiles. We have also been pressing for a better deal for our textiles. Such final pressures are inevitable, but I hope that it will be possible for Mr. Sutherland to announce in Geneva this evening that the Uruguay round has reached a successful conclusion, after seven years in which many successive British Ministers have worked extremely hard—when others had forgotten the issue—to help bring them to a successful conclusion.

My hon. Friend is right in the example that he gave. As a big trading and manufacturing nation, and as a nation of consumers, Britain stands to gain enormously—perhaps as much as any other country—from the success that is just about within grasp.

Mr. Gapes: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that although the Uruguay round and GATT are in the interests of the United States and of the European Community, countries in the southern hemisphere will view the agreement as damaging? It is estimated that Africa will lose $2,600 million by the year 2002. What steps will be taken to assist the poorest countries, which will be damaged by that process?

Mr. Hurd: I do not believe that they will be damaged. I am familiar with the argument, but it is a myth. The winding down of the multi-fibre arrangement over a period of time will benefit new textile producers, and the opening up of the Japanese market after years of total closure will be of huge benefit to rice producers—and so on, across the board. It is not a zero-sum game in which some are bound to gain and some are bound to lose. World trade expands —and under the impetus of such an agreement, it will expand a great deal faster than it otherwise would.

Sir Giles Shaw: Given that some products may have been taken out of the negotiations, what is the mechanism by which textiles, films or steel, for example, will be further pursued?

Mr. Hurd: A number of matters will be further discussed including elements of financial services and maritime matters, on which agreement was not possible on this occasion. Rather than hold up the total agreement, those issues were taken out for the time being. Some are important to us. I asked Sir Leon Brittan today about civil aircraft, aero engines and financial services. The replies and clarifications that I received were reassuring and confirmed our general belief that, for this country, the agreement will be of substantial benefit.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: We understand that one of the cornerstones of the agreement will be a substantial reduction in agricultural subsidies. How long will the agriculture industry, under the terms of the agreement, be given to adjust to the new circumstances arising out of the agreement? Exactly when will we be given details of the agreement, and when will it be deposited in the Library of the House?

Mr. Hurd: I am sure that there will be an opportunity to debate the matter. The Prime Minister will make, I imagine, a fairly full statement tomorrow—that is to say, if the negotiations conclude in the way that we hope. Therefore I shall not answer the hon. Gentleman's question in detail, but I would say that it is common sense that there should be a wind-down in the total of exports of subsidised grain from Europe. It is difficult for farmers in some countries—perhaps in all countries—but I think that most hon. Members in the House believe that that is a movement towards common sense.

Yugoslavia

9. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made towards the restoration of peace in the former Yugoslavia as a result of the most recent conference in Geneva; if the issue of the Krajina has been discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: At their meeting with the parties in Geneva on 29 September, European Union Foreign Ministers emphasised the importance of a peace settlement. The subsequent peace talks have made some progress in clarifying positions. The European Council on 10 and 11 December agreed to maintain the pressure on the Serbs to make the further territorial concessions on the scale demanded by the Bosnian Government. The parties have discussed the situation in Croatia, where European Union Foreign Ministers have urged them to reach agreement on a ceasefire and confidence-building measures as a preliminary to a final settlement.

Mr. Wareing: Has the Minister noticed early-day motion 119 on the order paper? It is signed by Members on both sides of the House, and it deplores Croatian army atrocities in Croatia against Serb Villagers, and indeed in Bosnia Herzegovina.

Does the Minister realise that to many, many people in this country and elsewhere, it seems utterly ludicrous and far from even handed that there should be sanctions against Serbia, while at the same time the Croatian army, along with the HVO, is causing such turmoil, such as the destruction of the bridge at Mostar, and the atrocities that were committed in that area? What is the difference between Mostar and Sarajevo that we have sanctions against the Serbs but not against Croatia?

Mr. Hogg: I am aware of evidence of serious atrocities committed by the Croat forces, both from within the regular army of Croatia and, indeed, from within the Bosnian Croat forces. We have raised those matters very forcefully with the Croat authorities and Ministers from the Croatian Government and we will continue to do so. I can conceive of circumstances in which the international community might well wish to impose sanctions. I think that if there were an upsurge of fighting in the Krajina as a result of Croatian action that might be a matter of very profound significance in this context. I do, however, think that the hon. Gentleman would wish to keep in mind—it is a point of distinction—that we rely on the Split access for the delivery of humanitarian supplies and the maintenance of UNPROFOR troops.

Mr. Cormack: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that there are still Serbian forces present in Croatia, and that the prime responsibility for the killing and the carnage rests with Serbia? What will he do to impress upon President Milosevic that the creation of a greater Serbia by brutal aggression will never be recognised by the international community?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is right when he draws attention to the presence of Serb forces in Croatia. It is extremely important that we establish the basis for settlement within the Krajinas, and one of the things that have been made absolutely plain to President Milosevic is that he cannot expect a relaxation of sanctions until a proper framework for a ceasefire and modus vivendi in the Krajina has been put in place.

Mr. Macdonald: Does the Minister affirm that the international community has recognised Serbia as bearing the primary responsibility for the conflict and for the hideous atrocities in the former Yugoslavia? That affirmation has been made. It was made at the Edinburgh summit of the European Community; it has been made in numerous United Nations resolutions. Does he agree, therefore, that as long as Croatia continues to be divided, Bosnia continues to come under attack and Kosovo continues to be repressed, there can be no question of relaxing sanctions against the Serbian Government?

Mr. Hogg: As to responsibility for the outbreak of the war, I certainly agree that the Government of Serbia are primarily responsible. If one were trying to determine who had committed the most atrocities one might have some difficulty. The plain truth is that all sides have committed atrocities and the barbarism has been shocking.

As to forward policies, it is obviously essential that we promote an early settlement in Bosnia, not least because we otherwise face a calamity this winter. We must therefore ask ourselves and everyone else how best the Serbs—the Bosnian Serbs in particular—can be got to concede land. I can conceive of the relaxation of sanctions if there is a genuine ceasefire and implementation of the settlement and if the Serbs are prepared to deal with a modus vivendi in Krajina. That said, they will not be fully readmitted to the international community unless and until the problems of Kosovo and Vojvodina are also fully addressed.

Soviet Bloc Countries

10. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on relations with former Soviet bloc countries.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our relations with the states are excellent.

Mr. Oppenheim: Is not my right hon. and learned Friend a little ashamed of the position when, having preached the benefits of free and open markets to those countries for so long, just when they most need our help the European Community is refusing free access for their goods to appease a few cosseted, subsidised and vested interests, such as the European steel industry? Are we not at the same time refusing cheap goods to our consumers and setting a bad example to those countries? Bearing in mind our example, it is not surprising that they are beginning to reject open market democracy.

Mr. Hogg: I entirely agree with the main thrust of my hon. Friend's argument, that free markets and open access to them is of critical importance to underpinning the political reforms in the former Soviet Union and the central and eastern European countries. The British Government have been foremost in arguing the case for liberalising markets. We promoted the association agreements with the Visigrad group of countries and others and we are promoting the concept of free trade between the European Union, Russia and other countries from the former Soviet Union.

Mr. Hardy: The Minister may be aware that significant delegations from the former Warsaw pact states attended the recent assembly of Western European Union and that they were especially concerned to pursue security guarantees. Since their anxieties may well have increased in recent days, what meaningful and justifiable assurances or guarantees can western Europe offer?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that those countries are concerned about security questions. We are not in a position to give guarantees of the article 5 type and nor is the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation or any of the states within it. We are planning to thicken the relationship between NATO and the countries within the former Soviet Union and central and eastern Europe. In that context, the concept of partnership for peace initiated by the United States is extremely welcome. It will form the basis of the discussions to be held at the NATO summit in January and, broadly speaking, it was welcomed at the North Atlantic Co-operation Council meeting in Brussels about 10 days ago.

Kashmir

11. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans Her Majesty's Government have to assist in resolving the problems in Kashmir.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have repeatedly urged India and Pakistan to resolve their dispute through bilateral negotiation. I welcome the recent announcement that talks will be resumed early in the new year.

Mr. Knapman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his careful reply and for his excellent speech during an Adjournment debate last week. Will he reconsider the position in Kashmir, where thousands of people have been slaughtered—probably tens of thousands during the past three to four years—as that is poisoning relations between two of our oldest allies, India and Pakistan? In addition, if the pressure for substantive early bilateral talks between those two countries fails, will my hon. Friend refer the matter to the United Nations, which first passed a resolution on the matter in 1947?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The best prospect at the moment is the resumption of talks, as my hon. Friend says. That is the way that we wish to be taken and we hope that there will be some progress. Of course, we have always made clear to the Indian Government our concern about human rights violations in Kashmir. There should be a dialogue and a political process in Kashmir, and an improvement in human rights there.

Mr. Madden: Does the Minister agree that lasting peace will come to Jammu and Kashmir only if any political settlement is acceptable to the overwhelming majority of the people living in that region? If that is the case, does he agree that representatives of the people of Jammu and Kashmir should be directly involved in any discussions on Kashmir that are convened between the Governments of India and Pakistan?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As I said to the hon. Gentleman during the Adjournment debate the other night, the participants in any discussions must be a matter for the two parties to decide. But certainly we have always urged and continue to urge on the Indian Government the need for a political process in Kashmir.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Does my hon. Friend agree that when the two parties—the two Pakistani Foreign Ministers and the Indian Prime Minister—meet in January, they should make progress and that, above all, international observers should be allowed into Kashmir so that the rest of the world can see what is going on there?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My hon. Friend is right that people should go to Kashmir, and I have repeatedly urged that on representatives of the Indian Government. That is what we would certainly like to see.

Dr. John Cunningham: The Minister is right to welcome the news that India and Pakistan are to begin at Foreign Secretary level in January discussions on mutual problems, including the circumstances in Kashmir. Should not all friends of India, Pakistan and the people of Kashmir welcome that small but positive step forward? Was not it good news that the siege and occupation of the Hazratbal mosque in Srinagar ended without bloodshed?

We welcome the decision by the Government of the Republic of India to agree that Amnesty International should be given access to Kashmir to report on the circumstances that prevail there. Finally, I press on the Minister the need for the Government of India to be unequivocally told that the human and democratic rights of the people of Kashmir should be upheld in any settlement that may emerge.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is precisely because we respect the Indian Government as a democratic Government that we expect the rights of the people of Kashmir to be upheld and we are bringing pressure to bear on the Indian Government to recognise those important facts. I am glad that Amnesty International has recognised that there is positive progress in being able to go to India. I cannot confirm that Amnesty International has been invited to Kashmir, but it thinks that it will be able to visit the Punjab.

Azerbaijan

12. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Azerbaijan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our relations with Azerbaijan are in very good order.

Mr. Colvin: What action are Her Majesty's Government taking to bring about the implementation of the four Security Council resolutions relating to the conflict involving Azerbaijan and Armenia? Can we expect an official visit from the President of Azerbaijan, President Aliev, next year? In view of the considerable business prospects for Britain in Azerbaijan—most notably, British Petroleum—and if the president is to visit this country, does not my right hon. and learned Friend think that there would be merit in a trade delegation to Azerbaijan under the Minister's leadership some time in the near future?

Mr. Hogg: I am glad to say that I have been to Azerbaijan twice. As my hon. Friend knows, we have an ambassador in Baku. The trade opportunities in Azerbaijan, especially in the oil sector, are large and important to us. My hon. Friend will know that an agreement has been signed and is currently awaiting the approval of the Parliament and the president.

Yes, I hope that we shall have an opportunity to welcome President Aliev here early next year. As for the war involving Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia, I believe that the way forward lies through the Minsk process. We stand strongly and firmly behind that process.

Mr. Hutton: In the light of recent developments in Russia, and the gains of the Fascist parties in the parliamentary elections, is it not important for the British Government to take immediate and urgent steps to promote full diplomatic representations in the new states of the former Soviet Union, including Azerbaijan? Is it not extraordinary that, several years after the break-up of the Soviet Union, we still do not have full diplomatic representation in many of those states?

Mr. Hogg: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman was listening to my answer. I said that we had an ambassador in Baku. Perhaps he did not realise that Baku was the capital of Azerbaijan.

Sir Jim Spicer: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that when the people of Azerbaijan consider the example of Georgia, where we have seen direct Russian aggression, up to and including military intervention, they will be very careful before accepting any assurances given by the western powers at present?

Mr. Hogg: The present state of Azerbaijan is a cause of considerable anxiety to us all. We judge that there are many Armenian troops there, and it is important that they start the process of withdrawal. The Minsk process offers that prospect through a staged timetable, and I would say to the Armenians from Nagorno Karabakh and from Armenia, and to the Azeri Government, that it is essential that they work by, with and through the Minsk process.

Subsidiarity

13. **Mr. Charles Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards further subsidiarity since the coming into force of the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Hurd: The Commission presented its subsidiarity report to the European Council on 10 December. We believe that it is a good start to a continuing process. The report calls for the repeal or simplification of some 25 per cent. of EC legislation. It covers 16 of the 24 items on the list that the French and British Governments submitted. Those include revision of the bathing and drinking water directives, the acquired rights directive, and the liability of service suppliers. One further item from the list has already been amended on those grounds, and the Commission is pursuing two others. All legislative proposals put forward by the Commission must now be tested against the requirements of subsidiarity.

Mr. Charles Kennedy: I thank the Foreign Secretary for that informative reply. Will he take the opportunity to confirm, as he has confirmed before, that the best guarantee of effective subsidiarity is probably federalism, as understood elsewhere in the Community, although the same definition is not understood in sections of this country? Will the right hon. Gentleman therefore continue vigorously to apply subsidiarity within the nations and regions of the United Kingdom, and confirm that the Conservative Members of the European Parliament have subscribed to a federal future, through their affiliation to the European People's party?

Mr. Hurd: I advise the hon. Gentleman not to start dabbling in the different meanings of federalism. He will find himself in deeper water than he supposes, as his leader did in Brussels last week. The arrangements within the United Kingdom, as within any other member state, are a matter for the individual state. That was made clear in the Birmingham declaration last year.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the repeal or reform of 17 European measures at the Council last week is the first vindication of the Government's stance on subsidiarity during the Maastricht debate? Does he also agree that, provided that the common agricultural policy is adequately reformed, we can foresee a significant decrease in the competences of the European Community and the Commission, to the benefit of every country in Europe?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right. I did not entirely blame the more sceptical of my right hon. and hon. Friends who, when subsidiarity was first discussed in the House, dismissed it as a mere phrase, but we are now turning it into a reality. This is the beginning of a process that will be extremely important. We said that it would be important, and we are making it important.

Ms Quin: If the Government succeed in abandoning the bathing and drinking water directives, will the Foreign Secretary tell us what will happen to the green dowry of £1 billion that was given to water companies during privatisation specifically to bring our water up to EC quality standards? Does the Foreign Secretary appreciate that the British public will not forgive a Government who put party dogma before water safety?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Lady and the Labour party miss the point. The purification and cleansing of this country's water are matters on which she and her colleagues can reasonably press my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment; that is fine. We do not think that the Commission in Brussels should lay down detailed regulations on such matters—regulations, which are, incidentally, out of date. What is new is that the Commission agrees with that point of view.

Norway

14. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the recent visit of the Prime Minister to Norway.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Norwegian Prime Minister, Mrs. Brundtland, visited London privately from 14 to 17 November. She called on the Prime Minister during that time and discussion covered the European Community, Norwegian accession and Norway's whaling policy.

Sir Thomas Arnold: During those talks, did my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister endorse Norway's role in the middle-east process, and did he give similar support to Norway's peace initiative in Bosnia?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government have warmly congratulated the Norwegian Government on the mediatory role that they played in the Israeli-Palestinian breakthrough, and I further congratulated Mr. Holst, Norway's Foreign Minister when I was in Norway. That is only part of the way towards the comprehensive settlement that we still have to achieve.

Mr. Eric Clarke: Did the Minister raise with the Norwegian Prime Minister that country's whaling policy and condemn it for environmental reasons? Having said that, I have a great deal of affection for the Norwegian people because of the role that they played in the second world war and their great affinity with the Scottish nation.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We all feel the same way about the Norwegians. During the discussion between Mrs. Brundtland and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, Mrs. Brundtland described Norway's whaling policy. Our Prime Minister reiterated the British position and our support for EC legislation—the habitats directive and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species regulations, which amount to a de facto ban on commercial whaling. Anyone who wishes to see an end to Norwegian whaling should welcome the Norwegian accession to the Community in due course.

Falkland Islands

15. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last visited the Falkland Islands to discuss arrangements for agreements with Argentina relating to fishing and oil exploration.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I visited the Falkland Islands from 12 to 17 November. During my visit, I discussed fisheries and oil with the Falkland Islands Government and elected councillors.

Mr. Shersby: In view of the decision of the Falklands Islands Government to pursue exploration for hydrocarbons in the area of the continental shelf, will my hon. Friend assure the House that as soon as the necessary legislation is forthcoming from the Falkland Islands, it will be followed by a prompt announcement on exclusive licensing arrangements?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We do not yet know whether there is any oil—at least, any oil of commercial quantities —in the Falklands waters. Two seismic surveys are under way and the results will be published in the early part of next year. Meanwhile, the Falkland Islands Government, assisted by us, are drawing up legislation with the prospect of a second exploration round, which may be announced next year.

Middle East

16. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's support for the Washington accord on resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary to the question asked by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway).

Mr. Townsend: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is vital to keep up the momentum of the peace process in the middle east and that there is a need to get Syria and Jordan involved as soon as we can? I welcome the support that Britain will give to the Palestinian police force. Will we be equipping it as well?

Mr. Hogg: I entirely agree with what my hon. Friend has said. *[Interruption.]* I thought that that was a tribute to my answer, but I see that it is not. It is important to keep up the momentum. Yes, the Syrian-Israeli track must be supported. Yes, technical assistance will be given to the Palestinian police force. We will assist with training, and if we can find appropriate equipment, we will see if we can provide that as well.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Will the Minister of State ask his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State when he visits Israel to impress on the Israeli Government the need to release the 10,000 Palestinian prisoners? When he discusses the issue with him, will he also offer to the Israelis, but especially to the Palestinians, some form of package to help to resettle the 10,000 prisoners in the occupied territories when they are released from Israeli gaols?

Mr. Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will have heard that question. Yes, indeed, the release of the detainees is an important part of the confidence-building process and of making it plain to the Palestinian community that there are positive benefits to be gained from the accord. The settlement of the detainees and their families is an important point and Chairman Arafat acknowledged that when pressing for a substantial area of land to be handed to the Palestinians as part of the Jericho region.

Ireland (Joint Declaration)

3.30 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about my discussions with the Irish Prime Minister.

As the House will be aware, the Taoiseach and I agreed a joint declaration this morning. Copies of the declaration have been placed in the Vote Office. I know that the whole House will wish to hear what lay behind this declaration and what it may mean for the future.

For the past 25 years, the people of Northern Ireland have suffered levels of violence that any civilised community would find intolerable. No community, and especially no part of the United Kingdom, should have to endure the murder and destruction that have afflicted the Province. That is why successive British Governments have sought to find a solution to these terrible problems. We must care as much about violence in Northern Ireland as about violence in any other part of the Union.

When the Taoiseach and I met at Downing street two years ago, we both agreed on the need to work together to try to bring about peace in Northern Ireland and in the Republic. We were both well aware of the pitfalls and dangers which have wrecked so many previous attempts, but we both knew that, after 25 years of killing, we had to make it a personal priority both to seek a permanent end to violence and to establish the basis for a comprehensive and lasting political settlement.

The declaration that we have agreed today shows the commitment of the two Governments for peace and democracy and against violence. Its objective is to set a framework for peace, a framework that reflects our responsibilities to both communities in a way that is fully compatible with the undertakings that we have both given and with the objectives of the talks process.

Copies of the joint declaration have been placed in the Vote Office. I urge all hon. Members to read it carefully. It deserves careful study. It has required detailed and painstaking negotiations between the two Governments. It addresses the concerns of both sides of the Community and it is totally consistent with the principles that this Government have repeatedly confirmed to the House.

It may help the House if I set out the main elements of the declaration. I will, where possible, quote directly from the text of the declaration so that there can be no misunderstanding about what it says.

First, paragraph 2 expressly reaffirms the British Government's commitment to Northern Ireland's statutory constitutional guarantee. This guarantees that, as long as a majority of the people of Northern Ireland wish to remain a part of the United Kingdom, the Government will uphold their right to do so. That pledge is rock solid. That is set out most clearly also in paragraph 4, which reaffirms that the British Government will

> "uphold the democratic wish of a greater number of the people of Northern Ireland on the issue of whether they prefer to support the Union or a sovereign united Ireland."

Later in that paragraph, the British Government agree

> "that it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish."

This is a crucial sentence, and one about which there has been much misleading speculation. So let me repeat that it says that a move to a united Ireland can take place only

> "by agreement between the two parts respectively"

and

> "on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South".

This fully protects the position of the majority in Northern Ireland, and means that change could come about only with their consent.

In line with previous undertakings, the British Government also reaffirm that if a future majority in Northern Ireland desired a united Ireland, we would introduce the necessary legislation to bring that about.

For his part, the Taoiseach accepts in paragraph 5 that

> "it would be wrong to attempt to impose a united Ireland in the absence of the freely given consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland."

Later in the same paragraph, he accepts that

> "the democratic right of self-determination by the people of Ireland as a whole must be achieved and exercised with and subject to the agreement and consent of a majority of the people in Northern Ireland".

Those are important commitments by the Taoiseach which I know will be widely welcomed by the House. The House will also welcome, in paragraph 7, the Taoiseach's confirmation that, in the event of an overall settlement of the talks process,

> "the Irish Government will, as part of a balanced constitutional accommodation, put forward and support proposals for change in the Irish Constitution which would fully reflect the principle of consent in Northern Ireland."

The joint declaration fully backs the three-strand talks process involving the main constitutional parties and the two Governments. It says that it is the two Governments' aim

> "to foster agreement and reconciliation, leading to a new political framework founded on consent and encompassing arrangements within Northern Ireland, for the whole island, and between these islands."

I believe that the passages that I have quoted, and the other language in the joint declaration, set out a clear framework under which differences can be negotiated and resolved exclusively by peaceful political means. But that can come about only if the men of violence end the killing and commit themselves to the democratic process. The joint declaration sets out the way in which this can be brought about.

Paragraph 10 says that both Governments

> "reiterate that the achievement of peace must involve a permanent end to the use of, or support for, paramilitary violence. They confirm that, in these circumstances, democratically mandated parties which establish a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and which have shown that they abide by the democratic process, are free to participate fully in democratic politics and to join in dialogue in due course between the Governments and the political parties on the way ahead."

Let me make it plain on behalf of the British Government what that undertaking means. If there is a permanent end to violence, and if Sinn Fein commits itself to the democratic process, then we will be ready to enter into preliminary exploratory dialogue with it within three months. But, first, it must end violence for good.

I understand the fears and concerns of Unionists about the prospects of the British Government's entering into talks with Sinn Fein. This period has been a worrying and uncertain time for them. Although they have the primary interest in seeing an end to violence, they are rightly concerned lest this be achieved by selling out the fundamental constitutional principles which the

Government have always upheld. If they fear that, then they should be reassured by this declaration. It reaffirms the constitutional guarantee in the clearest possible terms. The Taoiseach fully accepts the principle that any constitutional change could come about only with the consent of a majority in Northern Ireland.

In summary, let me make it clear what is in the declaration and what is not. What is in the declaration is a renewed commitment by the British Government to Northern Ireland's constitutional guarantee; an acknowledgement by the Taoiseach that a united Ireland could only be brought about with the consent of a majority of the people in Northern Ireland; a willingness on the Taoiseach's part to make changes in the Irish constitution if an overall settlement can be reached; and a confirmation that if Sinn Fein renounces violence, it will be able to participate in future democratic discussions.

What is not in the declaration is any suggestion that the British Government should join the ranks of persuaders of the "value" or "legitimacy" of a united Ireland; that is not there. Nor is there any suggestion that the future status of Northern Ireland should be decided by a single act of self-determination by the people of Ireland as a whole; that is not there either. Nor is there any timetable for constitutional change, or any arrangement for joint authority over Northern Ireland. In sum, the declaration provides that it is, as it must be, for the people of Northern Ireland to determine their own future.

All the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland will wish to study the document very carefully. I should like today to extend an offer to meet each of the parties regularly in the future, so that I can hear at first hand their concerns and ambitions, and can set out to them the British Government's position. If we can work together to quell ancient fears and suspicions, we can help to build a better future for Northern Ireland.

I have made it clear that if it renounces violence, the way is open to Sinn Fein to join in legitimate constitutional dialogue. That is a political route which it now has no excuse not to follow. That is the opportunity offered by this joint declaration—and it has been obtained without compromising any of the constitutional principles that this Government have consistently espoused. The onus is now on Sinn Fein to take advantage of that opportunity: I urge it to do so.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): On behalf of the Opposition, I welcome the joint declaration with enthusiasm. We fervently hope that it will be an important first step in a peace process that will lead to a new political settlement. It was necessary for the two Governments to take the lead, but it is vital that the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland now take part in new discussions which the British Government should promote.

There was never any excuse for violence and terror on the part of any paramilitary organisation, but there is now an opportunity for both the permanent cessation of violence and the involvement of Sinn Fein in constitutional dialogue—provided that it is clear that the path of violence has been abandoned. We hope that the new opportunities that the declaration creates are seized by both traditions in Northern Ireland.

May I ask the Prime Minister two questions about the detail of the declaration? First, in paragraph 9, both Governments commit themselves to seeking to create institutions and structures which would enable the people of Ireland to work together in all areas of common interest. What kind of institution, and what areas of policy, have the Governments in mind?

Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman referred to what he described as the "crucial sentence" in paragraph 4, about consent being

"freely and concurrently given, North and South".

Does that passage mean that a constitutional settlement arising from the talks process could be put to the people of Northern Ireland and those of the Republic in separate referendums on the same day?

Finally, may I endorse the appeal for an end to violence that the Prime Minister made in his concluding sentence? That must be the overwhelming desire of all the people of the British Isles—not least those in Northern Ireland—who have suffered the appalling violence of the past 25 years.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman both for his support for the joint declaration and for the continuation of talks which necessarily must proceed beside it. I believe that he is right that it is an opportunity to move from a violent path. It is an opportunity which no one can compel the men of violence to take. It is an opportunity which lies there and it is in their hands now to decide whether to take that opportunity and move towards a legitimate political path in future. I repeat: I hope that they will take that opportunity.

As to the right hon. and learned Gentleman's two specific questions, the reference in paragraph 9 refers specifically to the three-stranded talks that are continuing at the present time, and there would be a large number of areas of common interest that are being identified in these talks that would be the subject of the structures referred to. So far as "freely and concurrently given" is concerned in terms of referendums, it certainly need not necessarily mean referendums on the same day. What it does mean is that that could be the situation. It is a matter for agreement in the talks and beyond, but they certainly need not necessarily be on the same day. It does imply that consent would need to be given separately north and south.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Has the Prime Minister noticed that this morning's statement is already being termed the Downing street declaration? Those of us who remember the earlier Downing street declaration in the time of the Government of Lord Wilson will remember that it was very specific in saying that the affairs of Northern Ireland were an internal matter for the Parliament of the United Kingdom. May I, in a constructive fashion, ask the Prime Minister to assure us that the drift from that position over the past 20 years will be halted under his premiership?

Whatever the eventual conclusions that one may draw from this rather tortuously worded statement with its many contradictions—I am referring to the statement, not the one just made by the Prime Minister—it appears to give some finality to the secret discussions that have destabilised the Province over recent months and which the Prime Minister has recognised just now. Does the Prime Minister share my expectation that we can now proceed to govern Northern Ireland in accordance with the wishes of 85 per cent. of the population—Protestant and Roman Catholic—who were greatly reassured by his remark to the House that

"The future constitutional position of the people of Northern Ireland is a matter for the people of Northern Ireland to determine and for no one else to determine."—[*Official Report*, 18 November 1993; Vol. 233, c. 29.]

[Mr. James Molyneaux]

Finally, can the Prime Minister confirm that the joint declaration does not assert the value or legitimacy of achieving a united Ireland without majority consent; commit the people of Northern Ireland to joining a united Ireland against their democratic wishes, establish any form of joint authority over Northern Ireland, even by phasing; establish any joint mechanisms such as a permanent convention; or give Sinn Fein an immediate place at the talks table? Can the Prime Minister also confirm that the statement does not sideline the very valuable round of meetings between the parties convened by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—the hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram)—which are now drawing towards a successful conclusion and which have been supported just now by the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition?

The Prime Minister: On the right hon. Gentleman's specific point at the end, I can confirm to him that the joint declaration does not assert the value of achieving a united Ireland; does not assert the legitimacy of a united Ireland in the absence of majority consent; does not either, for I think that it was implicit in what the right hon. Gentleman said, commit the British Government to joining the ranks of the persuaders for a united Ireland. That is not the job of any British Government. It does not set any timetable for a united Ireland. It does not commit the people of Northern Ireland to join a united Ireland against their wishes, and it does not establish any arrangements for joint authority. I can confirm each of those points to the right hon. Gentleman.

As to the talks process undertaken by my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes, we anticipate and expect that they will continue and intensify. They are, I believe, becoming extremely valuable. We wish to proceed with them with all speed so that we can make further progress in the talks, which will run alongside the declaration that I have just set out to the House. As far as the consent principle is concerned, I reiterate again, because I wish no one to be in any doubt about this, that the future constitutional position of Northern Ireland lies now, and will continue to lie, within the wishes of the people of Northern Ireland. For so long as a majority of the people of Northern Ireland wish to remain within the Union, they will have the total and complete support of this Government in doing so.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Would the Prime Minister care to comment on the fact that the great difficulty and the field of controversy between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic—Northern Ireland being a member of the United Kingdom, although the document never once mentions the United Kingdom; that phrase has been entirely jettisoned from the document—involves articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution? Surely that is the very nub of the controversy. Why does this paper not even mention that?

A member of the Government said to me outside, "Oh, yes, but look at page 5." I have read the document carefully. In fact, I was able to receive from Dublin 24 hours before this document was available to other people all the information that I put in my letter—*[Interruption.]* It is very important that the Prime Minister should answer this question. He confirms that, in the event of an overall settlement, according to the Taoiseach,

> "the Irish Government will, as part of a balanced constitutional accommodation, put forward and support proposals for change in the Irish Constitution which would fully reflect the principle of consent in Northern Ireland."

But it is not the principle of consent in Northern Ireland that has anything to do with articles 2 and 3; it is the principle of the territorial claim. However, that most important matter has not even been referred to.

Will the Prime Minister tell us what the statement on page 2 really does to the present position? Paragraph 4 states that the British Government agree

> "that it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish."

How is that different? Is it not different from the present situation when the entity of self-determination in Northern Ireland is the people of Northern Ireland? Why must the people of Northern Ireland now be linked with the Irish Republic on a question of their own right to remain within this United Kingdom?

Finally, may I say to the Prime Minister, that, as a public representative, I find it very offensive to be told that, in three months' time, if the IRA ceases its violence without any conditions for handing over its weapons or its bomb-making material or any of its military prowess, the IRA will be invited, as constitutional politicians, to sit down at the table. That goes to the very gut of the resentment of the people of Northern Ireland who have been slaughtered, butchered and murdered—*[Interruption.]* I do not mind what the hon. Gentleman says. His constituents have not been murdered or butchered. Perhaps he would like to sit down with the godfathers of the IRA and others who have done such things. What I have described goes to the gut of the people of Northern Ireland. They look on this as a sell-out act of treachery.

The Prime Minister: Let me touch on the last part first. The hon. Gentleman makes the point that some of his constituents have been murdered by terrorist activities over the past 25 years. I acknowledge that and I understand the misery that that must have caused to his constituents, their families and to the hon. Gentleman himself.

I must say to the hon. Gentleman that the purpose of the agreement and the document is to make sure that, 25 years from now, his successor does not sit there saying that to the Prime Minister of the day. I wish to take action to make sure that there is no more bloodshed of that sort and no more coffins carried away week after week because politicians do not have the courage to sit down, address the problem and find a way through. I am prepared to do that. If the hon. Gentleman believes that I should not, he does not understand the responsibilities of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

On the hon. Gentleman's three questions, the declaration does not specifically refer to the United Kingdom; it specifically refers to the Union, which I think that the hon. Gentleman himself cares about. If he reads the document carefully, which, alas, he had not done when he made his remarks this morning and issued his letter, he will see that reference to the Union. As for articles 2 and 3, the quotation answers the hon. Gentleman's own question. That is clearly intended to refer to articles 2 and 3 in due course, and does so refer.

On the hon. Gentleman's third point on paragraph 4 about freely expressed consent, the specific point of paragraph 4 is to mention the freely expressed consent north and south respectively. It is saying to the hon. Gentleman that he, his constituents and all the other people in Northern Ireland have themselves, by their own actions, in their hands the future constitutional position of Ulster.

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): May I express to the Prime Minister and to Mr. Reynolds my deep appreciation for the enormous amount of energy that they have put into trying to grasp the hope of peace—a hope which is shared by the masses of people on both islands? Having read the joint declaration, I think that it is one of the most comprehensive declarations that has been made about British-Irish relations in the past 70 years. My appeal to all sections of our people is to read the entire statement in full and to have no knee-jerk reactions but to study it carefully and in full before responding.

As the House will be aware, it has been the consistent position of my party that the British-Irish quarrel of old, the quarrel of sovereignty, has changed fundamentally in the evolution of the new interdependent and post-nationalist Europe of which we are members, but the legacy of that past is the deeply divided people. I welcome the fact that the declaration indentifies the problem as the deeply divided people of Ireland. I also welcome the fact that it recognises that that division can be healed only by agreement, and by an agreement that earns the allegiance and agreement of all our traditions and respects their diversity. I welcome also the fact that the Government have committed themselves to promoting such agreement and to encouraging such agreement, and whatever form that agreement takes, the Government will endorse.

Does the Prime Minister agree that the joint declaration is a challenge to all parties to come to the table in a totally peaceful atmosphere to begin the very difficult process —it will be a difficult process—of reaching agreement? If it takes place in a peaceful atmosphere, we will have much more chance of reaching such an agreement. My appeal to everyone who comes to that table is to come armed only with the strength of their convictions and not with any form of coercion or physical force.

Let us remember at this time that it is people who have rights, not territory, and that humanity transcends nationality. May the House share with me at this moment the hope of all our people that today will be the first major step on a road that will remove for ever the gun and the bomb from our small island of people.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comprehensive support. He is right; the declaration is a challenge to all parties and to all people concerned with finding a peaceful settlement in Northern Ireland. I have to say to all parties that I think that we have no moral alternative but to take up that challenge and see whether we can find a satisfactory outcome. The hon. Gentleman has shown his personal commitment to a settlement in Northern Ireland for many years and, on that basis, his support today is doubly welcome.

Mr. Tom King (Bridgwater): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the genuine and serious work that he has done in producing the declaration for the House? Is not it evident that no such declaration could give everybody everything that they wanted? Is not it evident also that there is nothing in the declaration that genuinely and seriously threatens anybody's vital interests in the matter?

Is not there a heavy responsibility on all hon. Members, including the elected Members in Northern Ireland, not to react in a way which could destroy the best opportunity for peace that we have seen since the trouble began? Is not the message from the House—we hope that it will be repeated later from the Dail Eireann—to those who have been responsible for violence that, because there is now a joint offer from both Governments of access to the democratic process, violence should cease immediately?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his remarks. He speaks, of course, with the experience of having been a distinguished Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. He is right that this is a balanced document which now offers opportunities that were not there before. I share my right hon. Friend's hope that those opportunities will be taken up.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Will the Prime Minister note that he has our sincere and heartfelt good will in all his efforts and in the personal commitment which he is devoting to the task? Does he note also that we welcome the concurrent referendum possibility and the emphasis on human rights in the Taoiseach's own statement?

Is not the real question for the terrorists? Why should anybody else die and why should any more families be torn apart when it is possible to seek change without obstacle by a peaceful process, and when there are guarantees, which are underwritten by both Governments, that those changes cannot be enforced against the will of the majority in the north of Ireland?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. There is now no justification whatever for terrorism. There is now a clear and identifiable alternative for those people who seriously wish to engage in discussions in Northern Ireland. If terrorism were to continue after the statement and after the declaration, with the support that that has been given, it will be clearly understood by everyone that those people who engage in terrorism do not in any way genuinely seek a settlement, but simply wish to inflict murder and terror continuously.

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): May I ask my right hon. Friend to be encouraged by the fact that the British-Irish inter-parliamentary body met in London today, and British and Irish Members of Parliament alike asked me on their behalf to welcome the joint declaration and to give it their support?

May I further ask my right hon. Friend to repeat that the declaration is a framework for peace that represents in many ways an opportunity for a new beginning? Will my right hon. Friend, together with the Irish Taoiseach, continue with all of his strength in his historic work, the end of which can mean only the peace which we all want?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that. The declaration certainly is a framework for peace. It is an opportunity, but whether that opportunity is taken does not lie in my hands or in the hands of the Irish Prime Minister. It lies in the hands of the people who have bombed and killed for so long. It is they who must come under pressure to make sure that the violence ends.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): May I, as someone whose constituency suffered from the bombers, ask the Prime Minister to accept that now is the time to give peace a chance? Will he also accept that if anybody involved fails to take that chance, they will never be forgiven?

It is time for all paramilitaries to lay down their arms. If they do, will not that be a fitting memorial, not only to the two small boys who lost their lives in Warrington, but to all who have lost their lives needlessly because of the actions of the people of violence? Let us hope that the words that have been spoken today will be heeded and that peace comes at last. Is not that what is needed if we are to avoid debates about violence in the future?

The Prime Minister: I cannot improve on what the hon. Gentleman said; I simply endorse it.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Does my right hon. Friend ardently wish that people of Northern Ireland wish to remain part of the United Kingdom? Otherwise, is there not a danger that people will say that the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom is careless with regard to the integrity of the United Kingdom? In that case, would it be inconceivable that anybody could have said that without the events of the past 25 years?

The Prime Minister: If my hon. Friend looks at the joint declaration and at the words I set out so clearly at the last general election, he need have no doubt about my views on the Union; they are well known and on the record. I have gone to great trouble to ensure that the constitutional guarantee is firmly enshrined in the joint declaration, so that there can be no doubt that those people who care about the Union—and we are primarily concerned about the people in Northern Ireland who care about the Union—shall have it within their own hands, with the full support of the Government, to remain within the Union for so long as that is their wish.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Prime Minister aware that so strong is the desire for peace that the overwhelming majority of people in this country have long favoured talks among all the parties concerned? Will he confirm that a round table conference on that basis offers a better hope of a durable peace than simply talks between two Prime Ministers, neither of whom has been responsible for the violence? Would I be right in assuming that the significance of what he said today about the future of the island of Ireland being in the hands of the Irish people is that the British Government are no longer laying claim to an interest in the maintenance of the Union if the people of the north are ready to seek alternative arrangements? Is not that an important statement which ought to be underlined, clarified and emphasised in order to end the violence?

The Prime Minister: On the first point, talks between the two Governments have a place and the joint declaration is the outcome of those discussions. It lies alongside the main talks process with all the consitutional parties, who must play their part in determining what happens, as they are most directly concerned. Self-evidently, that is the best way to proceed. As far as the Union is concerned, I reiterate the points I made a moment ago; my views about the Union are well known. I said some time ago at the election that it would not be appropriate for any Government—I was talking about Scotland—to hold Scotland within the United Kingdom if a majority of its people wanted independence. The same must apply to the people of Northern Ireland. That does not exclude the fact that I have my own personal views; it illustrates the fact that, ultimately, it must be for the people themselves to determine.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): While warmly welcoming the joint declaration as a potential positive way forward, may I ask my right hon. Friend to remember that, during the weeks it was prepared, violence continued in Northern Ireland? Will he ensure that there is no let-up in the hunt for those that perpetrated terrorism?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend takes a particular interest in Northern Ireland as chairman of the committee particularly concerned with Northern Ireland. I give him the categorical assurance that there will be no let-up in the security action against terrorists. The co-operation with the Gardai and the security forces in the north is today at a more comprehensive level that we have ever known.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): As I almost lost my life at the hands of IRA terrorism, I fully understand the message inherent in today's declaration and to whom it is directed. Obviously there is much emphasis on Irish nationalist aspirations. However, the Prime Minister will know that 95 per cent. of people in my constituency are more interested in British aspirations. Although he has given some assurances today and specifically referred to paragraph 2 of the joint declaration which states that both Prime Ministers reaffirm

"Northern Ireland's statutory constitutional guarantee",

the trouble is that both Prime Ministers interpret differently what Northern Ireland's constitutional guarantee really is. Therefore, with the purpose of giving confidence to the British people of my constituency, will the Prime Minister assure us, first, that the declaration in no way weakens Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom and, secondly, that it in no way gives Dublin any further role in the internal affairs or administration of Northern Ireland?

The Prime Minister: First, the whole House knows that the right hon. Gentleman was on one occasion very badly wounded by the IRA, and that he showed bravery then and subsequently. I am grateful for what he said. I give him both the assurances that he seeks. The declaration in no way weakens the constitutional guarantee that was first set out in the Northern Ireland Constitutional Act 1973. There is no weakening of that constitutional guarantee and nothing agreed today in the joint declaration gives the Government of the Republic of Ireland any additional say in the affairs of Northern Ireland.

Sir James Kilfedder (North Down): Will the Prime Minister give an assurance that there will be no talks with Sinn Fein until the terrorists, the IRA, hand over not only all the guns, ammunition and explosives that they have in Northern Ireland, but the material that they have in the Irish Republic?

The Prime Minister: It may be rather difficult in practice to find out precisely where it is and who has it; that is the practical difficulty that we face. We have said, beyond any doubt, that there must be the clearest possible public renunciation of violence and then a decontamination period—[HON. MEMBERS: "Both sides."]—so that it is clear that that renunciation of violence will be held and there will be no violence. Then one can determine whether Sinn Fein can enter into discussions.

Hon. Members: Both sides.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): The Prime Minister will be aware that, in Dail Eireann today, there will be a similar reaction to the joint declaration. I welcome that, as I welcome the reception that it has received in the House. Does the Prime Minister accept that the intrinsic value will be recognised only if the same acceptance is gained where it counts—in places like my constituency in west Belfast, on the Shankill road and in the districts which have been beset by the violence of the IRA and of loyalist paramilitary groupings?

The Prime Minister said in his statement that the British Government's role will be to encourage, facilitate and enable agreement among all the people who inhabit the island. Does he include in that the further persuasion of those in the IRA who are carrying out violence? He has recognised that there are channels for achieving that. A logical conclusion of that part of his statement must be to pursue that type of persuasion with those people, to try to ensure an end to violence.

I am consistently impressed by the reassurances that the Prime Minister gives to Unionists in the House. Those of us of a nationalist persuasion believe in pursuing our objectives by peaceful democratic means. When the Prime Minister speaks about the north of Ireland, he should recognise that 44 per cent. of the population follow that view and are entitled to some prime ministerial persuasion and reassurance at some time.

The Prime Minister: I do not think that there has been any occasion when I have suggested that everyone who held nationalist aspirations was inclined to pursue them in a violent manner. That is certainly not my view. The IRA has pursued its activities in a wholly unsatisfactory and brutal manner. That patently does not apply to every nationalist and I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should have thought that any hon. Member could conceivably think that it did. As for persuasion, it is not in my mind to offer concessions to people. What we have to say to all parties is now said clearly and in the open. They know what lies there; they know what opportunity awaits if they are prepared permanently to renounce violence. That is what lies there and there is nothing further to be offered.

Mr. Michael Mates (East Hampshire): Now that the brave efforts of both Prime Ministers and of the Ministers and officials, who worked so hard, have brought the declaration to a successful conclusion, does my right hon. Friend agree that the greatest cause for hope and satisfaction is that although there has never been the slightest excuse for violence, killing and bombing, if that course is pursued by the terrorists it will only show that they are not the slightest bit interested in any part of the democratic process? Has my right hon. Friend further agreed with the Taoiseach that if violence continues, both Governments, working together, will make concerted efforts to do whatever must be done to defeat the terrorists?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend speaks with special knowledge of Northern Ireland. He is absolutely right to say that there is no conceivable excuse for a continuation of violence. If it were to continue, I do not have a shred of doubt that we would continue to receive good and enhanced co-operation from the Government of the Republic of Ireland in tracking down those engaged in terrorism.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Do not we owe a particular debt of gratitude to the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) whose dedicated work for peace should be appreciated by all? Many attacked him, and I hope that they will realise now what he set out to achieve. Would it be useful to let friendly western democracies know what has been agreed between Ireland and the United Kingdom—not least the United States, where there seems to be some misunderstanding of the long and justified campaign waged by this country against terrorism? Should not the people of western Europe know and understand that the joint declaration has the overwhelming support of the people of Ireland and Britain and that continuing terrorism from either side has no support from the people whom the terrorists claim to represent?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to add the hon. Gentleman's tribute to the hon. Member for Foyle. I have paid tribute to him in the past for the work that he pursued for so many years, and I am glad to reiterate it today.

I agree entirely with the remarks of the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) in respect of the United States and Europe. I believe that there will be overwhelming support for the proposals set out in the joint declaration. We must hope that that transmits itself to those people who have the power to stop the killing, and that they choose to do so.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Does my right hon. Friend agree that whether or not this welcome declaration leads to an end to violence, it finally strips away the remotest pretext for violence and for international sympathy or support for violence? It also broadens the political base for the repression of violence from whatever quarter, should it continue.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend touched on a most important point when he said that the declaration strips away any pretext for tangible support. That is true within the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, and in respect of the tangible support that has come from other sources from time to time.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Although there is widespread hope that today's declaration will form the basis of a peaceful settlement, does the Prime Minister agree that much remains to be done to ensure a lasting peaceful settlement? As to talks with various parties, will the Prime Minister give an absolute assurance that no party will be able to use a boycott or veto to scupper the peace process and that the Prime Minister will not be deflected by his Government's desire to secure the support of Unionist votes in the House?

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that the participants in the talks would put up with a veto, which is the most practical point arising from the hon. Gentleman's question. However, if the talks procedure itself is to produce a lasting outcome, it will need to carry the consent of people in Northern Ireland. I shall seek, therefore, to encourage the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland at

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which the hon. Gentleman directed his remarks to play a full part in the constitutional discussions. They have done so thus far; they have done so very constructively. A great deal of progress has been made and I believe that they will wish to continue to make progress, as was indicated by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) a few moments ago.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): As a committed Conservative and Unionist Member of the House, I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's total commitment to peace. All Members of the House join him in hoping that the declaration will produce peace. Does my right hon. Friend accept, however, that the strength of the United Kingdom is composed of the component parts of the United Kingdom—England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales—and that any breach of the Union will weaken the whole? Will my right hon. Friend, as I did some years ago, go to Northern Ireland and campaign for the Union and support those who are in favour of the Union, should the necessity arise?

The Prime Minister: My views about the Union, as I indicated a moment or so ago, are well known and I do not believe that they can be seriously challenged by anyone who considers the record at the general election, before the general election, or subsequent to the general election, or considers the detail of the joint declaration. I also hold to the belief, however, that in the circumstances that exist in Northern Ireland it is for the people of Northern Ireland to determine the position. I believe that that is the right way to proceed and I think that in due course that is the way in which we must proceed.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): In welcoming the statement and wishing its ideals and its aspirations fair wind, although I recognise the many difficult days which still lie ahead, may I re-emphasise, on behalf of the constitutional nationalist parties in the House, the importance that we attach to achieving our aims through the ballot box, through reasoned arguments and through the democratically expressed views of the people of the constituent parts of the United Kingdom, be that through a referendum or through a general election?

I also congratulate the hon. Member for Foyle on the bravery that he has shown for many months, along with other people whose names perhaps are not so well known in this context, and I hope that the efforts that have been made will bring about a lasting settlement. Finally, I remind the Prime Minister that in Europe there is a great opportunity for the diversity of nations to be recognised as equal partners.

The Prime Minister: On her first two points, the hon. Lady will carry almost everyone with her, and I believe that she deserves to. The third point was rather more elliptical, but I think that, in principle, I can agree with the hon. Lady.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I congratulate my right hon. Friend and all those who have helped in the making of this historic agreement. Will my right hon. Friend reassure the House, however, that no commitment —explicit or implicit—has been made for any form of amnesty for those people who have been convicted of the most heinous crimes in Northern Ireland, and that the judicial process will pursue, with utmost diligence, those who have continued with their crimes of violence in recent weeks?

The Prime Minister: I can give my hon. Friend that absolute commitment.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): May I suggest to the Prime Minister that it is appropriate at this time that we remember two brave and dedicated men from my constituency who made the supreme sacrifice as members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary at the weekend? Drew Beecom and Ernie Smith were fine men. Those are the sort of people who must never be betrayed. I have experienced at first hand for more than 20 years the treachery of the IRA. Is there implicit in paragraph 10, which deals with a possible permanent end to violence and the way in which the men of violence can in due course enter the democratic process, provision by both Governments for a process of verification? Will he assure us that that process includes the surrender of arms and explosives and that it requires those who have been involved in violence to declare, by drafting a new manifesto and seeking approval at the ballot box, that they totally eschew violence before they can fully enter the democratic process?

The Prime Minister: They will certainly be required to give evidence of sincerity in a renunciation of violence. That is the purpose of having a gap between the renunciation and the entry into exploratory preliminary talks, so that we can examine the matters that the hon. Gentleman raises. The dreadful murders of the two brave men that he mentioned at Fivemiletown are the latest in a long catalogue of the wholly unnecessary and wasteful actions that have destroyed so many people's lives in Northern Ireland. If the options that are opened up as a result of this declaration are to be taken up, there is a possibility that perhaps no more brave men need join them.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be widespread welcome for the third paragraph of the declaration, which emphasises the key role of the European Community? Does he agree that the development of the single market will break down economic barriers and build up trust between the two communities? Does he also agree that it is important to have greater sporting links, as they also break down barriers and could build up the links between the two traditions? Does he agree that it would be an excellent idea if there were an all-Ireland soccer team?

The Prime Minister: An all-Ireland soccer team would be a great loss to many people who have watched Northern Ireland play the Republic on many occasions. Those of us who like watching the five nations rugby championship would also rather miss that clash. Beyond that, however, my hon. Friend is right about the impact of the single market.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): None of us have doubted the Prime Minister's commitment to the Union, but perhaps in drafting the declaration it might have been wiser to put in Great Britain, because then we would have kept Scotland within the Union.

Mrs. Ewing: No, thank you.

Rev. Martin Smyth: May I explore a little further whether, having offered the carrot, the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic has made any commitment to join in applying the stick if it is necessary and the offer of peace is not accepted? As I understand it, the two Governments and the two nations are not at war. May I also clarify a misunderstanding that may have gone unnoticed in this place today? Sinn Fein has a democratic place and has been elected, but its representatives did not take their places in this House and it has not been prepared to act as a proper democratic party.

I shall give three simple illustrations. Having made a declaration that they would not support violence, as they would not then be eligible to be councillors, one of Sinn Fein's elected councillors has gone to the United States to defend the acts of the IRA. The other evening in my constituency, a 1,000 lb bomb was placed by the IRA in a nationalist and predominantly Roman Catholic area. It could have devasted new houses and a Roman Catholic-controlled school and one woman died. Representative McKnight of Sinn Fein refused to condemn the IRA. Is it not near time that we stopped that mollycoddling and laid down the terms under which Sinn Fein can be represented as a proper democratic party?

The Prime Minister: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, if the offer that implicitly lies there is not taken up, I have no doubt that the two Governments will continue to work together in intensified mode on security matters against men of violence, whether from the IRA, the Ulster Freedom Fighters or the Ulster Volunteer Force. The relationship between Sinn Fein and the IRA is well understood, as is the pseudo-constitutional position of the president of Sinn Fein. Therein lies the link—the necessity for a complete renunciation of violence before there can be any intention of accepting the representatives of Sinn Fein in any constitutional talks.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. May I remind hon. Members that we are not in the middle of a debate but asking questions on a statement. I am sure that if I call a few more hon. Members, they will co-operate with me and ask brisk questions, and perhaps we could have a brisk exchange.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): Can the Prime Minister tell us what loyal Ulster has done wrong to have this further betrayal visited on it? When he talks to the House about the consent of Northern Ireland being required, will he remember, because the people of Northern Ireland have not forgotten, that their consent was neither asked for nor given for the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Their consent was neither asked for nor given for this declaration. It seems that their consent will be required only for the final act of separation.

Can the Prime Minister tell the House whether his stomach is no longer turning at the prospect of sitting down with the IRA? Can he tell us why he has taken away the unfettered right of the people of Northern Ireland to have an act of self-determination and why he has included it in the self-determination of the island as a whole? Why is it that Prime Ministers from this House who protest the most that they are Unionists are always the ones who do the greatest harm to the Union?

The Prime Minister: I am afraid that I have to say to the hon. Gentleman that I think that that was intended to be a wholly destructive intervention. There is no question, and the hon. Gentleman knows that there is no question, of betrayal in any sense. I would invite the hon. Gentleman to read the joint declaration and then read it again and again until he understands it, because he cannot justify what he has just said.

The constitutional guarantee and the consent principle are writ large in the statement. In the letter which the hon. Gentleman published this morning, with the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), the hon. Gentleman claimed that I had

"given the Prime Minister of a foreign and alien power joint jurisdiction . . . over part of Her Majesty's dominions".

That is what the hon. Gentleman wrote this morning. He was utterly and totally wrong about that. I have done no such thing, as the joint declaration makes unambiguously clear. The declaration states that self-determination must be

"exercised with and subject to the agreement and consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland".

The hon. Gentleman should read the declaration before he comments on it, and not mislead people about it. I hope that one day the hon. Gentleman will not always put himself between actions that will bring peace and that peace.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Can the Prime Minister tell us whether the loyalist paramilitaries will also be expected to lay down their arms? Can he tell us what he means about the concurrent referendums? For instance, we now know from questions that he has answered that the referendums may not be on the same day. If the decision of the referendum in the south of the country is in favour, and the decision of the referendum in the north is against, do they add them up? *[Interruption.]* Can the Prime Minister explain what will happen in those circumstances? Does it mean that there will be no further progress? I should like to know the answer.

The Prime Minister: I sometimes despair at the hon. Gentleman. Everyone is expected to lay down their arms —that is perfectly clear. As I said, I despair at the hon. Gentleman's understanding. I have made it clear almost times beyond number at this Dispatch Box over recent weeks and now that there must be a majority in Northern Ireland. If there is no majority in Northern Ireland, the constitutional guarantee stands.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): In view of paragraph 4 of the declaration that the British Government

"have no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland",

will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Government still have a "strategic or economic interest" in Wolverhampton? *[Interruption.]*

The Prime Minister: Well—*[Interruption.]* Don't tempt me—*[Laughter.]*

Let me explain to my hon. Friend: we shall not impose our views on the majority in Northern Ireland, but that, of course, does not and cannot mean that we are indifferent to their concerns and their future. We support the Union, and we protect its people. We support their rights with our cast-iron constitutional guarantee. We support their economy, and we support it generously. We deploy 18,000 of our troops in Northern Ireland, because of our concern about the situation there, and we want to ensure that the

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people in Northern Ireland about whom we are concerned, from both communities, can have a safer and more prosperous future in which democracy can thrive. None of that is selfish; all of it is our responsibility.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Does the Prime Minister accept that only when articles 2 and 3 have been removed from the Irish constitution——

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Removed?

Mr. Beggs: Removed. Does the Prime Minister accept that only when articles 2 and 3 have been removed will my constituents recognise that, for the first time, an opportunity has arisen to seek to develop new relationships between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic? Will he bear with me when I describe the great disappointments that my constituents and people elsewhere in Northern Ireland have had over little things, such as the £7 million defrauded by a citizen of the Irish Republic in Dublin out of the people who invested in International Investments Ltd? Despite the representations that have been made from Northern Ireland on that little issue, we have had no satisfaction. Therefore, we have great doubts whether we shall get satisfaction on the greater issues.

The Prime Minister: I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman's constituents. I freely confess that I am not familiar with the particular case that he mentioned, but I am sure that if he brings it to the attention of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, my right hon. and learned Friend will examine the matter to see whether anything can be done.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Does my right hon. Friend accept that no rational Unionist could fail to give the declaration a cautious welcome, but does he also accept that it is sensible that the declaration has not been made in an atmosphere of euphoria, as though it would bring "peace in our time"? However, it is an opportunity. I take sides with the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) in asking whether my right hon. Friend also agrees that those who may have some persuasive influence, although no direct influence, over the loyalist paramilitaries should persuade them to lay down their arms—before the IRA men lay down theirs, in my view.

The Prime Minister: We all wish to see the men of violence lay down their arms, whether they claim to represent the loyalist or the nationalist cause. In my judgment, both groups of people involved in violence betray the causes for which they claim to speak. My hon. Friend is right about the status of the document. It is an opportunity for peace, but it cannot be guaranteed by the two Governments; I do not guarantee it. It lies there to be taken up if the people who can deliver peace will take it up. It is not a certainty, but it is an opportunity.

Mr. Trimble: The hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) referred to euphoria. Does the Prime Minister recall the euphoria years ago when the House foolishly endorsed the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which has blighted the politics of Ulster ever since? If we are suspending judgment on the statement today, it is in the hope that it will lead to a way out of the cul-de-sac to which the people of Ulster have been condemned for the past eight years.

Will the Prime Minister comment on the democratic deficit in Northern Ireland? At his press conference today he said that his object was to increase the democratic rights of the people of Northern Ireland. Does he realise that it lies uniquely within his hands to remedy that democratic deficit, and will he give us an assurance that he will not be held to ransom by other parties in other countries that are trying to block that remedy for their own selfish motives?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for saying that he will suspend judgment and study the document. I am sure that that is the right thing to do. The document is complex, and genuinely deserves and will reward careful study. I hope that when he has studied it he will be reassured. As I said earlier to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), the leader of the Ulster Unionist party, I am keen to proceed with the talks process. I look forward very much to examining the ideas which the right hon. Gentleman has presented to me on strand 1. We shall examine those quickly and pursue the discussions that my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) has been engaged in for some time.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): May I say to my right hon. Friend that it was a remarkable achievement to have received such an unambiguous statement from the Government of Eire that they would abide by the wishes of the Northern Ireland people on the matter of unification? That fact alone should be sufficient to convince the IRA that, even by the standards of its own perverted logic, when neither Government will give it any succour or support, it has no alternative but to come to the bargaining table.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right and I see no need to reiterate his point.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): Is the Prime Minister aware that while the House has generally accepted his statement, the people of Northern Ireland will not perhaps look at it in the same light because for years and years and for election after election, they have voted to show that they are part of the United Kingdom? They will hardly regard the agreement as further copper fastening because they already felt that they were part of the United Kingdom. Do the Prime Minister and the House realise that the people of Northern Ireland require every encouragement to see this statement and the agreement in that light because they have always felt that they were part of the United Kingdom and they do not understand why we need an agreement to point that out?

The Prime Minister: In a sense, the hon. Gentleman answered the point when he said that the people of Northern Ireland have shown that they are part of the United Kingdom and that they feel strongly about that. The fact that they feel strongly about it and the debates that so frequently ensue in Northern Ireland mean that there is a need for reassurance and that reassurance is offered by the joint declaration today. They have shown, as the hon. Gentleman says, that they wish to be part of the United Kingdom. As long as they continue to show that, they need have no doubt that they will remain a part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): My right hon. Friend may not be aware that 25 years ago I was serving with the Army in Northern Ireland and had the task of helping build the peace line that divided the Protestant and

Catholic communities of the Shankill and Falls road. Does he accept that the initiative is not just the best chance of peace, but the only chance of peace in the foreseeable future? Does he further agree that we are talking not only about peace, but about prosperity, jobs and trade for north and south Ireland to improve the standard of living of all the people?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making a point that has not yet been made this afternoon. Were we able to end the violence that has scarred Northern Ireland for so long, it would make a remarkable difference to the business prospects of Northern Ireland, to the prospects for tourism and to the prospects for the flow of inward investment into Northern Ireland. I can think of no single event that would raise the quality of life and the standard of material prosperity for the people of Northern Ireland than an ending of violence.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker (Belfast, North): I welcome the Prime Minister's commitment to the constitutional parties. Will he confirm that the creation of a Northern Ireland assembly is still on the table?

The Prime Minister: I can confirm that that is still part of the strand 1 talks.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the real importance of the declaration is that it removes any pretext for terrorism, violence and murder and that now the onus is clearly on the men of violence to give up their arms and take the peace process further?

The Prime Minister: Yes, that is entirely right. It is their decision and we hope that they will make it.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): It is hoped that Sinn Fein will respond positively to the joint declaration and persuade the IRA to end its armed struggle. However, some issues in the joint declaration may worry responsible Unionism in Northern Ireland—the issue of articles 2 and 3 has already been suggested. Will the Prime Minister elaborate on paragraph 11 of the declaration which deals with the establishment of a forum for peace and reconciliation? It seems that that forum is to be established by the Irish Government, although they will talk to other parties. I am not clear whether that forum is to be for the whole of Ireland or just for the Republic. Is not it the case that Northern Ireland really needs a forum for peace and reconciliation and that it should be developed in that area?

The Prime Minister: The forum to which the hon. Gentleman refers is an initiative of the Irish Government which I understood would be launched after an announcement that violence had ended. That is certainly what the Taoiseach said this morning. It would be open to all constitutional parties in the north and south, but would, of course, be entirely optional. There would be no compulsion on any party to attend.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): In giving the joint declaration a cautious, but heartfelt welcome, may I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his courage in seizing what is potentially a poisoned chalice? May I press him further for crucial detail? Does his definition of a cessation of violence include the handing over of at least some weapons and explosives and will he assure the House that convicted murderers in Northern Ireland will serve the whole of their sentences?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly confirm that not only do I not have any notion in my mind of amnesty, but there is no suggestion of a reduction in sentences awarded by the courts. That is a matter for the courts and not something in which I wish to interfere. Were there to be an end to violence, the crimes that are currently being investigated would still be the subject of investigation in the future—that is the way our criminal justice system operates and it will continue to operate on that basis. We hope that there will be a surrender of some arms. The sine qua non is the absolute assurance that there is a renunciation of violence and that that renunciation is shown to be carried out.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does the Prime Minister recognise that the basis of a lot of the talks that have occurred in the past few weeks is the initiative taken by the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) in meeting Gerry Adams, the leader of the Sinn Fein? In the spirit of expanding democracy in Northern Ireland and in the whole country, what consideration has he given to the repeal of the prevention of terrorism Act, to a lifting of the ban on Gerry Adam's movements to this country and to the ending of the broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein so that the peace process may be further hastened in Northern Ireland?

The Prime Minister: I have not given consideration to those particular matters. Indeed, in the Republic of Ireland, there is a tougher ban, as I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will know. I indicated earlier my admiration for what the hon. Member for Foyle has done over many years, not only over recent months. The Taoiseach's initiative did not begin a few months ago, but commenced in February 1992, at our first meeting in Downing street, soon after he became the Taoiseach.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): The Prime Minister must be pleased and proud to put the offer for peace on the table today and I, like most hon. Members, am happy about it. However, will he bear in mind that the active elements of terrorism in Northern Ireland will not wish to see a cessation of violence—the element that have what I call a gangster mentality who have been making a good living from what is going on? Some of those men will want actively to perpetrate further acts of violence under the guise of someone else. Will the Prime Minister give an assurance that he will carefully scrutinise any transgression that may threaten the agreement so that we know who is the guilty party? While a referendum is being——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have asked for brisk questions. I am allowing the statement to run a long time because it is so important to the House. I wish that hon. Members would not abuse my tolerance and put one question so that I can call all hon. Members who wish to speak.

Mr. Cook: It is a most important question.

Madam Speaker: I am sure that all questions are important. The hon. Gentleman must determine the priority of his questions.

Mr. Cook: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will ask his question speedily. I have pleaded for short questions so that other hon. Members might be called. I think that that is a fair and just way to proceed.

Mr. Cook: Concurrent with the concurrent referendums in north and southern Ireland, can we have an appropriate and complementary referendum in the United Kingdom to find out what mainland Britain thinks?

The Prime Minister: I had not contemplated a referendum of that sort on this particular issue. On the early part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I think that he is right. In terms of the criminal aspect that so often runs alongside terrorism, he touches on an important point. There is a possibility that terrorists might give up terrorism but that some might decide to continue with what one might call freelance gangsterism. The hon. Gentleman touches on an important point, and I am glad that he did so.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): Will the Prime Minister clarify the final sentence of paragraph 7, which contains the important commitment from the Taoiseach that

> "in the event of overall settlement, the Irish Government will, as part of a balanced constitutional accommodation, put forward proposals for changes in the . . . Constitution which would . . . reflect the principle of consent"?

May I take that to mean that it does not preclude a change of that nature in the constitution in advance of a final settlement and that we might still hope that the Irish Government might, of themselves, grasp the nettle of articles 2 and 3?

The Prime Minister: It certainly does not preclude that. The hon. Gentleman has read it entirely correctly. It is a rather allusive way of indicating the fact that articles 2 and 3 might, at an appropriate time, be put forward for changes in the Irish constitution. The hon. Gentleman has read it accurately.

Ms Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): In paragraph 4, the Prime Minister reiterates on behalf of the Government that Britain has no

> "selfish strategic or economic interest in northern Ireland."

Even if hon. Members do not like it, they must accept that many people in Northern Ireland will regard that as a betrayal, even if we think it is wrong. Will the Prime Minister clarify what he means by that sentence? Does not he, as a British Prime Minister, think that British citizens, many of whom lost members of their families fighting for this country in the war, might feel a little sad? Will he say what he really means by it?

The Prime Minister: The essence of it is that our interest is benevolent, not selfish. I set out a series of ways in which I felt that that should be interpreted in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen). The essence is that we are not going to impose our views on the majority of the people in Northern Ireland against their wishes. That is the essence of what it is about, but it does not mean, and should not be interpreted as meaning, that we are indifferent to their concerns or their future. We are not indifferent to their concerns or to their future. That is why in terms of economic support and, for the past many years, military support to preserve security, we have shown our concern for the people of Northern Ireland—all of them, both communities—in the most tangible way possible.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I fully understand why the declaration concentrates mainly on finding ways of persuading Sinn Fein and its paramilitary allies to stop murdering people, but, as the majority of recent terrorist incidents have been the result of so-called "loyalist" paramilitary activities, does the Prime Minister agree that the whole House would never forgive people who went on carrying out such acts in the name of loyalty to the House and the state and nor would they forget politicians who condoned such activities?

The Prime Minister: The House wants no one to murder and kill on the basis of loyalty to the Union except perhaps at a time when the country might be at war with another nation. That is not the case. The hon. Gentleman is quite right—the actions of those who call themselves loyalists besmirch the Unionist cause and are not accepted by constitutional Unionists. Their activities are as malign as those of the IRA.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I hope that my reaction is not cynical, but, given the document's emphasis on the Government's commitment to honour

> "the democratic wish of a greater number of the people of Northern Ireland",

the island of Ireland will surely remain divided in the foreseeable future. Is that not a reasonble assumption? Is it not also fair to assume that significant interested parties will seek to put on the agenda the hugely important issue of a united Ireland?

The Prime Minister: I think that I have made it clear repeatedly over the past 1 hour and 25 minutes that we believe in the principle of consent and that is what, rightly in my judgment, is enshrined in the document.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Will the Prime Minister list to what extent the British Government's policy has been changed as a result of the joint agreement? Does he accept that merely to bring the parties to the conference table does not necessarily lessen the chance of violence? Does he recall that the last time a comprehensive peace treaty was under discussion, which all major parties had sought election successfully to support, a civil war and bloody carnage followed, the like of which we had not seen before and have not seen since?

The Prime Minister: The joint declaration is consistent with our policy, as I told the House earlier.

Mr. Field: What has changed?

The Prime Minister: It is consistent with our policy, as I told the House earlier. The hon. Gentleman referred to what happened in the past, but it is rather a counsel of despair. I think that the hon. Gentleman, like me, would wish to see us make a move that may end violence and lead to a constitutional settlement. That is what we are doing. In no sense do I believe that it is going to be easy, and in no sense do I believe that we can snatch at it in a second and change the whole way of life in Ireland, or even in Northern Ireland, but it is presenting an opportunity to take a first step towards securing a long-term constitutional position by ending violence. While that violence continues, no progress can be made economically and only limited progress can be made politically so it is a wholly desirable step. We are seeking to ensure that violence ends so that we can begin the further discussions that will have to take place.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): I should like to add my congratulations to those who brought about this joint declaration and I am very pleased because it is, of course, Labour party policy that there should be a united Ireland only with the consent of the people in the north. Does the Prime Minister agree with me that the chill of the horror of violence in Northern Ireland goes across the border? Although we bow to the experience of Northern Ireland Members, it does not go down well to hear the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) claim that it was only in his fiefdom. Is he aware that I lost a relative in 1973 in a pub bombing in Belfast?

Is he aware that last night there was a peace vigil at St. Martin-in-the-Fields at which hon. Members of all parties stood with people from Northern Ireland calling for an end to violence and killing for Christmas and, we hope, onwards in Northern Ireland? There were people there from the Ophsal Commission and members of Families Against Intimidation and Terror. Does he know that people in Families Against Intimidation and Terror are saying that they are underfunded? Does he not agree with me that the civil society will have to be built in Ireland, not just political initiatives, before the people of Ireland who are against violence can come into the light and drive the men of terror into the darkness?

The Prime Minister: I think that the hon. Gentleman is right on the question of violence. Clearly, hon. Members who represent Northern Ireland constituencies have had far greater experience of violence over the past 25 years than those of us with mainland constituencies. The hon. Gentleman cited his own case, and many of us will have had friends involved in the violence in Northern Ireland. In later years, perhaps most noticeably recently in the dreadful events in Warrington, that violence has spilled over to the mainland. While the brunt has been borne in Northern Ireland, I think that an understanding of what the people of Northern Ireland have suffered has increased in recent years and I think it is desirable that it has done so. The hon. Gentleman is quite right to say that the violence spreads beyond an individual constituency, however bad things may have been in that constituency.

The hon. Gentleman's second point returns to a point made by one of my hon. Friends a few moments ago: nothing will do more for the economic well-being of Northern Ireland, in the short and the long term, than an end to violence.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): Bearing in mind the wide international interest in the whole of the island of Ireland, will my right hon. Friend seek the support of the Republic of Ireland in explaining the present initiative in the United States and elsewhere?

The Prime Minister: I think that my hon. Friend will see that we will have that support.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant (Radioactive Discharges)

4.59 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): I wish to make a statement on the decisions that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I have made in respect of the authorisation of radioactive discharges from the British Nuclear Fuels site at Sellafield. Copies of our full decision, together with supporting summary documents, are now available in the Vote Office and will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

My right hon. Friend apologises for being unable to be in the House this afternoon: she is attending an Agriculture Council meeting in Brussels on behalf of the United Kingdom.

In April 1992, British Nuclear Fuels applied to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for new authorisations for the Sellafield site under the Radioactive Substances Act, which would allow for the operation of its thermal oxide reprocessing plant, known as THORP, and a new enhanced actinide removal plant, known as EARP. Those inspectorates considered the application and prepared draft authorisations, which, in accordance with the requirements of the legislation, were made available for public consultation.

Following that consultation, the inspectorates considered the responses that had been made and prepared a report on the issues that had been raised. They concluded that no points had been raised that would cause them to reconsider the terms of their draft authorisations, which they concluded

> "would effectively protect human health, the safety of the food chain and the environment generally".

In their report submitted to us on 21 May, however, the inspectorates pointed out that a number of wider policy issues had been raised that they had not considered. I announced to the House on 28 June that further papers would be commissioned on those wider issues, and that my right hon. Friend and I would then hold a further round of consultation. We undertook that no decisions on the authorisations would be made until the results of that consultation were known.

A paper on the economic and commercial justification for operating THORP was commissioned from British Nuclear Fuels, and a paper that provided a statement of Government policy on reprocessing and the operation of THORP was prepared within Government. A paper on the environmental aspects of operating THORP was also presented by British Nuclear Fuels. Those papers, together with the report from the inspectorates, were made available as part of the further public consultation.

That consultation began on 4 August and ended on 4 October, although responses received after that date have been considered. Altogether, 42,500 individual responses were received, 63 per cent. of which were opposed to the operation of THORP. Overall, 29 per cent. of respondents, or just under 12,300, called for a hearing or public inquiry. That total included 85 local authorities, although Cumbria county council and Copeland district council—the two authorities with direct responsibility for the Sellafield area—did not consider a hearing to be necessary.

[Mr. John Selwyn Gummer]

My right hon. Friend and I have been conscious of the great responsibilities placed on us by the Act. We have personally set aside a significant part of our time to consider with great care the points that were made in the consultation, and to reach our decisions. Where appropriate, we have sought the views of other Departments and other public bodies on issues falling within their expertise.

Our responsibilities under the Act require us to consider whether any local authority or other person should be offered a hearing. On this point, my right hon. Friend and I have come to the view that the extensive consultation already carried out—first by the inspectorates and then by ourselves—offered an adequate opportunity for people to make full and informed representations. This is borne out by the quality, quantity and detail of the responses received.

The large amount of information and argument that has been presented provides a fully adequate basis for us to inform ourselves of the weight and substance of the concerns of all interested parties, and to assess and weigh that information and argument.

My right hon. Friend and I have decided not to hold a hearing or a public inquiry, not least because we are satisfied that no issues have been raised that would cause us to conclude that further consultation or debate is necessary.

In reaching our decisions, we have been conscious that any major undertaking to provide fuel for energy production, or to manage the wastes from energy production, carries some element of risk. Risk cannot be eliminated entirely, but it must always be minimised. It is the policy of the United Kingdom to ensure that radioactive discharges from nuclear installations do not result in the public receiving doses in excess of internationally agreed limits designed to protect their health and, furthermore, that those doses are kept as low as reasonably achievable.

In this case, my right hon. Friend and I must reach decisions about authorisations that would permit liquid and gaseous radioactive discharges from the plant on the Sellafield site, including THORP. Our responsibility is to decide under what conditions, if any, the site and its plant may operate. Decisions about whether to use the authorisation to reprocess spent fuel are for others.

In reaching a decision on the authorisations, we have taken account of ~~all~~ the documents circulated, the responses to further consultation and further advice from Departments and other public bodies.

We considered, first, the narrow issues relating to the impact of the proposed authorisations on health and the environment; we believe that only those issues are legally relevant to our statutory duties. On that basis, we have concluded that the discharges permitted by the authorisations would not lead to unacceptable risks to human health or the environment. We have therefore decided that the authorisations should be granted, although we have considered it appropriate to propose a number of amendments to ensure that discharges from the site will be minimised.

The amendments would require British Nuclear Fuels to provide the inspectorates with reports each year on the means for further reducing discharges and on its forward research and development programme for krypton abatement technology. They would also require it to produce, within six months of the authorisations coming into effect, an analysis of different treatment programmes for dealing with the stored wastes once EARP is available.

To provide more clarity and consistency to the authorisations, amendments would include the incorporation of a specific limit on uranium discharges to the sea, and a total beta limit on atmospheric discharges from the Calder Hall reactors.

Under the Act, because of the conditions that we and the inspectorates are imposing, British Nuclear Fuels is entitled to make further representations. We are writing to it to ascertain whether it wishes to exercise this entitlement.

Although those narrow issues are the ones that we considered to be the limit of our legal responsibilities under the statute, we felt it right to consider the wider issues as if they were legally relevant.

The full decision, which is in the Vote Office, sets out how we have approached that task. It shows that we have considered matters of spent fuel and waste management, decisions to reprocess, economic aspects—including local employment benefits—transport issues and non-proliferation concerns.

Having weighed the various risks and benefits, in particular those arising from the operation of THORP, my right hon. Friend and I have reached the judgment that there is a sufficient balance of advantage in favour of the operation of THORP, and we are satisfied that the activities giving rise to the discharges permitted by the authorisations are justified.

For the reasons set out in detail in the full decision, we have concluded that, had these wider considerations been relevant—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps I should repeat that last sentence. For the reasons set out in detail in the full decision, we have concluded that, had these wider considerations been relevant, we would still have reached the same decision on the authorisations.

Subject, then, to British Nuclear Fuels' decision on the question of making further representations, the inspectorates will be instructed to issue the authorisations to British Nuclear Fuels, taking account of the amendments that we have required. In accordance with the provisions of the Act, there will be a period of 28 days between the authorisations being issued and their coming into effect.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): It is clear from some of this morning's newspapers, most notably *The Times*, that detailed briefings were given to certain journalists about the content of this afternoon's statement. I remind the Secretary of State that the House should be told first about any decision of such importance and magnitude.

Is not that typical of the lack of proper public opennesss that has characterised all the Government's decision making on this matter? Before any of us can make a sensible judgment on whether THORP should be started up, the fullest range of information about all aspects of the plant should be available to the public. That has not been the case, and it is still not the case. It is almost as if the Government had been deliberately concealing information from the public.

May I, therefore, ask the Secretary of State about a number of vital considerations on which we remain in the dark? First, why has there been no publication of the Touche Ross report on the plant's economic prospects?

Why has the report not even been shown to the Comptroller and Auditor General, or some other independent authority? Why, indeed—if some reports are to be believed—have Ministers at the Department of the Environment and the Treasury not seen it?

The Secretary of State may say that this is all to do with the economics of the plant, and not with its environmental implications, but we cannot and should not divorce the two, and the Secretary of State must recognise that fact. It is especially important in the light of the justification requirements of the Euratom treaty. In that connection, can the Secretary of State explain the rather strange claims that are made in paragraphs 129 and 130 of the decision document? The document states:

> "even doubling the figure used by BNFL for decommissioning costs would not significantly affect the conclusion that the operation of the plant would be likely to bring BNFL significant commercial benefit."

As BNFL's public estimate of profit from the plant overall is £500 million, and as its estimate of decommissioning costs is £900 million, how on earth can the Government reach the conclusions that they have reached in those two paragraphs?

Secondly, why has no information been placed in the public domain about the exact terms of the contracts for foreign fuel? In particular, what will be the impact of the requirement that apparently exists for surplus Japanese plutonium to be stored at Sellafield until it is needed in Japan? Should we not be told about that until it is needed in Japan? Should we not be told about that before the generation of the plutonium is put in hand?

Thirdly, why has there been no clear resolution yet of the issue of waste substitution, whereby smaller amounts of high-level waste could be returned in exchange for the retention of larger amounts of low and intermediate-level waste here in Britain? The Government have told us that a decision will be made at some unspecified time in the future—they confirm that point in paragraph 108 of the decision document issued today—but how can it possibly be sensible to make a decision now that commits us to generating large quantities of waste when the Government have not yet decided what precisely should be done with it?

Fourthly, why has the request for the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee to publish information on waste substitution, and the health and safety implications of returning foreign intermediate waste, been refused—in contravention, surely, of the environmental information regulations passed by the House just a year ago? It has been claimed, I understand, that freedom of information does not apply, because RWMAC is not a public body and is not under the control of Ministers. I put it to the Secretary of State, however, that he appoints its members, funds its work, sets its terms of reference, requires it to undertake specific tasks and has the power to wind it up. How can he possibly claim that it is not under his control?

Fifthly, why is today's decision being announced without any clear information being available to the House or the public about the future of a long-term deep disposal facility for the intermediate-level waste that will be created? In its current annual report, RWMAC says that, even if Sellafield is chosen as the site, it will be 16 years before it can operate. What will happen in the meantime, and what will happen if Sellafield turns out to be an unsuitable site?

Sixthly, why has the report of the public inquiry into the building of a dry storage facility at Torness not yet been published? According to some reports, it concludes that dry storage may be a preferable option to reprocessing. Is that so? If it is, is it not a material consideration in reaching a decision on THORP? Why, then, has there been such a long delay in the report's publication?

In all those respects, the way in which the Government have gone about making their decision has been wholly unacceptable. In sharp contrast to the open way in which my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) announced his decision on 22 March 1978, the present Government have kept crucial items of information under wraps, well away from public scrutiny. They are still at it, denying us the full information that we need if we are to make a proper judgment on the merits of their decision.

As the Government seem determined to proceed, may I ask them to make absolutely certain that the same furtiveness does not characterise the control and monitoring of emissions from the plant? It is surely vital —especially now, with a very tight tolerance between actual discharges and overall authorisation limits—that the strictest monitoring procedures are in place, and are seen by the public to be implemented properly.

I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement that he expects progressive reductions in discharge levels and that progress will be reported to the inspectorates. Can he guarantee that progress will also be reported to the public? Freedom of information may have been consistently denied by the Government in reaching the decision that they have announced today. I warn them that any denial of access to information during the course of implementation of that decision will not be forgiven.

Mr. Gummer: The House might be forgiven for concluding, following what has been said by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), that the only matter under wraps is the official Opposition's view on the issue. The Government have acted with complete openness, as anyone who reads the decision document will see. Only recently, the House debated THORP and declared its own view. Matters relating to the economic base on which the plant proceeds are, of course, partly to do with the decision; to that extent, they are stated very clearly in the decision letter.

The contracts ensure that all waste is to be sent back; matters of substitution, therefore, are not connected with the authorisations, which are made on the basis of the situation as it obtains. That, too, is made clear in the decision letter. We have consulted RWMAC very fully, and the consultation document from RWMAC is also in the Vote Office for hon. Members to read.

We have discussed in great detail the comparison between dry storage and reprocessing, and have reached certain very clear conclusions, which would in no way be altered by whatever statement results from the inspector's inquiry into Torness.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture and I have spent a long time on the investigations, not knowing how we would reach a conclusion—for this was a matter of considerable detail. We are entirely satisfied, however, that our conclusion is based on the facts, and that those facts would not be changed by any further discussion of the matter.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. With the remainder of today's business in mind, I require hon. Members to put their questions briskly, and to be given brisk answers. *[Interruption.]* Order. I time the statements and the responses from the Opposition Front Bench and take it up with them at an appropriate time.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, having delayed the opening and made himself doubly sure in recent months about safety matters, no one can fairly say that the matter has been entered into lightly or hastily? Can he think of any major project in this country over the years that has been more thoroughly crawled over, debated and inquired into since this project was introduced by the right hon. Members for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) in the 1970s, when the House has endorsed the project three times, when we had the 100-day inquiry, which was the longest that there had ever been, and over the past two years there has been a whole series of other consultations and approval by the—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must now come to order. *[Interruption.]* Order—all hon. Members. I require questions to the Secretary of State, not long statements. The House tends to forget that we are not in the middle of a debate. We have yet to start the debate. I want questions to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Gummer: We have given the subject the very serious consideration that is necessary. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I were not willing to reach a conclusion until we had properly considered the matter. We believe that we have done so and that any fair-minded person would agree with us.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): As millions of people around the world think that the Secretary of State and the Minister have made not just a wrong decision but a dangerously wrong decision, will he tell us where in the report—it does not appear anywhere—he justifies increasing the risk of nuclear proliferation around the world, and the creation of more plutonium, of which the world has an abundant excess already, and, on the very day that we talk about peace on the other side of the Irish sea, committing Britain to the reprocessing of nuclear waste, while all informed academic and political opinion suggests that the best way of dealing with it is by deep disposal or dry storage, not reprocessing, which nobody now thinks is a sensible way to proceed?

Mr. Gummer: I believe that the hon. Gentleman has not studied, and could not study with the adequacy that I would expect from him, the decision letter that we have written.

Mr. Hughes: Of course I have.

Mr. Gummer: Well, the hon. Gentleman should not say what is clearly not true about the document.

In addition, I want to say something directly to the hon. Gentleman. He has a responsibility not to trot out the views that he has held for some time without looking at the evidence and the statement we have made. We have carefully sought to face every issue, and if I had been convinced of his case, I would have refused the authorisations. It is because I am entirely unconvinced of his case that I have authorised those matters.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): On behalf of the company in my constituency, Davy Nuclear, which built the plant, I thank the Secretary of State for the comprehensive way in which he has dealt with all the representations and objections and made what will be seen in future years as a sensible and far-sighted decision.

Mr. Gummer: We tried to take all matters into account, and I am glad that my hon. Friend is pleased with the result.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Secretary of State aware that, since I and my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) presented these proposals in May 1978, there has been a fundamental change? Uranium is in massive supply, the fast breeder reactor has been cancelled, nuclear power has been revealed to be three and a half times as expensive as coal, and there have been accidents at Chernobyl and Three Mile Island.

The production by the plant of plutonium sufficient to produce 5,000 bombs of the size of those used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki merits a proper inquiry and a debate and decision by the House. Just as the House reached a decision in 1978, so in this case the House should be asked to make its own decision on the matter.

Mr. Gummer: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will read carefully the document that I have put before him. If he were to do so, he would recognise that all those matters have been taken into account.

Mr. Benn *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Gummer: It is no good the right hon. Gentleman shaking his head. They were taken into account. When he reads the document, he will so recognise, unless he is determined before reading it to maintain his present view, which is very different from the view that he once had. The thing that has changed most during that period is the right hon. Gentleman's own views.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many Conservative Members would like to congratulate him on the thoroughness with which he has looked into this whole business, and the decisiveness with which he has today given authorisation for THORP? Does he agree that his statement this afternoon will guarantee the maintenance of jobs in Cumbria, ensure that export orders already taken are fulfilled, justify the expenditure put into THORP, and, above all, maintain the credibility of our nuclear industry?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is right. But had the science and the facts pointed otherwise, my right hon. Friend and I would not have authorised the go-ahead for THORP.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): The present Leader of the House and the Secretary of State for Employment quite rightly voted against THORP in 1978. Is the Minister aware of any statement of theirs changing that position? If not, can we expect their resignations this afternoon?

Secondly, on 6 December, I was informed by the Energy Minister that civil nuclear materials had been taken out of safeguards on 46 occasions since 1990. What evidence can the Secretary of State give the House that plutonium from THORP will not be removed from safeguards in the same way? Finally, can we have a copy of the Touche Ross report?

Mr. Gummer: The authorisations are given by the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, acting together in a judicial capacity. Decisions taken by members of the Government at any future or past time are their responsibility. Just as I would be extremely angry were any of my colleagues to try to interfere in the responsibilities that I have, so I have no intention of interfering with their responsibilities.

As to the hon. Gentleman's question about plutonium, that is clearly covered in the document, which I am sure he has not had time to peruse. When he reads it, he will see how we have dealt with the Touche Ross report——

Mr. Smith: And Touche Ross?

Mr. Gummer: When the hon. Gentleman reads that report, he will see how we have dealt with all the economic case.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddlesworth): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, as surely as night follows day, there will be a worldwide depletion of oil, gas and coal, and that future generations will have to rely on people such as British Nuclear Fuels, who reprocess spent fuel and store it so that future generations can have the energy that we enjoy today? Why should we let the French take the lead in the nuclear field? We should be long-term players, and go for it.

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that my hon. Friend's views will be echoed by many, but in these circumstances, my right hon. Friend and I were ruled by the facts of science, not by any commercial consideration.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Now that the prime issue in world politics is for counter-proliferation policies to deal with the present turmoil and the turmoil that will come—not now, but in the next centuries, because plutonium and radioactivity are for ever—will not history judge today as the day that the Government went mad and decided hugely to increase the amount of radioactive waste and plutonium that will be sent to the four corners of the earth? Today's scientifically illiterate decision will be regarded by history as a giant error taken by pigmy politicians.

Mr. Gummer: I think that the hon. Gentleman is talking about politics, not about science.

Mr. Flynn: I am a scientist.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman may be a scientist, but he has obviously not yet read what I have written in the decision document. I do not blame him for that, but I hope that at least he will not bring his prejudices to bear until he has read the document. If he really thinks that my right hon. Friend and I would have given these authorisations if what he said were true, he has an estimate of his fellow Members of which he should be ashamed.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): As a member of the Public Accounts Committee, which looked at the cost of construction of THORP, I know that it became fairly obvious at that time that, with expert marketing and cost control, there was considerable opportunity for exports for this country. Therefore, with the safety amendments that my right hon. Friend has announced, I welcome the decision that at long last it is to go ahead. Will United Kingdom nuclear power station operators be compelled to use THORP for reprocessing or will they be allowed to continue their existing storage methods on site?

Mr. Gummer: I can assure my hon. Friend that there will be no compulsion.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I will be very specific and brief. How many Welsh local authorities made representations to the Minister on THORP? What percentage of them expressed quite clearly their opposition to the commissioning of THORP? I emphasise that there will be dismay in Wales and across the sea in the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland, whose shores are washed, and will be washed, by waters polluted by the emissions from Sellafield.

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would want to reassure any of those who fall within the categories that he mentioned that I would not have given the authorisations were I not sure that they properly protected public health and the environment. If I had thought that they did not do so, I would not have given the authorisations. I am happy to send the hon. Gentleman a list of the local authorities that wrote to us.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): My right hon. Friend will be aware that his decision will be widely welcomed in the north-west, especially in Cumbria and in my county of Lancashire. Will he now back the efforts of the nuclear industry's trade union movement, especially the THORP nuclear workers support organisation, which is supported by the GMB and the Amalgamated Engineering and Electricial Union and which is seeking to persuade Labour-controlled Lancashire county council not to back any effort that might be made by Greenpeace to seek a judicial review of my right hon. Friend's decision?

Mr. Gummer: I thank my hon. Friend for his support. I hope that he will now accept that it was reasonable to have longer to consider the matter so that people could be absolutely sure that everything had been taken into account. Given the role of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture and myself, the other matters to which my hon. Friend referred are matters for others.

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): The point has been well made that when the decision was first made about THORP in 1978, the world situation with regard to plutonium production was very different from what it is today. What risk assessment has the Secretary of State made of what seems to us to be a highly irresponsible decision to pour surplus plutonium on to the world market in today's increasingly unstable world?

Mr. Gummer: If the hon. Lady reads the decision letter, she will see that we have dealt with that matter very clearly. With regard to these very serious matters, she should not use those phrases, which are very far from the truth.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): As my right hon. Friend has obviously taken the proliferation issue extremely seriously, may I urge him to continue, through

[Mr. Julian Brazier]

his inspectorate, to monitor very carefully the physical security of plutonium in storage, in transit and, above all, in terms of with whom we trade in it?

Mr. Gummer: I shall ensure that my right hon. Friends who are responsible for that know exactly what my hon. Friend has said. I am sure that they will give an exact and detailed response.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): To what peaceful purpose will the Secretary of State's customers put the liberated plutonium? What consultations took place with the Irish Government?

Mr. Gummer: On the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, plutonium is already used in MOX fuel to provide fuel for nuclear power stations. Customers have said that they intend to use it for that. The Irish Government made their opinions very clear to us in part of the consultations.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that nuclear waste is an international problem and that there will be a problem in decommissioning British nuclear power stations in future? Does he agree that, in terms of the environment and safety, the best way to deal with the problem is to use THORP plant? That is a much better way than dry storage.

Mr. Gummer: I do not think that the two are directly comparable. Dry storage might well lead to the need to reprocess at the end of the dry storage period. There is no direct comparison. We must remember, however, that there is risk in the production of energy in any circumstances. It is our job to try to look at that risk sensibly and carefully and to reach a proper conclusion. One of the sadnesses is that some people concern themselves with frightening people without recognising that other methods may be riskier than those that are chosen. The Liberal party, above all, is doing that.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I am sure that the decision will be welcomed on the west coast of Cumbria, and especially by those who work at Sellafield and by those who will be taken on. Is it not cynical, however, that the Government should hold back the decision on RAF Carlisle until today? On the day when they have made an announcement on THORP which will increase jobs, they have cut 800 jobs in Carlisle. We need a mixed economy in Cumbria, not one based simply on the nuclear industry.

Mr. Gummer: I think that I will answer the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question. Decisions were not made on the basis of providing jobs. If it had been clear to us that the authorisations should not be given for scientific reasons, we would not have given them. However, I am happy that, as the authorisations are clearly the right course, they will provide further jobs in Cumbria.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): Will my right hon. Friend deal with the very damaging report produced by Greenpeace, which stated that there would be 600 deaths if the plant were to be opened? Will he reassure my constituents that that report was rubbish?

Mr. Gummer: I do not have to deal with that myself, I can quote RWMAC, the official body that deals with such matters. It said that that report was misleading and should not be used in that way. I am sure that no hon. Member would want to associate himself with that kind of report.

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): Will the Minister think again about some of his earlier replies and accept that the commercial demand for plutonium is far lower than it was when THORP was first suggested, that fast-breeder reactors are not going to be built now and that the only significant use for plutonium is in the construction of nuclear weapons? Does he understand that the stockpiling of plutonium produced by THORP, whether or not it is stored securely, will be an incentive for other countries to acquire a nuclear capability at a time when we should be doing our utmost to stop nuclear proliferation?

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend and I covered that point in the document before the House. I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's arguments and that is why on this ground, as on others, I have allowed the authorisations to go forward.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Who in the Government considered the issue of nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism, which arise from giving THORP the go-ahead? Why have the Government given those matters such a low weighting in their considerations? Is not the decision immensely dangerous and against national and international interests?

Mr. Gummer: This is a matter not for the Government but for my right hon. Friend and me. We reached our conclusions in a very long series of meetings, in which we sought to find the best answer and to carry out our responsibilities under the Act. We took very considerable care to consider proliferation. We have said what we thought about that in the decision letter. I take a different view from the hon. Gentleman. I have spent a great deal of time examining the matter and reaching my judgment. I hope that he will take as much time.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): Throughout his statement, the Secretary of State has repeatedly dodged answering questions and requests to publish the Touche Ross report by referring hon. Members to the decision itself. The decision only covers the economic case in three short pages. In the light of that, it is impossible to assess what it means. Will the Secretary of State now take a decision and tell the House that he will, in due course, publish the Touche Ross report so that people can make an informed judgment about the case and not be, as we are at the moment, left in the dark?

Mr. Gummer: It must surely be the best proof of the commercial sense of such a matter that a body wishes to proceed and that contracts are in place that make the procedure profitable. The matters that relate to the authorisation are fully covered. It is not my purpose to cover matters that do not relate to the authorisations, even though I have taken into account with my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food wider matters that are not held to be legally our responsibility.

Northern Ireland

5.39 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

the situation arising in Northern Ireland as the result of the Prime Minister's signing of the joint declaration with the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic.

I am aware that all that I can do is underscore that this matter is specific, important and urgent and that I cannot go into the argument, but, because of the Prime Minister's statement and the remarks of other right hon. and hon. Members, the House is aware of the importance of the situation in Northern Ireland.

In Northern Ireland, we do not have any local authorities that can deal with matters such as this. Our local authorities empty bins, look after graveyards and deal with recreation. They do not have other powers. Therefore, it is essential that every democratic opportunity be taken by the House to air a matter of such grave importance. After all, we have been told today that this matter is going to bring peace. We have heard statements about peace in a week and peace at Christmas, but surely the House should take time to discuss the matter.

This week, we have had guillotines on important Bills. Surely, before the recess, we should have an opportunity to discuss this matter. Points of view should be argued and answers given. All hon. Members know the inadequacy of statements, and you, Madam Speaker, have called our attention to the fact that we must ask questions and not make speeches. I put this matter to the House on behalf of my constituents and the people of Northern Ireland who feel that, if all the eulogies that have been paid to the statement are true, the House should take time to discuss it, and discuss it thoroughly.

Madam Speaker: I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman has said. I have to give my decision without stating any reasons. I am afraid that I do not consider that the matter which the hon. Gentleman has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20. I therefore cannot submit the application to the House.

Points of Order

5.41 pm

Mr. Terry Rooney (Bradford, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wish to raise two aspects of written question No. 134, which appeared on yesterday's Order Paper. First, does the convention on hon. Members interfering in other hon. Members' constituencies apply to written questions? Secondly, a written question was tabled yesterday, but, at 9 o'clock yesterday morning, the local authorities concerned received a press release from the Minister giving the answer, before the Vote Office was open and before hon. Members representing the relevant constituencies knew that the question had been tabled.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must raise his latter point with the Minister concerned. On his first point, the hon. Member raises a matter of convention rather than a matter of order. I prefer to leave particular cases to hon. Members to resolve between themselves. In general, however, there is no doubt that it is far preferable for hon. Members to inform colleagues when they touch on events in their constituencies. That is the courteous thing to do. I should like hon. Members to continue in that way.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Are you aware that hon. Members have been challenged to use words such as "victrix" and "reverist" in the House? Is that in order, or is it balderdash?

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Three hon. Members—I have informed one of them at least—have earned for their constituents £1,000 in goods today by using the Chamber for what I believe to be a publicity stunt for a commercial organisation. Although all hon. Members would like to do the best for their constituents, and we would all like £1,000 worth of goods to distribute, the only way in which we can do that is by giving publicity to a commercial organisation. Although that might be fairly innocent in this situation, could it not lead to other commercial organisations putting pressure on hon. Members to use the House and our powers of influence here for purely commercial ends?

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: No, I can deal with it, thank you very much. I understand that there was some charitable element in what took place.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): It was a business.

Madam Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. But I cannot approve of hon. Members being incited to play games with our proceedings. *[Interruption.]* Order. I have not yet finished; I am on my feet. That is what has taken place today. Nor do I approve of hon. Members agreeing to do so and that is what has happened today. I hope that there will be no more tomfoolery, because I deprecate it very greatly.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. At 3.30 pm, a written answer from the Secretary of State for Health was placed in the Vote Office while the right hon. Lady herself was holding a press conference at Richmond house. Both answer and press conference deal with the financing and

[Ms Glenda Jackson]

delivery of health care in my constituency. Although I welcome the fact that the Secretary of State has decided to keep the renal unit at the Royal Free hospital, is not it disgraceful that, yet again, a Minister of the Crown has revealed changes in Government policy and funding to the press before they were detailed to the House?

Madam Speaker: I understand that that is the subject of a written answer which was made available to the House at 3.30 pm today. I understand that the Secretary of State also gave a press conference at that time. Possibly the press has picked up on an embargoed advance briefing and has breached that embargo. I deprecate such breaches, just as I deprecate any statements that are made outside the House to the media before they are made to the House.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I apologise to the House? I certainly did not appreciate that I was breaking the rules of the House when I mentioned that word. It is always a temptation, when not many Conservative Members have white beards, to try to play Father Christmas to our constituents.

Madam Speaker: There was no breaking of the rules of the House, but the hon. Gentleman was playing games with our proceedings. That is what I deprecate and I hope that it will never happen again.

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): I seek your guidance, Madam Speaker. Is it in order for the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Leader of the House to seek to disrupt Back-Bench business? I thought that the Leader of the House was meant to protect Back-Bench Members. Is it in order for that Parliamentary Private Secretary to remain in his position? May I refer the matter to the Procedure Committee?

Madam Speaker: There is no appeal from one day to the next and it is up to individual hon. Members to use the Standing Orders or the procedures of the House, provided that they do so correctly.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I have dealt with that point of order, thank you very much. *[Interruption.]* I have dealt with that point of order. There is no further point of order. I know precisely what happened. The matter should have been dealt with right away. It is up to hon. Members to use the Standing Orders and the procedures of the House, provided that they do so correctly.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I make it absolutely clear that none of that money whatsoever will go to anybody's constituency——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have dealt with that matter.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Notification of the two statements this afternoon did not appear on the annunciator until 10 minutes to 2. I realise that that has nothing to do with you, Madam Speaker, because you deal only with the notification of private notice questions. The provision of information at 1 o'clock is a very strong convention, to allow hon. Members to organise their afternoons so that they are present for statements. Your ruling has always been that, if hon. Members are not present for statements, they are not allowed to put questions. Therefore, it is very important that information is available at 1 o'clock so that hon. Members can plan their afternoons. The Leader of the House was responsible for the difficulties which were created for hon. Members this afternoon by the incompetence which he undoubtedly displayed. I hope that that is not a precedent and that you would deprecate any future occurrences.

Madam Speaker: As a matter of fact, the matter has nothing to do with the Leader of the House. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Order. The matter is the responsibility of the authorities of the House.

I have to tell the hon. Gentleman and the House that I did not notice that the information was not on the annunciator. The hon. Gentleman is quite right that it should be on the annunciator by 1 o'clock to allow hon. Members to make preparations. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I will take the matter up as soon as I have left the Chair.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 21 JANUARY

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. James Couchman
Mrs. Ann Winterton
Mr. John Hutton

Orders of the Day

Statutory Sick Pay Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

5.53 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a second time.

I will endeavour to be brief, both because this is a short and simple Bill and because I want to leave the Opposition a full opportunity to spell out their alternative proposals—if they have any. If not, the House can have the pleasure of hearing the Opposition defend the current arrangements for statutory sick pay, even though they have consistently opposed them since they were introduced in 1983.

The Bill will give employers a greater incentive to improve the health, motivation and attendance of their employees. It will reduce and simplify the administrative burden of statutory sick pay. At the same time, we will ensure that employers in general have lower costs. Small employers will be fully reimbursed for the cost of illness after four weeks. The Bill will ensure, from April 1995, that lower-paid employees get the higher rate of sick pay.

Britain has the highest rate of sick leave of any country in the EC except Holland. The total cost to British industry of sickness is enormous. Recent surveys put the total direct costs at somewhere between £9 billion and £13 billion a year.

The extent of sickness and sick leave in a firm is not primarily the result of external factors outside an employer's control. The rate of sick leave varies greatly between firms, even within the same industry. High rates of sick leave often reflect poor motivation, stressful relationships, inadequate working environment, lack of interest in staff well-being and poor monitoring of absence.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does that apply to Members of Parliament?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman makes a point about the attendance records of hon. Members. I will tell him that, of the 200 best-attending hon. Members, 191 were Tories and only six were members of the Labour party.

The variations are within the control of management. When managers take an interest in the health, attendance and well-being of staff, they can substantially reduce levels of absence.

For example, an Audit Commission study three years ago criticised London boroughs for their deplorably high level of sick leave. On average, local government workers took 17 days off sick a year—twice the national average. The Audit Commission advised them how this could be improved and they have taken note of that advice. The latest figures show that the average is now reduced to 11 days. That is still high by comparison with private industry, but it shows what can be achieved by better management.

There are considerable variations within the private sector. Japanese companies have put great emphasis on the motivation and the well-being of their employees. As a result, according to the Industrial Society, Japanese-owned companies in Britain lose little more than half as many days through sickness as the British average.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Leaving aside small employers, is the Secretary of State aware that many employers do not pay statutory sick pay and that others sack people if they are sick? I ask the right hon. Gentleman to consider two brief cases before he concludes his speech.

First, an employee in the west midlands, who has been employed by a firm for three years, was off work due to an accident at work. The employer made it clear that he never pays statutory sick pay. Secondly, the citizens advice bureau in Greater Manchester reports an increasing number of dismissals from work in connection with illness. Is that not a serious problem and will the Secretary of State comment on those cases before he concludes?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman must be mistaken. It is a statutory scheme which employers have a statutory obligation to pay. Some employers do pay occupational sick pay, which is higher and more generous than statutory sick pay. Some do not claim statutory sick pay back from the state, although they pay the amount or more than the amount and are continuing to pay it to their employees. I will get on to the question of the response of companies in recruiting and maintaining in employment people with poor health records later.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): My right hon. Friend may have heard of Beijing flu, which is apparently raging in the country at the moment. He may like to know that a constituent company of mine which I visited the other day reported that of the 40 sub-contractors which they use, not one suffered from Beijing flu last month. Of the 10 people whom they employ directly, some seven have, on the basis that the state will pay for their statutory sick pay. Does not that emphasise that people will swing the lead if they think that the taxpayer will pay for it?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend makes a telling point. It is certainly true that there are variations in employment which cannot be explained by medical factors. The prevalence of what the Foreign Office would prefer us to call Peking flu is one of those factors.

Today, a company has welcomed the Government's action in putting responsibility for sick pay back with companies. That company is Unipart, one of our leading manufacturers. It has taken the lead, particularly in improving employee conditions. Absenteeism at one of its factories used to be about 8 per cent. a year. Two years ago, Unipart introduced new working practices. People now work in teams in an improved working environment, with more challenging work and much more control over their own process. As a result, absenteeism has dropped to less than 2 per cent. and it has remained below that level. That is despite improvements in the generosity of the company's own sick pay scheme.

Yesterday, the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) mocked the idea of employers

> "deciding to expand their occupational health service—perhaps installing a gym."—[*Official Report*, 14 December 1993; Vol. 234, c. 876.]

Unipart's management did just that, because they see employees as stakeholders. They believe that the benefits in employee fitness are self-evidently of value to the firm. Unipart has publicly welcomed the Government's decision to put the responsibility for sick pay back with companies. It sees that as challenging management to search for the

[Mr. Lilley]

root causes of absenteeism and it believes that the net result will improve the performance of the United Kingdom economy.

However, the reimbursement of the cost of statutory sick pay reduces employers' incentive to take positive action to improve the health and attendance of their staff. At the same time, it sends a message that that is not their responsibility, nor within their control. It means that good employers who minimise sick leave are effectively subsidising poor employers who do nothing to tackle the problem.

Moreover, smaller employers in general have a much lower level of absence through sickness than do large employers. The CBI/Percom study, for example, showed that large companies with over 5,000 employees have twice the level of absence through sickness as do companies with fewer than 100 employees. Of the smallest employers with 10 or fewer staff, 37 per cent. had no staff absences through sickness long enough to qualify for statutory sick pay in 1991-92. By abolishing reimbursement, I believe that we will give employers greater incentive to motivate employees, to care for their health and to monitor their absence.

At the same time, I intend to reduce employers' national insurance contributions by more than enough to offset the impact on employers as a whole of ending reimbursement of statutory sick pay. The ending of the 80 per cent. reimbursement of statutory sick pay means that employers would forgo about £695 million in 1994-95, but there will be £25 million of special help for small employers.

The reduction in employers' national insurance rates will cut their national insurance contributions by some £830 million next year. That saving will reach nearly £1 billion by 1996-97. Therefore, employers in aggregate will be some £160 million pounds better off next year as a result of the combined impact of the changes and, as employers respond to the incentive to improve attendance, they will be substantially better off still.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Let me draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the problem that most people are not sick for four weeks or more, so that the bulk of costs on all sizes of companies will fall on the employer. Could not Peking flu create acute cash flow problems to a small company with a sudden abnormal rate of sickness? Will he consider whether there should be full reinbursement to small companies if a certain percentage of the national insurance contribution is crossed?

Mr. Lilley: Particular harm is caused by the prolonged absence of key employees in small firms. However, small employers usually have lower rates of sickness and absenteeism than larger companies, so they will be net beneficiaries from the change. There may be odd weeks when they suffer because a large number of staff are off sick, but they will be gaining throughout the rest of the year. Overall, they will benefit financially from the change, particularly if they have lower-paid employees. They should also welcome the change because it gives them greater control over their own bills.

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): It would be extremely helpful if, in the spirit of deregulation, my right hon. Friend would consider whether some of the paperwork and administrative burdens of smaller firms could be simplified. Will he examine the role of the DSS or the social security inspectors who might take a more lenient view if a smaller firm genuinely finds it difficult to understand the complex regulations, and perhaps be slightly more tolerant than in the past? Perhaps the DTI one-stop shops could advise smaller employers on those aspects of book keeping, record keeping and understanding regulations?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. An intervention is not a speech, and that was rapidly becoming one.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend has raised some important points about the burden on employers and the opportunities for deregulation.

The changes will reduce the burden on employers and open up scope for further reductions in due course. As for the enforcement of existing rules by inspectors, I shall take account of my hon. Friend's point, but I believe that the actual number of legal cases ever brought under the rules is extremely limited. I recall only one and the fine was £30. Nonetheless, we do not want onerous enforcement measures and I shall take on board my hon. Friend's point.

I propose to reduce the highest rate of employers' national insurance by 0·2 per cent. from 10·4 per cent. to 10·2 per cent. and the three lower rates by a whole percentage point. That will particularly benefit employers of less highly paid staff and make it more attractive for them to take on extra employees.

A firm whose employees all earn £170 a week will save £88 over the year on national insurance for each employee. If the firm has average sickness, it will forgo reimbursement of SSP over the year worth £43 per employee, so on average it will gain £45 per employee per year.

A company with the same pay level but twice the national sick leave will still break even on the two changes.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): May I make a brief point requesting information. When statutory sick pay becomes one level of return for the person who is ill, how will the uprating work? I understand that the upper level, which will now be combined with the others, has been frozen since 1990. It does not fall under the obvious Rossi or RPI machinery. How will it be uprated in future?

Mr. Lilley: I shall make a wise judgment each year on the amount by which it will be uprated.

Small organisations usually have below average sickness levels, but their operations may be harder hit by the prolonged absence of even a single member of staff. I therefore intend to increase the special help that we give small employers and extend it to more of them.

At present, smaller employers receive 100 per cent. reimbursement of statutory sick pay on absences in excess of six weeks. In future, they will receive 100 per cent. reimbursement after only four weeks. At present, firms with total national insurance contribution bills of £16,000 qualify for such help. In future, I shall extend it to firms with bills of up to £20,000.

Yesterday, the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) said that we had attempted to conceal the fact that the abolition of 80 per cent. reimbursement would apply to small employers as well as to large ones. That is absolute nonsense.

Let me read the letter that we sent to all the small business organisations on the day of the Budget. On statutory sick pay it said:

> "80 per cent. reimbursement will cease from 6 April 1994 i.e. there will be no reimbursement of statutory sick pay payable for sickness on or after that date."

That could not be clearer. It continues:

> "special help for small employers will be retained and enhanced. Employers remitting national insurance contributions totalling £20,000 or less in 1993-94 will be eligible for 100 per cent. reimbursement of statutory sick pay for illness lasting longer than four weeks.".

There was no attempt to conceal that. We have an interest in employers understanding the changes and implementing them rapidly in time for next April.

Our proposals will help 50,000 extra employers, some 750,000 in total—that is two thirds of all employers—at a total cost of £25 million.

Small employers will also benefit more from the reduction in national insurance rates. The reduction is greater for employees on low earnings who tend to form a high proportion of the work force in small companies.

The Budget also included a number of other measures to help small employers and those proposals have been welcomed by industry.

Abolition of reimbursement will also reduce the administrative burden on employers. They will no longer have to work out their total statutory sick pay bill for the year in order to calculate how much national insurance they are due to pay.

The abolition of the lower rate of statutory sick pay will be introduced in the Bill to reform invalidity benefit, with effect from April 1995. It will further reduce the burden on employers. Previously, they had to calculate each employee's average earnings to determine which rate of statutory sick pay applied and how much they could claim. That will no longer be necessary when there is only one rate.

Earlier this year, we set up a working party with employers to examine the scope for cutting red tape in the statutory sick pay scheme. We shall be discussing with that group whether ending reimbursement of statutory sick pay further opens up scope for reducing the burden on employers without affecting employees' rights.

As a result of the changes, British employers will retain their relative advantage over their continental competitors. European Community employers face much greater burdens than we do. For example, German employers must pay full wages for the first six weeks of illness, yet they receive no reimbursement and pay higher social security charges. Dutch employers have to pay sick employees 70 per cent. of their earnings up to £282 per week for up to a year and they bear five sixths of the cost.

The Opposition have claimed that ending reimbursement of statutory sick pay will lead to employers sacking sick employees and being more reluctant to take on disabled staff. They made the same claim when the rate of reimbursement was reduced from 100 per cent. to 80 per cent. in 1991.

There has been no evidence of sick employees being sacked or companies being more reluctant to employ people who have been sick. I will receive soon the Centre for Social Policy Research report examining the effects of the 1991 changes and I will publish it as soon as I do. I understand that it will not help the Opposition's case and that there is no evidence that disabled staff have been affected. In fact, it would be perverse as well as inhumane for employers to reduce job opportunities for the disabled. The evidence is that they have a better than average attendance record. The more that that is widely known, the more we shall be pleased.

We shall continue to promote employment opportunities for disabled people. I was pleased to announce in the social security statement that the disability working allowance will be made more attractive. From April 1995, beneficiaries will be entitled to free prescriptions, free dental treatment and other NHS benefits.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I am a registered disabled person, yet I returned the joint third best participation rate in the House in the last Session?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is proof of many great truths and I congratulate him on his record. As I said earlier, he is not joined in the top 200 by many Opposition Members. Last night, we had sad evidence of an outbreak of sickness on the Labour Benches, when the Opposition were unable to muster a quorum to continue their own Consolidated Fund debates. It is a difficult area for the Labour party in respect of attendance records and of previous Labour Governments.

The last Labour Government imposed a surcharge on employers' national insurance that brought the total amount paid by employers to 13·5 per cent. of their pay bill. If that rate applied today, industry would bear an additional burden of £8 billion a year.

The final consequence of our changes is that once employers meet the full cost of SSP, it will become a form of pay and thus be subject to the EC equal treatment directive. Women and men will be entitled to statutory sick pay on the same basis. As a result, women will be entitled to receive it until the age of 65, rather than age 60 at present. That is catered for in the Bill.

Statutory sick pay has been successful in meeting its aim of delivering sick pay through the wage packet rather than requiring employees to collect it at benefit offices. It cuts out wasteful duplication of work by employers and the state and the opportunities for a further reduction of duplication are enhanced by the Bill.

The introduction of SSP cut civil service numbers by 3,700 and ended the anomaly whereby employees received more money when off sick than at work. I shall shortly introduce a new Bill to reform the whole structure of incapacity benefits. It will create a single SSP rate from April 1995, which will help those in lower-paid jobs. The overall structural reform will provide a more integrated set of sickness benefits than ever before and it reflects the first fruits of our sector-by-sector reform of social security. We have now tackled sickness benefits and we are in the process of improving them and providing an up-to-date and well-focused set of sickness benefits.

The Bill will improve incentives to employers for increasing the well-being, attendance and health of their staff; lead to reduced costs for industry; and provide a more rational benefits structure for the future. I commend the Bill to the House.

6.13 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I appreciate the succinct way in which the Secretary of State put his case. His short speech set out the bare essentials of the

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

proposals encapsulated in the Bill. It is part of a package deal offered by the Government and interconnects with a number of interesting arguments.

There is no doubt that this important legislation deserves the proper attention that the House will want to give over the next few hours. I have no intention of re-opening the argument about the timetable motion, but it is important that the House examines what is being offered and its consequences and significance.

One problem is that the unified Budget took some of us by surprise. The new procedures are difficult, for a unified Budget presents a mound of issues. Everything but the kitchen sink was thrown in, in terms of fiscal revenue raising and public expenditure. There is a danger that we shall lose definition and not focus as we should on all the Budget's component parts with the clarity that they deserve. I am glad of this opportunity to put that right.

In yesterday's allocation of time debate, we heard that the Bill has only one effective clause. Clause 1 abolishes for large employers—those that account for 85 per cent. of the work force—the 80 per cent. rebate on statutory sick pay. Clearly, that is of interest to them and to those of us concerned about the way that the system works.

I do not suggest that that comes entirely as a surprise. The Secretary of State reminded the House that the rebate system was introduced just over 10 years ago. Early in its career, it became clear that the Government had reservations about the way that it operated or at least about its part in the social security system. In 1990, a significant change occurred, when the 100 per cent. rebate plus the 7 per cent. to reimburse companies for the administrative charges that they incurred was reduced to 80 per cent.—and now that is being obliterated. It has been suspected for some time that that was the start of a slide into oblivion in terms of both the rebate and Government involvement.

In connection with yesterday's debate on the guillotine motion, to which my right hon. Friend the shadow Leader of the House contributed, there were exchanges between members of the Public Accounts Committee and the Permanent Secretary at the Department of Social Security. I make no complaint that they were slightly "Yes, Minister" in their tone. We were presented with the Government's usual "We have no plans" formula. That kind of response gives plausibility to the theory that in this country, one should believe nothing until it has been officially denied. That was a further warning shot about the likely course of events. Expectations or fears, depending on one's point of view, are amply borne out by the Bill now before the House.

The majority of employees will depend no longer on the subsidy provided by the rebate but on their employers' resources—the scheme will be funded by industry. I hope that the Secretary of State will not think me over-partisan when I say that that is strike one for the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and for his loyal lieutenant at the Department of Social Security. It is at least one area where it has been discovered that it will be possible for the Government to withdraw altogether, which is the proposition we are asked to consider.

I accept that many companies have occupational schemes that incorporate sickness cover. However, a much-quoted 1989 survey suggested that 91 per cent. of employees were covered by such an arrangement. I do not want to debate that point at length, but I enter the fair caveat that that figure of 91 per cent. has been criticised as misleading, partly because many schemes exclude part of the work force from that provision. That is specifically the case with manual workers. The cover is not nearly as impressive on analysis as that headline figure suggests.

Statutory sick pay is still important. It is common ground between myself and the Minister that statutory sick pay is still a foundation of importance to those who are suffering a period of ill-health. In the current year the higher rate—the rate that will become effective—is £52·50. I was interested in what the Secretary of State had to say about the future of that matter. He used a nice phrase —he will "use a wise judgment year by year". There are societies in which wise men are respected. It is probably true in our society as well, but there is unfortunately a preliminary dispute as to who is wise. If we could agree about that, happy unanimity would break out.

There is an important point in the simple question that I asked, which I draw to the Secretary of State's attention. At the end of the day, companies will have to pay the higher rate which, in his wisdom, he decides; they have no control over that. That cost is totally out of their hands.

If there is a rebate system, there is a real discipline—the discipline, perhaps, of the account book—on the Secretary of State when he makes such decisions. He has to weigh all types of factors, but one of them is that the Chancellor has to find the cash, because if he puts up generously the rebate goes up. Now he is in the position in which perhaps he will resist those temptations—I immediately concede that, knowing him—but in which he will be deciding what someone else has to pay. He will not have to foot the bill himself. There is no suggestion, presumably, that there will be a special reduction in the employer's national insurance contribution every year if the Minister is especially generous on the uprating.

I mention that, and emphasise it, because it seems to underline some of the uncertainties that we are building into the system for employers. Although perhaps on occasions it is rather arrogantly assumed that the Labour party does not care about the problems of employers, I am not unconscious of the difficulties that can, and do, confront employers. That is an important short point.

Mr. David Willetts (Havant): Is the hon. Gentleman arguing against the proposal on the grounds that it will lead to sick pay being higher than it would be otherwise?

Mr. Dewar: No. I must remonstrate with the hon. Member, as I had to earlier this week. He is an alert and precocious child. He sees a point and he cannot resist getting up and making it. It is quite an endearing habit and it adds a bit of variety to sometimes rather dry and arcane debates about the world of social security, but it is not a sensible point or a point of substance. I am merely suggesting to him that there is an instability, and perhaps a potential concern about a looseness in the system. There is a divorce between he who takes the decision and he who is accountable and pays the bills. That might be a principle which commends itself to a gentleman of somewhat dry and right-wing views, generally, in the economic field.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Has my hon. Friend read a splendid publication called "The Age of Entitlement" by the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts), who has ridden a coach and horses through many of the claims of the present Government? Specifically, he says that they have vastly exaggerated the effects of the demographic change and have used it as a pretext for many of their damaging policies.

Mr. Dewar: I must confess—probably some of my colleagues may think that it is a confession—that I often read the works of the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts). *[Interruption.]* I sometimes wonder a little bit why I do it. I think that it is because, at an early stage in my career when I did not know much about the social security world, someone said that (a) he was clever and (b) he had the ear of Ministers. Those theories live on. On that basis I have tended to read the hon. Member's pamphlets.

I agree that in that publication there is some quite useful corrective copy to the rather excitable view of the demographic time-bomb, the dependency ratio and so on, which tends to be the mark of the Government Front Bench. It would be wrong, however, if I went too far down that road. I know that Second Readings are wide, but I might find myself off a road and into a field if I follow my hon. Friend in that matter, so I shall turn back to the Bill.

I confess that when I first saw the Bill I rather misinterpreted it. My first thought was that it was an enormous transfer of financial burden to British industry at a time when the Prime Minister, as it happened, was daily on my television set telling me about the need to compete and to keep our industry competitive. Having considered the trade figures of only a few days ago, I agree that that is something to which we should give a high priority.

When I realised that nearly £750 million would disappear mysteriously from the public accounts and was to be met by British industry, I was very worried indeed. I accept that that is an over-simplification. Perhaps I swallowed the "one effective clause" theory about the matter because I considered the primary legislation. There are important counter-balancing propositions which appear, not in primary legislation, but, as you will be aware, Madam Deputy Speaker, in regulations that we have not seen and which will no doubt appear before the House at some future date.

I made the argument the other day, so I shall only repeat it in the briefest possible form; I find it rather unsatisfactory that things of so much importance are done by regulation. The one outstanding characteristic of a regulation is that one has to take it or leave it; one cannot attempt to amend it. One has a brief debate. Sometimes brief debates are mercies, but one cannot have any shade of grey; one cannot try to adapt and improve but can only vote against. That is especially useless, it seems to me, in terms of the job that Parliament should be doing, but no doubt that is an Opposition point of view. I may have a slightly different angle on that in perhaps a couple of years' time.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Would it now be logical for the hon. Gentleman to follow his concern for employers through to its logical conclusion and say that, now that he has realised that employers get more out of the Bill than they lose, the best thing to do would be to go for a brief debate, support the Bill and let us have an early night?

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Gentleman, who has earned a reputation of being one of the most abrasive members of the House in many ways—*[Interruption.]*—often makes a useful contribution, I think especially in social security matters. It is perhaps a result of his experience, or previous experience, on the Social Security Select Committee. I often think that if people know a little about a subject it helps a sense of reason to develop. In any event, I shall have to develop my argument and hon. Members will find out that he has slightly misinterpreted me, but no doubt we can put that right if he remains with me.

Not only do Ministers assert that the Bill will be neutral in its impact because the 0·2 per cent. and the subsidiary cuts in the other classes of employers' contributions will offset the £750 million, but they suggest that it is even a little more generous than neutral. One of the difficulties —I am not in a position personally to test it because there has hardly been time and there has not been time even to investigate in any depth with the various organisations that have an interest—is that it is a proposition that has been met with a unanimity of cynicism by the employers' organisations, with one exception. It is an important exception. The Confederation of British Industry, in a rather tortured press release, managed to be loyal at the end of the day, although with so many caveats and reservations that I am not sure that it did not do more credit to the loyalty than to the rationality. I have the document here.

If we consider the views of other people, whether it be the Federation of Small Businesses or the National Farmers Union—it is not often that I have the opportunity to quote the NFU in that type of context—there is a strong feeling that the situation is not as simplistic or as simple as the Minister has suggested, and that there will be very substantial difficulties for people on the employers' side of the divide in the period ahead.

While Ministers assert and employers doubt, I think that we can agree on certain things. One is that if, as a result of this massive transfer, it will be up to the employer to meet the bill, it is likely to be a permanent situation under this Conservative Government. Who knows, it may be a permanent situation, full stop? The other side of the equation, however, is that although the 0·2 per cent. might be a generous reduction in contribution when it is introduced, once there have been some upratings or variations and a Chancellor comes under pressure and does not want to increase direct taxation but thinks that he can get away with a national insurance hike, I defy anyone to say whether that 0·2 per cent. compensation will survive; it could easily go.

The argument about additionality is similar. Many of us became involved in it and retreated in horror—defeated, confused and bewildered. Is it really additional money or is it something that the Treasury has taken into account in its calculations? Is it substitute money and not additional money? That is the problem for employers. They will certainly have to meet the £750 billion or its equivalent —it may be a little higher year on year—but there is no guarantee that they will receive anything like the same compensation after a year or two.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I am sure that my hon. Friend is right, but is it not also true that employers whose workers have adverse working conditions that affect their health are likely to lose, even in the first instance?

Mr. Dewar: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, as I certainly should have got round to mentioning that fact. As the Minister will be aware, some employers' organisations have been alarmed about firms operating within the construction industry, for example. There is a fear that the employers who will suffer most are those in industries where there is a lot of wear and tear on the human frame

[Mr. Dewar]

and where, despite improving methods that enable more working under cover, workers have to suffer harsh climatic conditions and destructive work.

The trouble with working on global figures and averaging things out is that many people are not average and they suffer. The National Farmers Union said that. I cannot resist suggesting that the union obviously did not receive the Minister's letter, which described the matter with such clarity, but made the mistake of relying on the Chancellor's Budget statement. I notice that the union's head of parliamentary affairs, in a letter to Members of Parliament—or certainly to me—on 13 December refers to Government statements as "misleading and confusing", quotes the Chancellor and says that neither of the two statements quoted

"can be considered to be accurate."

There is obviously a great deal of anger about the way in which farmers have been treated. I referred to the NFU because it has made some calculations, which I cannot challenge or verify from personal experience as I have never been a farmer or done farming books. The NFU is certainly in a position to do such calculations and states that some farmers will be adversely affected—especially the more generous who pay above the farm worker's minimum wage, who will be penalised for doing so.

I am pointing that out because the information comes from a genuine source and underlines the dangers of taking at face value the assumption that there will be a nice offset, or perhaps something a little more generous. That might be true, but there will be many exceptions—it might be true in year one, but Lord knows whether it will be in years four, five or six.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I think that the hon. Gentleman is trying to say that employers should be wary because the Government might increase national insurance contributions to their disadvantage. He commented earlier about the Confederation of British Industry being loyal to the Government. Surely the memories of CBI members will go back to the time of the Labour Government. Were not all sorts of burdens imposed on industry at that time? Perhaps the hon. Gentleman can remind the House what the Labour Government did about national insurance contributions, let alone all those weird and wonderful things such as selective employment tax. Is not that what employers should be wary about?

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Gentleman will have heard the almost ritual reference by the Secretary of State in the earlier part of his speech. I do not object, as it is part of the litany of political debate. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will also accept that, whatever the basis of their fear, employers are genuinely concerned about what has happened in the Bill and how it has built on the 1990 change in the law and moved so substantially towards a bail-out—or a cop-out, if one likes—by the Government.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton) *rose*——

Mr. Dewar: Oh dear.

Mr. Newton: As the man who introduced and carried through the Statutory Sick Pay Act 1990, which I think is the legislation to which the hon. Gentleman is referring, may I relate what happened then and has happened since to the subject that he has been seeking to develop?

In proposing and carrying through the reduction to 80 per cent. of reimbursement at that stage, I also introduced reductions in national insurance contributions, including the reduced rates for less well-paid employees. Not only have those rates stuck at the reduced level; they are exactly the same as the rates that my right hon. Friend is reducing further. By way of comparison, the Labour Government charged an employer £17·55 for an employee earning £130 per week and the figure next year will be £7·28, according to these proposals.

Mr. Dewar: Yes, I am familiar with those figures because they appear in the Conservative party brief for this debate which was so usefully given to me.

Mr. Lilley: I sent the hon. Gentleman a copy.

Mr. Dewar: What a new and high level of co-operation. I look forward to that continuing and thank the right hon. Gentleman for that courtesy.

The Leader of the House has a little room at the end of the corridor and now the right hon. Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley) rules in his place. Perhaps that colours industry's approach to possible future events.

Perhaps I am taking too long. I shall try to make my point in short order. I concede that there is genuine concern that this is the start of a process that is gathering speed, whereby there will be a substantial transfer of responsibility for what have been seen as welfare functions from Government to industry. That is also a matter for controversy in other countries. As the Secretary of State will know, a major argument is raging in Germany, where the view is that the process has perhaps gone too far and has had an unfortunate impact on the German economy.

People fear that, in the interests of what is fashionably called in Conservative party circles "shrinking" the public sector, there will be a substantial transfer of such responsibilities. I am not the only one to have that fear. When the hon. Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) was talking about the reduction from 100 per cent. to 80 per cent. in 1990 he said, rather engagingly,

"I think that most hon. Members would accept that I am a trusting soul, but equally I can claim not to be daft"—

that is not a matter for debate at the moment, so I shall pass on—

"and I have an awful feeling, as do the companies in the constituency that I have consulted, that the Government cannot possibly intend to increase the percentage from 80 to 90 or 95 at some point . . . but it is probable that the 80 per cent. will be reduced at some stage to 60 per cent."—[*Official Report*, 26 November, 1990; Vol. 181, c. 669.]

He was very worried about that, and that feeling of concern was reflected throughout the debate in 1990. I am not surprised that he is not attending this debate, as it would be a distressing experience for him. If he had known that the percentage would not merely decrease to 60 but go down to nil, he would have been very worried indeed.

I suggest to the Secretary of State that, once statutory sick pay has been transferred and becomes the responsibility of industry, with an offset on this occasion, we shall find that maternity pay and perhaps industrial injury benefit will follow.

Indeed, this cross-references nicely to earlier exchanges in the debate. Who has been advocating this in terms of industrial injury benefit? The hon. Member for Havant thinks that it would be a splendid idea. When I suggested it in the Minister's ear, I saw him nodding enthusiastically.

It seems that there is concern about the matter. We are talking about £400 million in terms of maternity pay and £650 million in terms of industrial injury benefit being transferred to industry. There is genuine cause for concern. I know that the Confederation of British Industry has asked for assurances, and the Institute of Directors and the Federation of Small Businesses are worried. It is always difficult for Ministers to commit a Government, even over the next few years, but it would be extremely useful if the Minister could give us a guarantee or an assurance that this will not happen.

There is no more assiduous a critic of the social chapter than the Secretary of State. The rhetoric that is always used when we discuss the social chapter is that it will put burdens on industry that will make it uncompetitive. It would be a tragic mistake. Against that undoubtedly genuine and sincere view—I think that it is an exaggerated view—it should be easy for the Minister to say that he will have no truck with going further down that road and burdening industry with maternity pay or industrial injury benefit.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: No. I am more interested in the Minister's view than that of the hon. Gentleman. I shall listen to him in a moment.

It would not be unreasonable to expect the Minister to say that that is not his intention. After all, in a rather dramatic interview recently on the Walden show—I think that the Minister will now be known as the "not now, not never" man from this point forward—he made it clear that there would be no opting out of the basic state pension. We got the impression that it would be over his dead body.

This might be a convenient time for the Minister to confirm that, in the same way as he dislikes the social chapter and its implications, he will not make what he sees as the same mistake by dumping maternity pay, industrial injury benefit and other matters on industry. Perhaps the Minister would like to accept that challenge. In any event, we can come back to this point. I think that the Minister is sitting there with a certain stolid, professional phlegm; if I may say so, I know the feeling.

Mr. Heald: The hon. Gentleman referred to the burdens on business. Does he accept that one of the burdens of the statutory sick pay scheme is the complicated nature of the regulations and the administrative burdens that it places on large employers? One of the great benefits of the Bill is that it will remove that burden and compensate employers by cutting their national insurance contributions. Is not that good for business?

Mr. Dewar: I understand the point about the rebate. Employers' federations—in this case I can only reflect their anxieties—feel that they are still heavily burdened, and fear that they will be much more heavily burdened in the future if the present policy continues. *[Interruption.]* I must push on because I know that other hon. Members wish to participate in the debate.

I have fundamental reservations about the so-called off-set arrangements. For the purposes of the next part of my remarks, let us accept that it is neutral, or perhaps a little better than neutral. When I first saw the proposition —I am sure that many of my hon. Friends made the same mistake—I thought that it was part of the major Budget strategy. I thought that it was all to do with sound money and reducing the public sector borrowing requirement. I suspect that many Tory Members thought that they were gritting their teeth, accepting pain, and battling for those admirable Tory objectives.

Of course, it has nothing to do with that at all, as we now know and as the Minister has made clear. It has nothing to do with any of the objectives. Indeed, we now have to ask why we are getting it at all. The Minister has offered an explanation—I will not pretend that he has not done so. This considerable reorganisation will enable employers to concentrate their minds on the need to tackle absenteeism and to do something about the health problems of their work force. I want to make it clear, simply to avoid doubt, that I accept that the figures in this country are not good. I entirely accept that they should be better.

I must make it clear that I do not want to endorse the Minister's somewhat cynical view that we cannot expect employers to take steps to deal with the matter unless they have a direct pecuniary interest in doing so. The Minister has a rather poor view of humanity. I suspect that he thinks that there is a lot of malingering, and there are many layabouts, behind the figures on absenteeism and ill health. I also suspect that he feels that we cannot expect leadership, control and developments in this field from employers unless we bribe them. I hope that that is not a view that we take of British management in the longer term.

I will not develop this point, but I think that there are many reasons why perhaps we have higher rates of absenteeism and higher ill-health rates in some parts of the country than in others. For example, averages are misleading. Two or three months ago, I happened to look at figures on mobility rates for men between the ages of 16 and 64. The level for the city of Glasgow is 20 per cent. above the Scottish level, and the Scottish level is much higher than that of the United Kingdom.

The view of the Greater Glasgow health board—I have to say that it is not in particularly safe hands at present in political terms—was that the figures for Glasgow could be put down to social conditions, deprivation, poverty and the long-standing factors that were highlighted by the report of the Black committee. There is a danger that, by using averages, we might be hiding the reality of the problem and possibly condoning what is effectively an additional burden on employers operating in those conditions.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): The hon. Gentleman made a long and involved point about the dubiety and uncertainty that is being introduced into the system. He felt that the Secretary of State was making a distinction between those who create the obligation to pay and those on whom the payment falls. It seems that the hon. Gentleman is arguing against himself because he is now saying that, in a specific case where the employer is being handed the obligation to pay the bill, this is a bribe. I do not see the point.

Mr. Dewar: It is not a matter of an obligation. The theory is that employers will take an interest because they will cut their outgoings by so doing. One cannot go to employers and say that it is good management practice.

[Mr. Dewar]

One cannot go to them with the five suggestions that appeared in the Conservative Central Office brief on how to improve these matters, none of which are related to or depend on the sort of reforms which we need and which we are being asked to consider at present.

All the suggestions are simply matters of good management practice. The proposition which I am putting a caveat against is that the reforms will not happen without that financial interest. I understand that there can be a place for a financial incentive, but I think that it is overstated in this way. The argument does not hold up, for the reasons that I have explained.

I know that all these matters are on the margin to some extent, but, as my hon. Friends have said, there is a possibility that the Bill may have an unfortunate effect. Undoubtedly, there are people who through no fault of their own are absent from work because of ill health. It may be that we are providing an incentive for employers to see them as disposable before the point at which perhaps they could have claimed for unfair dismissal. We may possibly be putting a double squeeze on some very vulnerable people. I do not know the views of the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe)—I invite him to tell me. Perhaps we will get his view later.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, we are changing from invalidity benefit to incapacity benefit. The point is that a substantial number of people—a figure of 70,000 has been mentioned, which strikes me as rather low—who qualify for invalidity benefit under the old system will not qualify for incapacity benefit. The theory is that they will have to go out and find jobs. After this system has been introduced, if I were an employer I might look long and hard at the possibility of employing such people simply because of the financial squeeze that is being built in by the reforms. That concern was expressed by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureax in a report recently circulated to hon. Members. It is really an all-party point, because the same fear was expressed during the debates in 1990, and the NACAB material suggests that, to some extent at least, it has been borne out.

The hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) has an honourable record of taking an independent stance on such matters, and on 5 February 1991 she said:

> "There are bound to be people in work who, for whatever reason, need more time off because of their illnesses. There is great worry that they will be discriminated against by a company that decides that it cannot afford to take them on because they would be off work more often than an average employee."—[*Official Report*, 5 February 1991; Vol. 185, c. 186.]

When that view was expressed the 100 per cent. rebate was being reduced to 80 per cent. Now the rebate is coming down in one leap to nil. Arguably, the House is entitled to take account of the fact that that substantial drop may have a bad effect. I am glad that the hon. Member for Mid-Kent interrupted me, since my next analogy may appeal to him because of his social work background.

I spent five years of my life working full time with children in trouble, and I remember well a debate—it probably still lives on with the present Home Secretary —about a great move to make parents responsible for their children's criminal activities. The suggestion was that if a child got into trouble his parents must be fined in his place, to "larn them" to take more interest in their children. There was a general view that that might indeed have been effective, but not necessarily in the right way. It would not necessarily have contributed to an improvement in the quality of family life. There seems to be a danger that the reform before us will have an impact on employers, but not necessarily the impact that the Minister expects. I do not think that he has established his case.

I have taken rather longer than I meant to, but perhaps I may briefly mention a couple of important small points. I shall simply flag them now, and perhaps during the remainder of our debates, when we get Second Reading behind us—assuming that the Government have a majority, as no doubt they will, because of the Whips—we may be able to return to some of those matters.

First, as has already been said by at least one Conservative Member, there is a genuine worry about the small firms relief. I do not say that it was the fault of the Secretary of State or of the Department, but there was a failure to realise that, instead of the six weeks during which small firms were responsible for 20 per cent., small firms would now have to pay 100 per cent. of statutory sick pay costs for four weeks. I acknowledge that there is another part to the sum—the reduction in contributions—but because between 75 per cent. and 80 per cent. of all absences are completed within the first four weeks, there will be a substantial additional burden, even on the small employer.

Many people see the change as a bad bargain. I referred earlier, with some validity, to the views of the National Farmers Union on the matter, and I was intrigued to read what that organisation says about the parliamentary process. I had not seen the letter when I spoke in the debate on the timetable motion, and it gives the House something to think about:

> "As in 1991 . . . it seems likely that the House of Lords—which cannot be bounced in the same way—will have to take on the burden of examining the legislation in detail."

It is bad for the House that the NFU should have reached that opinion. Moreover, sadly, the NFU is wrong, because small firms relief is not in the Bill at all. Again, it will be a matter for regulations, in which no change can be introduced.

I do not want to exaggerate the argument, but I put it to the Minister that there is a slight danger in saying, "If you are a small firm you get relief"—let us assume for the moment that the relief is worth something, although that is a question in itself—"so there will be an advantage in staying within the definition of a small firm, but if your national insurance bill goes above £20,000, you will lose that advantage." We would, in a strange way, be building in an employment trap, equivalent to the poverty trap with which we are so familiar in other parts of the social security system.

Today, with the assistance of the Library, I tried to test out one significant example. A firm with eight employees, assuming a salary of £250 a week per employee, would have a national insurance bill just below the £20,000 threshold. If another employee were added the bill would rise just above the £20,000, and there would be a significant financial differential in the firm's responsibility for statutory sick pay as a result. I put that fact to the Minister as another complication.

The only other matter that I wish to raise concerns the retirement age. That is an interesting question, and I make it clear that I am on the Minister's side on the subject. As the House will know, the entitlement for statutory sick pay, which used to expire at retirement age, is now knocked out when a person reaches 65. That is part of the process of equal treatment for men and women, and I have no objection to it; indeed, I positively endorse it. However, I believe that there may be complications, with which the Secretary of State, or pehaps the Minister of State, may wish to deal in the wind-up or in one of the clause stand part debates.

As I understand it, the Minister has been forced to make the change because the derogation that enabled him to preserve the current situation on the ground that it derived directly from the retirement age system, can no longer be used, as he has now transferred the responsibility for paying statutory sick pay to the employer, so it has passed out of the public sector. I hope that the problem does not arise but, as I said to the Minister of State the other day, there could be endless litigation—I think of the Rose Graham case, litigation concerning invalidity benefit, and so on.

I hope that people will not be able to argue that, until the problem disappears in 2020—that is by no means tomorrow—some women in work will be able to draw both their pensions and statutory sick pay, whereas men will not be able to do the same beyond their retirement age. There may well be complications there. It is an interesting matter for speculation and discussion, and perhaps the Minister of State will tell us—I notice that the Minister of State is pointing straight at the Secretary of State—*[Interruption.]* No, he was pointing at the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, who is apparently to be allowed to trot out. In any event, the Minister who replies may tell us whether the Government have considered those legal matters.

Now I am done. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear".] I think that the verb that I used is the mot juste, because I know from the correspondence that I have received that many employers feel that they will be done, or diddled, by the change in the system, and there is nothing wrong with having fellow feeling with those whose views I am tying to represent.

The Government are making a massive extension to the system, and it has worried many hon. Members—including, I am sure, many Conservative theorists—who feel that that is not what a Conservative Government should be about. Such a transfer has potential dangers. It has brought uncertainty to industry; the Government will control what industry pays, and they are also in charge of national insurance contributions. As I have said, that is a temptation that they may not be able to resist. I believe that it would be better if they retained the responsibility in the public sector at this stage. There is an element of sleight of hand about the legislation. It opens opportunities for dishonesty by government—I use that word as a concept; I am not making a particular accusation, although possibly I could. The suggested system builds in distortions which I believe may prejudice those who are already vulnerable.

I do not believe that the advantages of the changes have in any way been established. The Government have deliberately rejected an economic case and now talk of a social case and of incentives for better practice in industry. They have laboured to try to justify what they have proposed, but they are labouring in a false cause.

The real explanation goes back to the ideology and the battles in the Department of Social Security and the Treasury over the shape and size of the public sector. The measure is attractive to them because it is seen as one that will shrink the public sector and that will privatise a benefit. It allows a manipulation of the figures to enable those who still have a loyalty to the No Turning Back group, to the hard right and to the memories of Lady Thatcher to say that they are on the march. I do not care about them and their marching. I want legislation that has some relevance to the better government of the country and that creates better conditions under which people can live. I do not want legislation that is based on ideology and that is no more than a victory for faction over common sense. That is why I will vote against the Bill.

7 pm

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): I listened with great care to the comments of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). He said that there would be dangerous uncertainty in a situation in which the Minister set the minimum level for statutory sick pay and the employer had to pay. One cannot logically argue in that way, as he did, and at the same time support a statutory minimum wage, as he does, where exactly the same principles would apply. That is totally illogical.

Opposition Members repeatedly made the point, with which I also disagree, that an employer is more likely to dismiss somebody who has a poor sickness record as a result of the changes. If someone has been employed for two years and qualifies for the unfair dismissal legislation, it would not be possible for employers to dismiss out of hand for sickness without a heavy award in a tribunal.

Leading cases suggest that, to justify dismissal, there needs to be an extended absence of an employee of six months to a year or a record of 25 to 50 per cent. of non-attendance on a regular basis. To suggest that dismissal can occur willy-nilly is wrong.

For people who have been employed for less than two years, it is uneconomic for the employer to dismiss them rather than pay statutory sick pay. Four weeks' statutory sick pay is more than £200, and to pay two weeks' wages by way of notice is far more than that. It makes no economic sense, and the employer would pay a heavy price if he took that heavy-handed approach.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As has been pointed out, if the measure goes through, the employer will be liable for five times more money than at present. If someone has been employed for two years and they are lead-swingers or become so, the burden on employers will be five times what it was before. My hon. Friend said that it is not difficult to take cases to an industrial tribunal. Does not he have some concern for employers who find themselves in such a situation, because they will have to pay five times as much as before, and will be able to do nothing about it?

Mr. Heald: Conservative Members have always supported good industrial relations. *[Interruption.]* We have always supported the industrial relations code of practice, and any employer who breaks the law by unfair dismissal should pay the price; we should not derogate from that at all.

However, it is important to remember that a whole series of measures have been added to the contract of employment to protect the weakest in society, and statutory sick pay is one of them. At the moment, an employer can offset his national insurance contributions against statutory sick pay, and does not have to pay the full amount.

We should consider the Government's proposals in that context. They are proposing to cut the national insurance

[Mr. Heald]

contributions and put more of the burden of SSP on to the employer than at present. There is a neutral effect on cost, but when one considers the burdens on business of administration and regulation, one realises that the Government are proposing to free employers of 85 per cent. of the working population from them, that the measure has a good deal of Conservative sense, and that even members of the No Turning Back group could not possibly disagree. I am not a paid-up member, by the way.

Mr. Marlow: I do not think that my hon. Friend has addressed the specific point that I made. A lead-swinger who is trying to buck the system and who takes three days off every now and then because he wants to go somewhere, but is not an obvious enough case to take before an industrial tribunal, will cost the employer five times as much as before. Does not my hon. Friend have sympathy for the employer under those circumstances?

Mr. Heald: I do not agree that it will cost the employer five times as much, because, on average, a small business with five workers on £190 a week, accounting for the cut in national insurance contributions, would be £400 a year better off. One cannot complain on their behalf.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): The situation is desperate.

Mr. Heald: The situation would certainly be desperate if the Labour party came to power.

If someone is shown to be absent from work without justification over a period, there is no reason why an employer cannot dismiss that person and it would be fair. However, Conservative Members must never say that we support poor industrial relations practice. It is important that we support the best.

I wish to make three points. First, the changes will remove a layer of unnecessary Government bureaucracy and over-regulation of business, with no effect on the costs of industry. Secondly, the changes will make employers more competitive and create jobs. Thirdly, the changes will be good for the health of employees.

Mr. John Spellar (Warley, West): Is that from central office?

Mr. Heald: No, these are not the words of central office. This is the real world.

Mr. Spellar: Will the hon. Gentleman describe how the changes will create jobs?

Mr. Heald: I am happy to do that. In the example that I gave a moment ago, the effect on a firm with five employees on an average wage of £190 a week who have average rates of sickness would be to reduce their costs by £400 per annum. Small businesses regularly tell the Select Committee on Employment that, if the burdens on business are reduced, more jobs will be created, because they will be more competitive and sell more goods, and the market will do its work. In my constituency, there are 1,200 small businesses in Letchworth, and I believe that they would accept that challenge whole-heartedly.

The argument is different for the large employer. The scale of the regulation of which we are talking is quite draconian. If one consults the handy guide of D. W. Pollard's book on social welfare law, one sees the problems that large employers currently have, which will be removed.

Mr. Spellar: I cannot follow the logic. We are being told that the changes are broadly neutral financially, so industry will not save money. Therefore, using the hon. Gentleman's logic, some companies will create jobs, while other companies will lose jobs. It will not have the effect he says. The real effect may well rest on those who are applying for jobs, especially those middle-aged workers who have been made redundant and who will find it more difficult to get into work because, statistically, they will be seen as a higher risk. That is exactly what has happened in the United States.

Mr. Heald: The provision is better than neutral; it provides £162 million extra for business, in the sense that its costs will be reduced by that amount. As for the hon. Gentleman's idea that employers do not currently consider the health of the people they take on, it is not true. Every employer already asks employees about their health before taking them on—91 per cent. of workplaces have health schemes for which the insurance companies require them to do so.

It is wrong to suggest that employers will suddenly become conscious of employees' health before taking them on—they already are. However, employers will be far more aware of the health of their existing employees and of those they have taken on, because it is in their direct financial interest to improve health and lower the absentee rate.

Mr. Rowe: As we drive up the training standards on which the future of this country depends, is it not the case that the present balance, which is already in favour of an employer much preferring to keep an employee at work than allowing him to be sick—however much he is likely to be reimbursed—will swing even further in that direction? The more skilled an employee, the more costly it is for him to be away from the business.

Mr. Heald: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point, with which I wholly agree. The average training cost nowadays for someone in manufacturing industry is about £25,000, so £400 for four weeks' statutory sick pay pales into insignificance.

I was about to read from D. W. Pollard's handy guide to social welfare law to give a flavour of the regulations. It states:

> "There will be repaid by the Secretary of State or by the Commissioners of Inland Revenue on behalf of the Secretary of State to an employer the amount, or part thereof, prescribed in D. 1560, provided that the employer has requested the Secretary of State in writing to do so and that the Secretary of State is satisfied that either:
>
> (i) after the employer had deducted all or part of the amount he or she was entitled to deduct by virtue of D. 1556, the amount of primary and secondary Class I national insurance contributions he or she is required to pay is insufficient to enable him or her to deduct therefrom all or part of the amount he or she"—

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): Regulations are intriguing but, for the sake of history, will the hon. Gentleman tell the House which Government published this regulation?

Mr. Heald: Clearly, these regulations were published by this Conservative Government, but, if there is to be a reimbursement scheme—something for which Labour Members seemed to be arguing barely a moment ago—one must have regulations of this type, because that is the only way to administer the scheme. The Government's view —rightly—is that, if the employers of 85 per cent. of the working population are taken out of the scheme, one can save a huge amount in administrative costs for the Government, the taxpayer and employers.

The hon. Member for Garscadden also appeared to think so, because, during the debate on the money resolution, he said:

> "It would not be unreasonable to expect a reduction in staff responsibilities, so why do we require the money resolution? After all, there will not be the substantial—I am sure that it must be substantial—administrative coming and going and expense which is at present the consequence of paying the 80 per cent. of sick pay reclaimed by the majority of employers. Clearly, that must involve a great deal of paperwork. It must involve the monitoring, processing and satisfying of claims. If all that is to be swept away, that is a big plus which presumably would result in a reduction in the administration expenses for which the Minister is responsible."—*[Official Report,* 14 December 1993; Vol. 234, c. 791.]

[Interruption.] I can hear the hon. Gentleman saying that I have taken his comments out of context, but it is clear that there are savings to be made, and that they could be considerable for the public purse and for large employers.

My second point is that employers need to have the lowest possible costs, so that they can compete. Large employers are for ever saying that to the Select Committee on Employment, of which I am a member, as are the Institute of Directors, and the Confederation of British Industry and various other bodies, but they cannot have it both ways. They cannot ask the Government to remove the burdens and regulations but, when the Government have done so, complain because they would like not only cuts in national insurance but not to have to bear any of the costs. The measure will therefore bring considerable benefits to large employers, and I have already dealt with small employers.

On the question of the sickness and health of the work force, there are lessons to be learned from the experience of the London boroughs which were outlined earlier. It was possible for the level of sickness and absenteeism to be reduced from 17 per cent. to 14 per cent. in a relatively short period, merely by improving management practice.

If one can introduce financial incentives, as the Bill would, one can make considerable inroads into the problem and make Britain one of the best countries in terms of absenteeism, rather than one of the worst. I am led to think that because, apart from the statistical evidence provided by the London boroughs, there is the obvious thought that, if there is money in it for the employer, the scheme is likely to work.

A woman came to my surgery recently to complain that her employer was putting pressure on her to remain off sick because he had a downturn at work and welcomed the fact that the state was paying for what amounted to a lay-off. She said that the same was true for three or four other employees in the same company near my constituency.

Mr. Spellar: Is that the upturn?

Mr. Heald: I hear the criticism.

I was lucky because it turned out that she was not one of my constituents, so I was not put in an embarrassing situation with a constituency company—the company involved was just over the border. The lesson, however, is that it may not simply be a question of someone swinging the lead, as my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) suggested; some employers may to some extent have connived in creating a higher level of absenteeism than is strictly right.

I welcome the Bill, because it will help industry and jobs, and that is why I shall vote for Second Reading tonight.

7.17 pm

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): I am delighted to be called, because the debate offers me the opportunity to raise many of my fears, especially those for people with disabilities, those with long-term health problems and ex-mental health patients.

Many of the measures in the Bill will debar many such people from obtaining work. Many employers will clearly not want to employ someone who has a bad sickness record and, by the very nature of their problems, people with disabilities often have to take time off work. I stress that that is not true of all people with disabilities, because some do not need to take time off. However, others do, and I believe that they will be strongly disadvantaged.

We have been led to believe that national insurance contributions were supposed to provide money for people when they were unemployed or sick. People have been paying into the scheme for years, but they now find that they are not getting the benefits that they have paid for from the Government.

Mr. Heald: Is the hon. Lady aware that it is not a contributory scheme?

Ms Lynne: Yes, I am well aware of that. The hon. Gentleman may wish to speak later, although he has already had the opportunity to make a speech. He did not make his points very well, so I do not think that it is worth while his intervening on someone else. It is just another example of the games that Conservative Members have played in the past few days. In the Budget, the increase in national contributions was 1 per cent., and a person earning £18,000 a year will have to pay an extra £150 a year. At the same time, the Government are dismantling the advantages of the welfare state. That is despicable—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may laugh, but people in their constituencies will not be laughing quite so much.

The Government are reneging on their side of the deal. It was a swift and deadly Budget, in which unemployment benefit was reduced to six months and statutory sick pay for many has been abolished. The Government attempted to compensate for statutory sick pay by reducing employers' national insurance contributions by 0·2 per cent. for large firms and by 1 per cent. for small firms. How do the Government know how many people will be off sick? How have they calculated that? Do they have a hot line to Russell Grant, or some other astrologer? Are they employing him to tell them how many people will be off sick and for how long?

The Government are saying that the Bill will compensate people, and that the compensation will be adequate. I do not think it will be. The Government have made an assumption that the decrease in employers' national insurance contributions will offset the bill for statutory sick pay. That is ludicrous; it will not. It is not only Opposition Members who believe that, but small firms and larger companies.

[Ms Lynne]

For example, the Federation of Small Businesses stated that, for

> "well-managed companies with low sickness rates, there will be a reduction in the cost of employing people."

That is possible, but what about the people who, through no fault of their own, are employed by not so well-managed companies?

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Lynne: No, I will get on.

People employed by not so well-managed companies will suffer; they will not receive sickness pay, or they will lose their jobs when companies can no longer afford to employ them.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer claims to be a friend of small businesses, and has said that they will benefit from the Bill. Small businesses with a national insurance contributions bill of less than £20,000 will receive state paid statutory sick pay if an employee is off work for more than four weeks. That is an inadequate measure. Many employees are certainly not off for more than four weeks, in which case the employer has to pick up the entire bill.

The owners of small businesses are extremely worried about these measures, and fear that they will cause them severe financial difficulty. For example, if a company with a work force of eight or 10 people has two workers, 25 per cent. of its work force, off sick for up to four weeks, how will it be able to afford to bring in temporary staff if it does not receive statutory sick pay? It will not, and in those circumstances it will be forced to close.

The Government say that the compensation is high enough. I have had a communication from a company called Goldwood (Moulton) Ltd., which employs 15 people. Last year, its national insurance contributions were £11,449·59; it got back £114, but it paid out £580·20. The true cost to the company will be £464·16 extra.

Mr. Lilley: How much will the company save on NI contributions—or was that included in the hon. Lady's figures?

Ms Lynne: The true cost will be £464·16. I will be pleased to let the Secretary of State see the communication after the debate, if he wishes.

Mr. Lilley: Does that take account of the reductions in national insurance contributions?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. If the hon. Lady is giving way, she should sit down. If she is not, the Secretary of State should not stand up. Is the hon. Lady giving way?

Ms Lynne: No, I have already given way once. I will give the figures to the Secretary of State after the debate, and if he cares to contact the firm, he is at liberty to do so. It will tell him far better than I of the problems that small businesses up and down the country are facing.

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Lynne: No, I will not give way. I am fed up with Conservative Members trying to score party political points, as they did last night when they disrupted the business of the House and prevented many hon. Members from taking part in the Consolidated Fund Bill debate. I am not prepared to give way to Conservative Members.

Big businesses have also voiced concerns. IBM is looking into the measures, and has said:

> "We will suffer more from a decision to stop reimbursing sick pay than we will benefit from the reduction in national insurance contributions."

It fears that it will have to cut back on perks such as generous occupational pensions.

If IBM, one of the best run and economically sound companies, is contemplating such moves, even with its 0·2 per cent. reduction, the mind boggles about what other companies will do to cope. They are already reeling from the recession that has been caused by this Government's policies.

The Bill will have a prejudicial effect on the work force and society. Many employers are bound to ask about the sickness records of people looking for work, and about how much time they have had off work. If they have had too much time off work, they will not be employed. These measures will have a devastating effect on people with disabilities. Already, 40 per cent. of disabled people are out of work, and the Bill will ensure that that figure will increase.

This is no way to run an economy. In addition to wasting the talents of many thousands of people, the Bill will increase the social security bill by putting people out of work and making them dependent on the state. The Bill is not a radical attempt to reform the welfare state; it is intended to dig the Government out of the PSBR hole that they have dug for themselves.

7.28 pm

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): I welcome clause 1, because it encourages British industry and commerce to become more effective, improve unit labour costs and become more competitive. The Bill is cost-neutral, as was its predecessor, the Statutory Sickness Payment Act 1991, and contains broadly compensating reductions in employers' national insurance contributions.

The most significant financial impact of the Bill will be to encourage employers and employees alike to reduce sickness absence and improve working conditions. That will reduce the direct cost of absenteeism, and, more significantly, reduce the indirect costs of sickness absence.

Let me explain that for the benefit of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). Hon. Members who know British industry will understand that the negative impact of sickness absence is not only lost productivity and the cost of sickness pay for the absent worker. Of equal, or even greater, importance is the disruptive impact on the balanced production line, on delayed and duplicated administrative work, and the learning curve effects.

The disruption impact—the secondary impact on efficiency—is of great financial consequence, greater even than the direct cost of sickness absenteeism. Unlike other forms of absenteeism, sickness absence cannot be planned. Its impact affects the whole organisation, inhibiting the effective achievement of the organisation's objectives, whatever they may be, and drives up the costs to the organisation out of all proportion to the direct costs of the statutory sick pay.

The latest sickness absence statistics are very telling. According to the labour force survey on absenteeism, 170 million working days are lost each year to the United Kingdom economy as a whole: that represents 3·8 per cent. of total working time, and an average of eight days per employee per year. As we have already heard, the duration of sickness absence is typically very low; some 40 per cent. of absentees are absent for fewer than four days.

Internationally, we perform very badly: we have the second highest absenteeism rate in the European Community. I had thought that we were under-performed only by the Netherlands. Our rate of sickness absence is about half as high again as that of the United States of America. That is not acceptable; it is draining our competitiveness, and acting as a permanent leech on our economy. It is therefore right and proper for the Government to make a change that will focus employers and employees on the need to reduce unnecessary sickness.

The CBI states:

> "incentives to reduce the costs of sickness absence are not necessary in the private sector where lost productivity provides sufficient incentive."

Members of the CBI are reverists if they really believe that there is no room for improvement in sickness absence rates.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): Did the hon. Gentleman read what the CBI said about the Bill in *The Independent on Sunday:*

> "It would impose costs on the employers which would be partly hidden and would damage competitiveness"?

Dr. Spink: According to a briefing that I received from the CBI today, it supports the Bill. I shall make that material available to the hon. Lady immediately after my speech. The CBI cannot really believe that there is no unnecessary sickness absence in this country; it knows there is.

There are interesting differences in sickness absence in the United Kingdom economy, which serve to highlight the fact that a good proportion of such absence is indeed unnecessary. For instance, in small companies—where management have a closer and much clearer understanding of employees, where the money often comes straight out of the manager's back pocket and where loyalty is strongest —sickness absence is much lower than in larger organisations.

In Japanese companies operating in the United Kingdom, sickness absence is running at about half the average. It is notably lower in the private sector than in the public sector—hon. Members will know the story of the public-sector employee who asked his colleague whether he had managed to save any of his sick leave for Christmas shopping this year. The CBI and Industrial Society surveys do not, however, have large enough sample sizes to distinguish reliably between regions and industries.

It will be clear to all hon. Members that, in bringing pressure to bear on the problem of sickness absence, the Government will drive up competitiveness. Let me point out to the hon. Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) —although, unfortunately, he is no longer in the Chamber —that that pressure will improve employment, reducing the burden on the taxpayer and the size of the bureaucracy.

I see nothing wrong in that; I consider it a great benefit. The moribund nanny state will be pushed further back: I welcome that development, and will ask the Government to go further along the same line. I see the Bill as an element of the virtuous circle that will yield benefits to everyone, and I am delighted to support the Government.

Ms Eagle: In its parliamentary brief, the CBI says that it does not want the Government to go any further. It appears that the hon. Gentleman agrees with one part of what it has said, but not with the other, more crucial, part.

Dr. Spink: The hon. Lady is being very selective. The CBI says that, "in accepting the proposals", it seeks three assurances. I shall deal with those assurances shortly, but it is clear that the CBI accepts the Government's proposals.

Mr. Spring: This is an important point. In its briefing, the CBI says:

> "In the context of the overall Budget package"—

which was enormously welcomed by the CBI—

> "and the reassurance provided by the welcome proposals to reduce NI contributions to offset the cost of transferring SSP, the CBI does not wish to oppose the SSP Bill."

It could not be put more plainly.

Dr. Spink: I am indebted to my hon. Friend for that clarification.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): In all fairness, the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) did not do the House the service that he might have done had he read the entire paragraph. The CBI goes on to say:

> "there are real concerns that some employers will not be adequately compensated, for example those in construction or heavy engineering, who face higher absence rates for reasons beyond their control. It may also hurt the small employers with around 20 employees disproportionately".

The entire brief should be read in context, not just selective extracts.

Dr. Spink: I agree with one implication of that statement. The construction industry, along with a number of others, needs to examine its working conditions and its safety record very carefully. They are appalling: there are far too many fatalities in our construction industry. Perhaps the Government's move will draw attention to that, and focus employers' minds on improving working conditions.

Of course we must all welcome any move that reduces bureaucracy, as the Bill does. It will greatly simplify the administration of the statutory sick pay system. Only a small business man—or, indeed, a large business man, or rather, a business man in a large organisation—who has had to grapple with the complexity of SSP would fully appreciate the importance of that point. Indeed, a third of small businesses do not even bother to use the system, because it is so complicated.

The CBI says that the measure will increase non-wage labour costs. However, if it works well—as I expect it to —it will reduce overall non-wage labour costs, thus reducing unit labour costs, making us more competitive and helping us around the virtuous circle that the Government are trying to pursue. I am sure that, on reflection, the CBI will accept that.

I agree with the CBI on one key point. It seeks an assurance that

> "there will be a radical overhaul of the present complex and burdensome administrative procedures for the SSP scheme. The present Bill only relieves employers of the burden of claiming compensation!"

I trust that the Government will give that firm assurance; I also hope that they will give careful consideration to what the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) said about the potential impact on disabled employees.

7.38 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): The speech of the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) underlined the problem that the Government have caused by rushing into the legislation. He gave one reason for his belief that the Bill would encourage employers to improve the health of their employees, thus reducing the sick pay bill; his hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald), however, could cite a clear case of an employer's suggesting that, because production was not as good as it should have been, employees should take more time off work in view of the sick-pay subsidy that enabled employers to pay their workers. Two very different reasons were given. The Opposition would welcome genuine measures by employers to improve the health of workers, but I do not believe that that is the purpose of the Bill.

Mr. Heald: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the point that I was making—at the moment, there is a possibility of fraud occurring of the kind that I was outlining, and this measure will stop that? Does he not agree that Opposition Members, as well as Conservative Members, want to stamp out fraud of that kind so that taxpayers' money is properly spent?

Mr. Pike: We, too, welcome the stamping out of fraud, but I bet that the employer that the hon. Gentleman was speaking about was a Tory voter and was looking at ways that he could abuse the system—tax evasion and the rest. The Opposition do not want to see the system abused. We share with that objective in mind. I do not believe that that is the principal objective of the Bill.

I believe that we must look seriously at the implications of what is going to happen. I have no doubt—my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) made the point, as did other hon. Friends—that the Bill encourages the employer not to employ people seeking employment who are older or perhaps have health problems. Therefore, those people will become permanently unemployable. Employers will be given a licence to get rid of workers who have an above-average record of quite genuine sickness. Many people quite rightly interpret the Bill and the Budget proposals that relate to it as a charter to sack the sick.

Mr. Rowe: The hon. Gentleman must admit that probably one of the most distressing features of the present employment market is the extraordinary difficulty that people over 50 have in even getting seen for jobs, and the Bill would not make any difference to that. What is required is a real understanding among employers that people over 50—or even over 45 these days—are more likely to have a good employment record and are more likely to turn their backs on minor illnesses. If anything, the Bill will highlight the present totally disgraceful situation and not affect the market in the way that he claims.

Mr. Pike: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. I have no doubt that there is a bar to people above the age of 50 and that many conscientious workers who should be considered for employment at the present time are barred. I believe that the proposal will extend the number of people aged 40 and over who will not be considered for employment because of their sickness record. Although I have some sympathy with part of his contention, I certainly would not go the whole way with what he was saying.

I want now to deal with the 0·2 per cent. reduction in national insurance contributions, which has the same effect as all general reductions on a one-off basis; some employers will gain and some will lose. I must say to the Minister, and to the Secretary of State who is not with us at the moment, that they should give consideration to employers who employ a large percentage of their workers in types of jobs which, by their nature, are prone to creating sickness.

My hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden referred to construction workers, but, as he will know, many industries equate to that one example. People who work outside—people working on the roads, and in many other jobs—are at high risk of having health problems and are more likely to have time off work. Some people work shifts. Shift work creates conditions for health problems. There are a number of situations that need to be taken into account.

I believe that the generalisation of the 0·2 per cent. reduction will penalise some employers. The Secretary of State should consider that position carefully. If the Bill is forced through, it will have unfortunate effects for some employers.

The Secretary of State referred to the situation in Germany and Holland. In some way, he was referring to the situation with regard to employers. If I understood him correctly, he was saying that the workers got a much better deal in Holland and Germany than they do in the United Kingdom. I make no apology for saying that I believe that the Government always fail to take into account the needs of workers. That is why they are opposed to the social chapter and a national minimum wage and why they abolished the wage councils. We must ensure that the right to sick pay is protected.

I want the Minister to look at how we can ensure that when the employer has to meet 100 per cent., bad employers will not try to evade it. I know that these things are covered by previous legislation, but there is a growing trend of employers trying to get away with such things. Unfortunately, many employers fail to recognise trade unions. Many workers dare not complain and will not get the sick pay to which they are entitled.

I want the Minister to assure us about what steps workers can take if they feel that they are not getting their entitlement to statutory pay. The Secretary of State underlined the fact that it is statutory sick pay, and, therefore, I hope that the Minister will accept that, if an employer dodges that responsibility, there is some statutory responsibility on his Department to ensure that that payment is made.

Mr. Hargreaves: I have some sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman has been saying, as I have been part of a large organisation and have had various connections with small organisations, particularly clubs. I ask him to consider that there appear with this measure to be two angles: the first is the medium and large company and the employees thereof; the second is the growing number of much smaller companies which, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary rightly said, find the form filling so horrendous that they dispense with the system altogether. To be honest, they are being very good employers in that they continue paying irrespective and are not reimbursed for it.

Mr. Pike: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point, but, on the point that I am making, I seek assurance from the Minister that his Department will give assistance to people if they do not get the statutory sick pay, to which they are entitled. Now that the employer will have to pay 100 per cent., I think that we may see a greater evasion of the legal responsibility by the bad employer. However, we must accept that there are good employers as well as some bad employers.

Finally, I shall refer to the rating. Again, the point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden. The Secretary of State said that he would use wise judgment in that situation. I hope that we get some assurance from the Minister who is winding up that although statutory sick pay does not have to be increased by the rate of inflation, or any other factor, we will not see it effectively frozen.

I accept that we [illegible] moving up from the lower to the higher rate. However, let us not hide from the fact that there will be a problem if that higher rate is not uprated in the years to come. I hope that the Minister will assure us that the Government have no intention of allowing the real value of statutory sick pay to be eroded even though they are shifting responsibility to the employer.

The Government must accept that they have a responsibility, particularly for those workers who depend on statutory sick pay and who do not receive sick pay from their employers. Those people depend on that money and its value must not be allowed to fall in real terms. I hope that the Government recognise that they have a genuine responsibility. It is always said that we have reasonable Secretaries of State, but we all have different views about what is reasonable and about wisdom. I hope that the Government will assure us that they intend the value of SSP to be maintained in the years ahead.

7.49 pm

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): I am aware of the problems of absenteeism, as I have run a business. On a national scale, up to £13 billion a year is lost to British industry in terms of additional costs as a result of absenteeism. That is a truly enormous and frightening figure.

I have also conducted business in the Netherlands. Absenteeism is a particularly endemic problem in that country and it has provoked considerable national discussion there. Happily, we are not as badly off as they are in the Netherlands, although the record in the United Kingdom is not particularly good. On average, we lose eight days a year through sickness.

Smaller companies are easier to manage from a personnel point of view. The level of absenteeism is twice as high in larger companies as in smaller companies. That is indicative of the scale of the problem.

Mr. Rowe: Is my hon. Friend aware of recent research which shows that a surprising number of employees of a whole variety of ages—not just the older employees—would, if given the opportunity, trade hours for pay? In other words, some of them would be prepared to work fewer hours a week if their employers gave them that opportunity. Does my hon. Friend accept that that may be a contributory cause to absenteeism and sickness? Does not that provide a window of opportunity to get people into work and off the unemployment queue?

Mr. Spring: My hon. Friend has made a very important point. Flexibility in the way in which we operate our employment market is important. Flexibility is one of the reasons why we have been so successful as a nation at reducing unemployment in comparison with other countries in the European Union. I value the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe).

When considering management, we must ask why Japanese companies operating in the United Kingdom are so successful at raising productivity levels and reducing absenteeism. Their productivity is reflected in lack of absenteeism. They have 2·3 per cent. absenteeism, as opposed to the national average of more than 4 per cent. That has not come about as a result of coercion.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) referred to the Audit Commission study of London boroughs which was undertaken in 1990. The Audit Commission enunciated five principles based on good management practice which included appropriate information, suitably trained managers, attention to staff welfare, clear responsibilities and commitment by senior management.

Absenteeism was running at two and a half times the national norm. However, as a result of the Audit Commission study, there has been a substantial decline in absenteeism as a result of the actions of management. That is an important part of the equation and it is an important element in the philosophy behind the Bill. Management should take responsibility for their employees, including for sickness and days off through absenteeism.

Motivation to make people a part of a team and an enterprise and to feel that they want to be at work and not absent is a clear objective of all good management. It has also been said that 90 per cent. of employees in this country are covered by occupational pension schemes for short-term sickness. Therefore, employers have a significant role to play.

Several hon. Members referred to the difficulties facing small businesses. I fully understand that point. The Federation of Small Businesses has been critical of the Bill. However, it is only fair to say that the federation and the Confederation of British Industry must consider the issue within the overall context of the Budget. After all, the Bill is a budgetary measure. The federation and the CBI both welcomed the Budget for the exceptional help it has provided for small businesses. I am a vice-chairman of the Small Business Bureau which is very much in touch with, and sympathetic to, small businesses.

It is important to make the point that the Budget offers help with cash flow. There has been a dramatic cut in interest rates over the past year. We have also seen an extension of the loan guarantee scheme and the rollover of capital gains reliefs. In addition the Government are rightly considering the question of prompt payment. Small businesses have been greatly encouraged by that. If they are critical of the Bill, they must consider it within the context of the enormous help that the Government have given the small business sector, which it has accepted unanimously, as a result of the Budget.

It goes without saying that individual employers will depend, with regard to absenteeism, on particular levels of pay and sickness. I want to consider the specific point of small businesses and the challenges that they face in the context of the Bill. We must consider whether this is a cost-saving exercise for the Government.

[Mr. Spring]

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) referred to a transfer away from welfare spending. However, a misleading impression has been created that the cost of not reimbursing 80 per cent. of SSP is about £675 million in 1994-95 and £720 million in 1995-96. However, the cut in employers' national insurance contributions is worth £830 million. That is much greater than the change in SSP. It is a saving of £160 million to businesses.

Let us consider the example of a medium-sized company employing staff who earn an average of about £170 a week. It will save £88 a year on national insurance for each employee. If the firm experienced average levels of sickness, it would forgo reimbursement of SSP over the next year of about £44 per employee. That is a gain per employee of £44 a year.

Ms Eagle: Will the hon. Gentleman admit that he is reading directly from the central office brief? Given the information that it provided during the last general election, why should we believe anything in the central office brief?

Mr. Spring: The hon. Lady has made a point on which it is worth reflecting. With regard to what the electorate believe, we know what the electorate did in the last general election and what they will certainly do in the next one. The fact is that reductions in NICs outweigh the higher cost of SSP and improvements in maternity pay which may come about through the EC pregnant workers directive.

I want now to consider specifically the small business situation. At present, any employer whose NIC liability is £16,000 or less—with, say, 10 or fewer employees—can recover 100 per cent. of SSP paid to an employee after the first six weeks of sickness. In effect, that means that raising the threshold to £20,000 is way ahead of inflation. Also, the reimbursement period is cut from six weeks to four weeks.

Two thirds of employees—about 750,000—will be helped. That is an increase of 50,000 employees. All small firms with average levels of sickness will benefit overall. To sum up, there will be 100 per cent. reimbursement for small companies with average sickness rates and where absences are in excess of four weeks.

I particularly wish to comment on what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said about the establishment of the working group which includes Department of Social Security officials, employers and employers' organisations to remove or ease the administrative burdens of the SSP. Its review will be completed in April 1994, as part of the Government's resolute determination to reduce red tape and bureaucracy wherever it is found.

At the heart of the matter is the question: can companies be encouraged to manage absenteeism and sickness better? In the *Financial Times* of 8 December, Angela Baron, a policy adviser at the Institute of Personnel Management, said:

> "The experience of companies that have started monitoring sickness absence is that the very fact that they have started paying attention to it is enough to reduce the absence rates in their companies."

That is an extremely important point. In practice, most big companies top up statutory sick pay in different ways. Some companies have introduced a number of measures and bonus schemes to attempt to reduce absenteeism further.

Iveco Ford in Slough did that. Its absence level of 7 per cent. is now down to 2·8 per cent. In 1986, Vauxhall had sickness absenteeism of 8·8 per cent. Today it is down to 4·5 per cent. That was after the company introduced a negotiated incentive scheme which saved employees £4 a week in contributions to the company's sick pay scheme if average levels of sick pay could be kept below 5 per cent. Rover, a great jewel in the manufacturing crown of this country, introduced a return-to-work interview scheme for staff who were frequently off, and it cut absenteeism by no less than half in the past three years.

Those are practical examples of successful management of absenteeism, and they have had an enormous impact on reducing costs to companies. After all, such companies provide employment in this country, and that is partly why companies such as Rover are doing so well capturing markets and are able to provide yet more employment, compared with other companies in Europe.

Can a change in statutory sick pay have even more dramatic effects? There is an extremely interesting example in Sweden. Opposition Members used frequently to cite Sweden as a great example of a model social welfare state. One has only to look at the implosion of the Swedish economy, its rapidly rising unemployment, and the collapse of national morale to see that the social welfare state grew so fast that it literally grew out of control.

Earlier this year, Sweden reformed its sick pay arrangements. For the first time, the payment for an employee for the first two weeks off work had to be borne by the employer. A curious thing happened early in November. The flu vaccine in Sweden ran out, not because of a flu epidemic but because employers saw the wisdom of taking preventative action in the face of a possible epidemic. Swedish companies have taken those steps to try to keep down sick pay costs. No doubt Sweden's soaring unemployment has much to do with that and has played its part, but, in three years, absenteeism has fallen in that country, from three out of 10 workers being on sick pay at any given time to fewer than one in 10 today. That is a remarkable success story of good management which has led to advantageous results for the Swedish economy.

The motivation of people to make the best of their jobs is at the heart of any business enterprise. Of course, motivation is more likely to be in the private sector than in the public sector. It is worth noting that, on average, sickness absence rates are a quarter higher in the public sector than in the private sector.

I particularly welcome the abolition, in April 1995, of the lower rate of SSP. That will be worth £3·70 a week to the lower paid. That harmonisation will remove the time-consuming exercise of establishing whether an employee's average weekly earnings entitle him to the lower or the standard rate of SSP. There will be only one rate, and that will further reduce bureaucracy and administrative burdens. Administration will be cheaper and the system will be easier to understand. Of course, lower-paid employees are less likely to be covered by occupational schemes.

The Bill gives employers an incentive to improve further the health of their staff, while protecting smaller businesses more generously. I very much welcome the Bill.

8.5 pm

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) on his use of the word "reverist". It will entitle him to some toys for children in his constituency. I hope that, if I use the word "victrix" in the same way, I will be able to join him in that——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Lady was probably not present when Madam Speaker expressed her views about that matter. She was not very happy about such practices in the Chamber. If the hon. Lady would refrain from making such comments, I would be more than grateful.

Mrs. Prentice: I accept what you say, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Unfortunately, I was not present when Madam Speaker made that comment.

The hon. Members for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) and for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) seemed to advocate movement towards a 35-hour week. I was most impressed that Conservative Members were beginning to think that such flexibility in working arrangements might be considered. However, the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds implied that nurses, for example, seem to be less well motivated than car workers. He implied that people doing such public service jobs are more likely to be absent, deliberately miss work and generally have no incentive to do the quality of work that we know that they do.

Statutory sick pay is not a giveaway—it is not easily obtained. It is a benefit to be received only if a person is sick or disabled and is unable to work as a result. We obtained the impression from Conservative Members that it is a skivers charter. We also know that people on poverty wages do not even qualify for it.

I should like to think that society is at a stage at which we should be working with employers and employees to enhance the world of work rather than to denigrate it, and that we should not make matters more difficult for employers but give them more help and opportunities to expand their work forces. The essence of the Bill contradicts what the Government say is their policy for business and employers. Indeed, they freely admit that it will cost employers at least £100 million. We have figures to suggest that it will be considerably more than that.

The Confederation of British Industry thinks that the measure is a fundamental breach of the partnership agreement between the state and employers delivering a vital social security benefit. That is what statutory sick pay is about. There is a responsibility on the Government, in favour of the citizens of this country, that they ensure that proper statutory sick pay is available to all. The Bill is really about the Government reneging on that policy and on their responsibility to govern and protect communities and individuals, and to act in a responsible and civilised manner.

Mr. Spring: Is the hon. Lady suggesting that the CBI is opposed overall to the Bill?

Mrs. Prentice: The hon. Gentleman will know that we have disputed the position that the Government have taken with regard to the CBI, which is not at all happy with the Bill. The so-called support from the CBI which we heard about from Government Members is a contorted view of what the CBI believes.

The Secretary of State said in his opening remarks that there was no evidence that the Statutory Sick Pay Act 1991—and, he implied, this Bill—involved discrimination against people who may be off work through illness. I do not know why the Secretary of State has come to that conclusion. At least he does not go as far as the brief from central office, which says that evidence shows that the Labour party got it wrong when in 1991 we predicted increased discrimination.

Let me tell hon. Members that citizens advice bureaux totally and absolutely refute the Secretary of State's position. They are extremely concerned that employers will dismiss sick people as a result of the Bill. We know already of many employees who do not receive the full amount of statutory sick pay, and some who do not receive any at all. The CAB gives examples, such as a client in the west midlands who said that his employer's policy is to issue written warnings for certified absence during sickness. In Avon, a client on sick leave was paid less than the full amount and was told by her supervisor after six weeks off sick that she was to be made redundant and that someone was already doing her job. The CAB provides several other examples.

If the Secretary of State believes that people are not discriminated against as result of being ill, he is not in the world of reality and he does not know what life is really like for employees.

The Government also say that they want to increase occupational sick pay schemes, yet both the CBI and the Federation of Small Businesses believe that the abolition of reimbursement will limit the ability of employers to provide occupational sick pay schemes. There, yet again, is a contradiction of the Government's policy.

The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) talked about the removal of the administrative burden. The Federation of Small Businesses seems to think something quite different. Its says that, despite the fact that the transfer of sick pay will take place, the administrative record-keeping will still have to go on. Firms must still provide sickness records, and all of the paperwork which is attached to them. They will still be expected to deal with self-certification notes, waiting days, periods of incapacity for work calculations and so on. Firms will still be subject also to Department of Social Security inspections. The federation believes that the administrative burden will not be reduced as a result of the Bill.

Mr. Heald: The point that I was making was that the complete removal of the administrative burden for large employers will be of great benefit to them. I accept entirely that, as far as small businesses are concerned, that has not been removed.

I hope that the review body will be able to cut that administrative burden further. The hon. Lady should not think that I said that small businesses would be better off in that particular way—I did not.

Mrs. Prentice: The hon. Gentleman may have attempted to clarify his speech which was delivered in a fog earlier in the evening. He lives in hope that the review body might do something about it. He should recognise, as others have, that every time the Government set up such a review body, our hopes do not triumph over experience. We do not expect a considerable improvement as a result of the review body.

[Mrs. Prentice]

The Conservative party believes itself to be the party of businesses, big and small. Tonight, through the Bill, it has reneged on its commitments to both. It has reneged on its commitments to reimburse employers, as it had promised in previous years. It has reneged on its commitment to support small businesses, because those businesses will tell anyone that the five week period is of little use to them, because most of their work force would have returned to work in a shorter period. It has reneged on its commitment to remove the burden from business.

The Conservative party cannot even get the business organisations to give their whole-hearted support to the Bill. Those of us who believe in a partnership between Government, employers and employees can do no better than to thoroughly oppose the Bill.

8.17 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I am sorry that I missed part of the speech by the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice), because I was out of the Chamber making inquiries. I declare an interest as I am a small employer. I may declare a further interest of a different sort in that I was fortunate to be winner of the Helping Hands award last year from the Federation of Small Businesses.

While I was out of the Chamber, I took the opportunity to check on what was said during the debate on 28 November 1990, when the House debated the Statutory Sick Pay Bill. I noticed that I welcomed the Bill then, and I said that I thought that the interests of small firms should be considered. I shall quote a sentence which I picked out:

> "I support the Bill as whole, but I should like to be assured that there will be full consultation before there are any more changes. Those consultations should be with representatives of smaller firms and with industries that are affected by the Bill."—[*Official Report*, 28 November 1990; Vol. 181, c. 893.]

Of course the Bill went to the other place, where amendments were made, including the removal of what was known as the "Henry VIII clause". The amendment which helps small businesses was introduced in the other place.

I notice that the briefing that has been issued by the Federation of Small Businesses does not entirely welcome the Bill. However, I wonder whether it has picked up on all of the points that the Government have introduced. It seems that the Government have paid particular attention this time to the interests of small firms. In reading the brief from the federation, it seems that it has not picked up the extent to which small firms will benefit from the change from six weeks to four weeks during which employers are liable before they get full compensation.

The Government have paid attention to the needs of small firms. That was the issue the last time we debated it, and it is still the issue now, although we have gone all the way to 100 per cent. payments by employers. The Government have made the right decision, although it may not be immediately welcome by all employers. The Government have, in effect, decentralised decision-making so that the amount of money provided by the Treasury can be allocated to those who need to draw sick pay benefit through the medium of employers. Those employers are able to make a much better judgment than anyone in the Government will ever be able to as to what the circumstances of each case are. Reducing national insurance contributions by 0·2 per cent. will amount to very nearly £1 billion which the Government have ensured will not burden employers.

While listening to the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), I had difficulty in understanding what the Opposition are opposing. It almost seemed as if the hon. Gentleman was trying to argue the case for the employers, which seemed to come strangely from a party which imposed a jobs tax when it was last in power. The rate of national insurance contributions was 13·5 per cent. when the Labour party was last in power. Was not that the best part of a jobs tax?

It seems strange that the Labour party should now try to argue that it is looking at the situation from the point of view of industry. When it was in power, the Labour party did its utmost to tax jobs out of existence. I still have the greatest difficulty in understanding why the Opposition are opposing the Bill, and I have heard no argument from Opposition Members which would explain. It is just a knee-jerk reaction—as the Government are doing what is perfectly sensible, the Opposition will oppose it for whatever reason. I do not know whether we will hear any arguments from the Opposition which will stand up. I have not heard anything from Opposition Members worthy of interest. The most interesting points were made by Conservative Members.

My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls) spoke about the importance of reducing the administrative burden on firms. The Bill will make a small contribution to that by relieving employers of having to go through the process of reclaiming the 80 per cent. However, employers still have a great deal of record keeping.

The fact that benefit is available for 28 weeks and is paid straight into an employee's bank account makes it easier for the payments to continue. When the Labour party was in power, it was much more difficult as people had to go to the benefit office to get their sick pay. The arrangements are now easier which may make it difficult for employers to judge the circumstances of an absent employee.

When we debated the issue previously, I spoke about the construction industry. I do know know whether my right hon. Friend will be able to say whether there has been any consultation with that industry.

The Electrical Contractors Association is concerned that employers will be more likely to take on 714s—the self-employed—because the traditional role of the Electrical Contractors Association as a self-regulatory body will be destroyed if more and more people become self-employed.

There is concern among the ECA and other construction industries that the Government's measures may lead to more people becoming self-employed. It would be nice to be reassured that the Government have considered that point of view and will consult fully with representatives from smaller firms. There may be an opportunity to participate later in the debate, but that is all I want to say now.

8.21 pm

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): This has been an interesting debate that is worth setting in its historical context. I hope that it will be recognised that it is no exaggeration to say that what Lloyd George started on 4

May 1911 when he moved the National Insurance Bill was ended on 30 November 1993 by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

We are debating the effective end to state participation in a social welfare benefit pioneered and brought into law by the National Insurance Act 1911. In its historical context, that Bill was the most important involvement by the state in social health care until the creation of the national health service in 1948 under a Labour Government. If the measure goes through tonight, as it undoubtedly will, it will be confining 82 years of state welfare provision to the dustbin of history.

That is all part of the Government's programme to dismantle the welfare state. It is the beginning, not the end, of a process and I hope that, as Conservative Members troop through the Lobby, they are aware of what they are doing. To use an old Scottish saying, "If ye didnae ken before, ye ken noo."

I turn to the more current historical antecedents of the Bill. When the Statutory Sick Pay Bill passed through the House in November 1990, hon. Members on both sides expressed fears that the reduction in reimbursement from 100 per cent. to 80 per cent. would be the thin end of the wedge—the beginning of a steady decline in the Government's contribution to national sick pay costs. It was one of those all too familiar phrases. The Secretary of State of the time assured the House that the Conservative Government had no plans to make further changes. We have become accustomed to such assurances. At the last election, the Prime Minister told the electorate that there were no plans to increase the scope of VAT or national insurance contributions. We know what has happened to those promises—even if they were made, in the immortal words of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on a wet night in Dudley.

The Labour party and the country at large now know that, when Ministers say that they have no plans to do something, they mean exactly the opposite. We have learnt to read between the lines. *[Interruption.]* Read my lips, as one of my hon. Friends said from a sedentary position.

There is a certain uniqueness about the debate. I cannot recollect a time when every major business organisation has universally condemned a Government measure. The views of industry are remarkably consistent—that is, consistently opposed.

Peter Morgan of the Institute of Directors—not an organisation which Labour Members would normally call in aid—described it as

> "imposing a heavy compliance burden on employers".

The CBI has been quoted earlier in the debate. It said that

> "as a matter of principle"

it opposed

> "loading these costs onto employers".

The Federation of Small Businesses called it a

> "Bill which will prove damaging to many small businesses and their employees".

It also accused the Government of having

> "reneged on their earlier commitments regarding statutory sick pay".

The Forum of Private Business—another organisation which it is unusual for Labour Members to quote in support of their arguments—has lambasted the Bill by saying:

> "The current proposals, if implemented, are likely to become the principal cause of a significant number of insolvencies".

In recent months we have heard much from Conservative Members about the placing of extra burdens on employers in the midst of the currrent recession. They are really saying that they are against anything which adds to the welfare of the working community. By voting for the measure tonight they are saying that they are in favour of those on-costs which undermine employee welfare.

There is no disputing the extra costs being imposed on industry. They have been accepted as £695 million next year and £750 million the year after. Those costs pose the threat of company closures and further job losses. It is a strange and perverse way to assist companies trying to fight their way out of a Government-created recession. We know that large companies will suffer as they have to meet the full costs of all their sick pay provision. We were led to believe that the Secretary of State had spared struggling small companies from a similar fate.

In his statement to the House, the Secretary of State said:

> "I propose to abolish reimbursement, except to small employers".

He went on to say that he intended to

> "increase the help to small employers".—*[Official Report, 1 December 1993; Vol. 233, c. 1038.]*

Those were disingenuous words.

Under the old rules small employers had to meet just 20 per cent. of the costs of statutory sick pay for the first weeks; they will now have to meet 100 per cent. of the costs for the first four weeks. Last night the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) muttered in a loud voice, "Is that true?" When it was pointed out that it was true, he buried his head in a copy of *Hansard* and rapidly left the Chamber. That it is why he is not here tonight.

When the Secretary of State was presenting the measures to the House, he conveniently ignored the fact that the introduction of full reimbursement to small employers would be of little assistance in more than 70 per cent. of the cases as the vast majority of employees are fit to return to work well within four weeks. If the Secretary of State has any doubts about that, let me draw attention to the words of his predecessor:

> "The average spell of sickness is probably about three weeks".—*[Official Report*, [illegible] November 1990; Vol. 181, c. 639.]

The extension of small employers' relief will apply to fewer than a quarter of the cases where sickness benefit is payable. As a direct consequence, all business will suffer.

The Forum of Private Business was perfectly correct to describe small business relief as "fundamentally flawed". The Bill will exacerbate already difficult cash flow problems.

As the Federation of Small Businesses points out,

> "The compensating national insurance contribution reduction to employers will only give a nominal weekly or monthly rebate whereas a high incidence of sick leave must be paid in the week or month in which it occurs."

As I said, small businesses will be acutely affected. For them, a short period of illness among two or three staff will have a proportionately greater impact on costs. A small firm with 10 employees could easily have to manage without 20 per cent. to 30 per cent. of its staff as a result of a flu epidemic. As most of them may return to work before the four-week cut-off point, the small company would bear all the costs. It is unlikely that a company of 1,000 employees would suffer an equivalent percentage of staff being absent through sickness at any one time.

Ministers may continue to stress the compensatory reduction in national insurance reductions—but if they claim that the direct financial cost to businesses will be almost totally offset by corresponding cuts in employer

[Mr. Adam Ingram]

NICs, what is the point of the Bill? The claim that businesses need the incentive of cutting sick pay entitlement is entirely without foundation. The CBI states:

> "Incentives to reduce the cost of sickness absence are not necessary in the private sector, where lost productivity provides sufficient incentive."

The CBI is saying that the legislation will have an effect that industry does not want. The CBI also sought assurances that the Bill is not simply the first step on the road of shifting the burden of legislated social costs on to employers.

Bearing in mind the broken promises of previous Secretaries of State, I repeat the questions asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). Will the Minister guarantee that he will not transfer in future the cost of statutory maternity pay or industrial injury benefits to employers? When my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden asked those questions, there was no response, so I ask them again.

Ministers have achieved a double whammy of pitfalls, with the Bill creating both an employment trap and a business expansion trap. The £20,000 national insurance contribution all-or-nothing threshold will discourage entrepreneurs from expanding business capacity and taking on more employees. The last thing that business needs at present are further disincentives to increase employment. The Bill's effect on employment prospects is clear.

The greatest impact of this mean-minded Bill will be on those already facing discrimination in the labour market. Instead of legislating to help them and those least likely to have occupational sick pay provision, the Government will increase discrimination at the point of recruitment against the potentially sick and disabled. My hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) made a particularly valid point on that and other issues.

That has happened since the rebate was reduced in 1991 from 100 per cent. to 80 per cent. The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux amassed evidence showing that the number of employers refusing to honour statutory sick-pay entitlement, paying any sick pay or threatening redundancy or dismissal has increased. Such unofficial practices are a symptom of the vulnerability of employees when jobs are scarce. The Bill will impose even more financial pressure on employers and encourage the spread of bad employment practices.

The Institute of Directors is another organisation to which we seldom refer in argument, but its spokesperson stated:

> "Parliament has decided that sick pay is a social benefit, but the Government is trying to make employers bear the cost of providing it. That may well harm the employment prospects of people with pre-existing medical conditions. They should not be penalised because they are disabled or sick—but the Government is making them uncompetitive in the labour market."

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice) made a similar point.

During the debate on yesterday's outrageous guillotine motion, the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People referred to the report awaited from the Public Accounts Committee on the impact of the 1991 statutory sick pay changes. He had no basis on which to assert that the report's content would support his arguments. In fact, he told the House that he had not even read the report, but still prayed it in aid. That demonstrates that a crucial body of available evidence that could have provided substance for this debate has been ignored in the Government's haste to pass the Bill.

I suspect that the report does not support the Government's case, which is why the guillotine was introduced. The Government want to get the Bill away before the PAC report undermines their case even further.

I would like to make a number of other points, but we shall begin another debate later this evening, so I now ask the Minister to respond to the specific questions raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden, which I repeated. We await his answers.

8.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. William Hague): This has been an interesting and varied debate, in which a large number of points were raised. We heard the first speech from the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) as a member of the Opposition Front Bench, to which I welcome him. I look forward to many more exchanges with the hon. Gentleman across the Dispatch Box.

I have never heard a debate in which so many Opposition Members quoted business organisations, prayed them in aid, and recited Confederation of British Industry briefs and other documents. That is a hazardous tactic when the CBI concluded that

> "the CBI does not wish to oppose the SSP Bill."

It is equally hazardous to pray in aid the Institute of Directors, because we are informed that it would welcome the SSP and national insurance changes overall, provided that the Government are prepared to mount a fundamental review of the SSP scheme's compliance burden on business. I am happy to confirm that we will look at that scheme in conjunction with employers, to determine the scope for cutting red tape without affecting employees' rights. We will consider also whether firms offering generous occupational sick pay could opt out of the SSP sick scheme. Quoting employers is a dangerous tactic for Opposition Members.

Mr. Mandelson: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hague: I want to develop these points, because I was asked a number of questions. I will give way in a moment.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) asked about the European equal treatment directive. The reason why women must be entitled to SSP until they are 65 is that, once reimbursement is abolished, SSP will become a form of pay and, therefore, outside the scope of the pension age derogation from the EC equal treatment directive. Retirement pension, however, will still be a benefit and thus still subject to the derogation. It will still be possible to pay retirement pension on a different age basis to women and men and there should be no scope for legal doubt about that. We do not expect any of the difficulties that the hon. Gentleman described.

The hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) appeared to be under a number of misapprehensions. She spoke of the payments that people have made over many years to the national insurance fund, but statutory sick pay is not a national insurance benefit and so is not met by that fund. I wonder whether the calculation she cited, provided by a small business in her constituency, took account of reductions in national insurance contributions that are part and parcel of the policy and of considerable benefit to businesses of all sizes. The most damning quotation that the hon. Lady could give in respect of large businesses was that IBM is "looking into the measures". She says that the policy is to get the Government out of a public sector borrowing requirement hole, but the policy does not reduce the PSBR, because the reduction in national insurance contributions more than offsets the reduction in statutory sick pay.

Mr. Mandelson: The hon. Gentleman's argument relies on the assumption that the compensating decrease in national insurance contributions will remain just that—decreased. Will he take this opportunity to give a firm and unequivocal undertaking to the House that that compensating decrease will not under any circumstances be reversed in future years? If he were not to do so, his remarks would appear extremely hollow.

Mr. Hague: The hon. Member knows that neither the Government nor the Opposition are likely to give commitments about the future level of national insurance contributions. We can, however, point very clearly to our record on employers' national insurance contributions, which for lower-paid employees will be 3·6 per cent. after the change, compared with 13·5 per cent. in 1979. Any employer who is concerned about that has to do no more than consider the record of each party in office to see what is most likely to happen.

Mr. Dewar: Employers may well be unnecessarily suspicious, but the Minister must accept that the prospect causes them to look forward with fear. The other aspect is the argument made by the Confederation of British Industry and various other organisations about the likely shift of other benefits on to the employer. Industrial injury benefit has been especially canvassed, as has maternity benefit. Can he perhaps help us on that subject, by telling us that there are no plans, and no intention, to move further down that road?

Mr. Hague: I recognise that the hon. Member, in his speech as well as his intervention, would prefer to argue against changes that he imagines and foresees rather than against the Bill. This is the Second Reading of the Statutory Sick Pay Bill. That is the subject of our debate. It may help the Opposition to tilt at all types of targets that have not been presented to them, but those targets are not on offer this evening; I can assure the hon. Gentleman of that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) asked for an assurance about complexity and I can give him the same assurance that I gave a few moments ago; we will discuss with employers the further scope for cutting red tape.

The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) mentioned a number of issues. He especially mentioned the construction industry and asked whether such an industry would be placed at a particular disadvantage. The construction industry has an average of about 3 per cent. of employees claiming statutory sick pay, so it is most unlikely to be disadvantaged in any way. In fact, it should be a net beneficiary of the change in statutory sick pay and national insurance contributions if one takes them together.

The hon. Member for Burnley also asked how the Government will ensure that employees are getting their proper entitlement, and whether there are a large number of cases in which they are not. The abolition of SSP reimbursement will have no effect on an employees' entitlement to SSP, but, should a dispute arise between an employee and his or her employer about entitlement, it can be resolved by adjudication procedures.

Where an employer fails to comply with a decision of the adjudicating authorities within the prescribed time and does not appeal, the Secretary of State will assume responsibility for payment, and legal proceedings against the employer will be considered for his non-payment. Inspectors of the Contributions Agency already operate a system of spot-checking of employers' pay records and that will continue. Officials have discussed with the Trades Union Congress the possibility of displaying a new poster in workplaces, reminding employees of their rights. The design and wording of a poster, together with a leaflet, are being evaluated.

A great deal is being done, therefore, and a great deal of redress is available to employees who think that they may be entitled to statutory sick pay, but are not receiving it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) rightly pointed to the experience of London boroughs in reducing, when they made an effort to do so, the average number of days of absence through sickness in three years from 17 days on average to 11·5. He drew attention—also quite rightly—to the *Financial Times* article of 8 December, only a week ago, which listed a large number of companies that have taken the initiative, have tried to reduce sickness levels in their companies and have had tremendous success in doing so.

To quote one example from the article,

> "Vauxhall, the UK car maker, has reduced its sickness absenteeism from 8·8 per cent. in 1986 to 4·5 per cent. today. This was after the company introduced a negotiated incentive scheme which saved employees about £4 a week in contributions to the company sick pay scheme if average levels of sick leave could be kept at or below 5 per cent."

The article points out:

> "Many factors underlie improved absence records, but whether it is knowing that someone in management cares or fearing that they are watching, both approaches seem more effective than the alternative of managerial neglect."

It is managerial neglect of the issue which we are tackling with the Bill. Opposition Members have underestimated the difference that can be made by giving employers an incentive to tackle the problem. It may seem a trivial example, but what happened in Sweden, that paradise of social provision, when they abolished state sick pay for the first two weeks of sickness? Did employers then say, "We are going to sack people who are ill for a short time"? They actually ran out of influenza vaccine in Sweden because employers went on such a campaign of immunising their employees against sickness.

A great deal can be done by employers to help with the health of their employees and a great deal more is being done by some employers. That should be recognised by Opposition Members.

I have already referred to the fact that the CBI says in its much-quoted brief that it does not wish to oppose the Bill. The problem for the hon. Member for Garscadden and his colleagues tonight was that they did not wish to oppose the Bill, but felt that they ought to do so. He said at one point in his speech, when my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Willets) had intervened, that he feared that he would go off the road and into a field. When one listened to the hon. Gentleman's speech, one found that, first, he had a principal fear that people might be squeezed from their benefits, but he also feared that we might make the

[Mr. Hague]

scheme more generous for employees and that employers would have to pay more. He said that at first he was afraid that there was a major transfer of costs to employers, but then realised that there was not. He said that he accepted that sickness absence figures were not good and ought to be improved, but he failed to offer any alternative.

It was rather less like going off a road and into a field than going round an endlessly confusing roundabout, with many signals pointing in different directions and with the hon. Gentleman at the wheel of the car, careering around the roundabout, peering into the distance, looking for something that would come over the horizon which would present a more attractive target than the Bill before the House at the time. He ought to reflect on some of his comments in that speech.

Mr. Dewar *rose*——

Mr. Hague: I have only three minutes left, so I think that I should tell the hon. Gentleman that the Bill is an opportunity to improve the sickness record of industry; it is an opportunity to clarify responsibility for sickness rates; it is an opportunity to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy in the future; it is an opportunity to reduce the overall total and burden of public expenditure; it is an opportunity to reduce industry's costs through a major offsetting reduction in national insurance contributions, a reduction to a level which a Labour Government could never have contemplated and which, for low-paid employees, is a fraction of the levels under a Labour Government.

After this change, when the employee's and employer's contributions are added together, the national insurance contribution payable for an employee on a weekly wage of £130 will be £15·72. It would have amounted to £26 a week in 1979. That is a dramatic reduction.

What is the attitude of the Opposition to this proposal? Blindly to oppose, without having a better proposal—without any proposal—to put before the House. They are not doing so in the interests of employees, because their sickness payments will be maintained, or in the interests of the disabled, because they have a better than average sickness record, or in the interests of small businesses, because they will be better off, and they are not doing it in the interests of well-managed, large businesses because they have a great opportunity to reduce their sickness rates.

In this debate, the Opposition have been reduced to being the defenders of weak, complacent and inefficient management—the only people who stand to gain from their attitude. Perhaps, after their performance with parliamentary procedures during the past two weeks, they identify to a certain extent with weak and inefficient management and that is why they have taken that stance tonight. I urge all my hon. Friends to support the Second Reading.

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question already proposed from the Chair, pursuant to the Order yesterday.*

The House divided: Ayes 308, Noes 268.

Division No. 43] **[8.50 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui

Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana

Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jon Owen Jones and
Mr. Alan Meale

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second Time and committed to a Committee of the whole House, pursuant to the Order yesterday.

[MR. GEOFFREY LOFTHOUSE *in the Chair.]*

Clause 1

RESTRICTION OF EMPLOYERS' RIGHT OF RECOVERY

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

9.4 pm

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): As you know, Mr. Lofthouse, normally after Second Reading we should reflect quietly on the Minister's views and on his response to the many excellent contributions made and pertinent points raised during the debate. Then we should be able to go in good order into Committee—we would have expected that to take place some time after Christmas—which would have given us the opportunity to consider the clauses in great detail and to move suitable amendments.

It is with great regret that, because the Government are forcing the Bill through with such haste, we are now having to reflect quickly on what was said on Second Reading and move straight on to the Committee stage.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said, the Bill has been framed so as to make it effectively a one-clause Bill. To ensure that we can continue to debate in the same constructive way as we debated Second Reading, we have chosen to discuss clause stand part immediately, so that we can pursue some of the crucial questions that were raised on Second Reading but were not well answered by the Government.

The Under-Secretary of State gave an interesting winding-up speech, in which he chose to denigrate the many organisations that oppose the Bill, describing them in the unique phrase "inefficient management". That is how he regards the collective experience of the Institute of Directors, the Confederation of British Industry and the Federation of Small Businesses, all of which were extensively quoted on Second Reading.

For example, we heard how Peter Morgan of the Institute of Directors said that the Bill would impose

> "a heavy compliance burden on employers".

The fact that the Under-Secretary of State said that that was a quotation from an organisation representing inefficient management will be well noted by all the organisations of which he chose to speak in those terms.

It is clear from all the representations that my hon. Friends and I have received from small and large businesses throughout the country that there is great anxiety about the Bill. As the CBI has said, it poses fundamental questions about who shall bear the cost of social security provision. On clause stand part, we shall pursue that line of argument.

As we have heard, the Bill transfers a burden of £750 million on to small businesses. Much has been made of the compensation, through the reduction by regulation of the national insurance contribution, but—I am sure that this is what lies behind much of the anxiety of the many organisations that represent business—no one knows what the future may hold.

It is especially relevant that, in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson), who asked about future increases in national insurance, the Minister could not give any assurance that, in future years, more national insurance burdens would not be placed back on small businesses. Not only do they have the burden of paying sick pay, but there is no guarantee that in future additional burdens will not be placed on them.

We already have evidence to suggest that, when the rebate was reduced from 100 per cent. to 80 per cent., many representations were made through the National Audit Office. The National Audit Office report "Statutory Sick Pay and Statutory Maternity Pay" of January 1993 said:

> "Some employers and organisations representing them told the National Audit Office that they believed the 1991 changes to the Statutory Sick Pay scheme had increased employers costs".

Their anxieties and fears about the future are well-founded.

It was also interesting to note that, when pressed for guarantees about the future impositions on small businesses—especially having to pay for maternity pay and also for industrial injuries—again the Minister could give no assurance whatever that those businesses would not be expected to bear those burdens.

All those worries which have been expressed through the various organisations are the key to why we are right to press for more clear answers on the clause stand part debate. Would there be extra burdens on the business community as a result of transferring the burden of other benefits? Would the Minister give an assurance about the possible extra costs through the national insurance scheme? When the Minister has a second bite of the cherry in winding up, perhaps he will give clearer answers to those questions.

When we were looking through the Second Reading debate, it became clear that there would be a real cost to small employers. In his Budget speech, the Chancellor gave the impression that there would be no cost to small employers. However, in his statement on the uprating of benefit, the Secretary of State told the House:

> "From April next year, I propose to abolish reimbursement, except to small employers . . . So far, we have been reimbursing 100 per cent. of statutory sick pay for absences of longer than six weeks. I shall start giving 100 per cent. help after four weeks."—[*Official Report*, 1 December 1993; Vol. 233, c. 1038.]

It is clear from the evidence of relief to small firms that there would be a real burden on them during that four-week period. Evidence shows that three quarters of sick leave cases are shorter than four weeks, so the full costs would have to be borne by those small businesses. They would lose and not be fully compensated by the proposed scheme.

The effect on a company of few employees that are struck down by illness is important to consider. We have already heard whether Peking flu does or does not hit employers. Judging from how many constituents have been laid low recently, my hon. Friends and I know of the devastating impact that such illnesses can have on small businesses. I have my own bitter experience: I recently moved house and employed builders to carry out some renovation work. Since all the builders were struck down with flu, improvements have been dramatically delayed. I hope that they will be finished by Christmas, but I digress.

One of the crucial issues that need to be explored in more detail is the vulnerability of emloyees. In his opening remarks on Second Reading, the Secretary of State said that there was no evidence at all that vulnerable groups of people, especially people with disabilities, would in any way be disadvantaged by the changes in sick pay legislation.

I beg to differ. There is a mound of evidence to support the alternative view that employers look closely at sickness records and the potential sickness of people before they employ them. Millions of people who are at work would be affected by that change. Three million people looking for work at the moment would have to face the fact that employers will obviously take on those who have not been ill recently.

The legislation will mean that thousands of people who are capable of work but not in perfect health will fall into a trap between invalidity benefit and work. They cannot get work because they have poor health, but they cannot get benefit because they are not judged sick enough to be unable to work.

In his Budget speech, the Chancellor said:

> "companies would have a much sharper incentive to improve their management of sick leave and to take a greater interest in the health of their employees."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1993; Vol. 233, c. 926.]

Although we welcome any improvement in the management of sick pay, in practice it means that employers will look more carefully at the health record of potential employees. People with genuine health problems who also have the ability and need to work may be overlooked because of the imposition of sick pay.

A great deal of evidence has already been brought to hon. Members' attention in reports such as that undertaken by the citizens advice bureaux. That report shows that, far from caring for their employees' health, employers are now more likely to dismiss workers who fall sick. They may also be deterred from recruiting people who are more likely to require time off due to illness.

On Second Reading, the Secretary of State said that there was no evidence to support such claims. I urge him to read the excellent report produced by the citizens advice bureaux—he may then become more knowledgable about the real practices of employers, instead of relying on some rather dubious claims.

9.15 pm

Although this is a clause stand part debate, it is important to consider the interrelationship between sick pay and the changes that will be made to disability benefits, especially the proposed introduction of the incapacity benefit. In determining incapacity benefit, a far more draconian set of considerations, questionnaires and assessments will be used than was the case for invalidity benefit.

The number of people who may be entitled to incapacity benefit will be limited and, at the same time, employers will examine sickness and health records more carefully before taking on employees. At a time of very high unemployment, it is clear that employers have that choice, and that is the way in which they will proceed.

Let us consider a recent survey of employers' attitudes undertaken by Sussex university. It covered 1,000 organisations and showed the damaging impact of the myth that is often propagated and used by employers, that disabled people are likely to be less productive and have bad sickness records. According to the study, 10 per cent. of employers were worried about the sickness levels of disabled people, without any evidence to back their arguments, and despite all the evidence to the contrary.

In fact, 93 per cent. of people questioned in a study in Devon showed that disabled workers performed better than able-bodied workers; 43 per cent. of those questioned reported that disabled workers' attitude to work was better, and 55 per cent. rated it equally; 70 per cent. rated disabled workers' attendance as equally good, and 26 per cent. rated it higher. There are a great many myths about disabled people, and the legislation, coupled with the new provisions for the incapacity benefit, may reinforce them and make it even more difficult for disabled people to obtain work.

When the Minister replies, I hope that he will give an assurance not only that he will consider those studies and the way in which sick pay legislation is enforced but that, before introducing the new proposals on the incapacity benefit, and before rigidly drawing up the criteria on which that benefit will be paid, he will take into account the views that I have described and incorporate them into the system.

If he does not, we shall create a tranche of people who are perceived by employers to be too sick to work but not sick enough by the Government's standards to receive incapacity benefit. That could cause great distress and anxiety to thousands—if not millions—of potential workers.

The Government should not only monitor those issues but consider whether some outside body, such as the Equal Opportunities Commission, should undertake independent research. The Equal Opportunities Commission is justifiably well respected by the Government, and it may be appropriate for it, or an alternative body, to report to Parliament. We could then be satisfied that these issues are being properly addressed, and that employers are not using bad operational practices to limit the number of people with health problems who are taken on.

On Second Reading, one of the crucial issues was the changing of the words "over pensionable age" to "over the age of 65", and how that would work in practice. Women in particular are anxious to know whether they will be able to claim sick pay, which becomes a payment, and a pension, which becomes a benefit. We would welcome a Government assurance on that issue.

We have debated the way in which the Statutory Sick Pay Bill will operate in practice and how individual employees' rights can be enforced. The Minister, winding up on Second Reading, said that the Government had produced pamphlets and posters to publicise employees' rights, and ensure that they were properly identified.

According to a report issued by the National Audit Office, in January 1993, that is part of the problem with the Statutory Sick Pay Bill:

> "Employees do not always receive adequate information. They"—

the DSS—

> "need to consider what more can be done to ensure that people working for such employers are informed about their right under the scheme. There is also evidence that many payments of benefit are inaccurate . . . Inspectors have consistently found monetary errors in 25 to 30 per cent. of the Statutory Sick Pay and Statutory Maternity Pay cases examined".

While I welcome the fact that the Department is looking at that aspect of the Bill, what mechanisms and staff resources will be employed to ensure that such errors are stamped out, in addition to publicity posters?

Bad practices also need to be stamped out. Various devices are used by some employers to try to curtail the payment of statutory sick pay, such as dismissal, threats of dismissal and not allowing people proper time off for ill health. Will the Minister assure the House that the Government are taking those issues seriously, and say what action they will take effectively to police the new arrangements?

Many organisations representing disabled and sick people have contacted us to express their great concerns about the Bill. I hope that the Government will not dismiss such representations lightly, as they have in previous debates on the Bill. These are very serious issues, and we will monitor them closely during the next few months.

The House should receive an annual report on how the Bill is operating in practice, and that issue could perhaps be discussed when the regulations are introduced. Otherwise, the anxieties will not go away. We shall feel not only that small firms are right to worry about facing greater burdens at a time when they are trying to increase employment and emerge from the recession, but that they are right to fear that further costs—such as maternity pay—are just around the corner. I hope that the Minister will allay many of those fears.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I wish that a proper Standing Committee had been set up to deal with the Bill. I would certainly have volunteered to serve on it and to support my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and his excellent Front-Bench team.

Over the weekend, I spent a good deal of time in my constituency. I had a surgery in Cumnock, and another in Maybole; I visited people in Catrine; I spoke at a meeting in Troon—which, admittedly, is in another hon. Member's constituency—and at another in Ayr. Everyone was outraged by the contempt with which the Government are treating the House of Commons, Parliament and this country's democratic processes. This Bill, and the one that we shall discuss tomorrow, are important and should be dealt with properly in Committee.

Let me identify some items that should have been discussed in more detail and some of the pitfalls that may befall the Department and the Secretary of State in particular. I have nothing against the Minister of State or the Parliamentary Under-Secretary; indeed, I believe that the Minister of State is one of the longest-serving Ministers in the Government. I have seen him in so many guises that I find it difficult to remember which Department he is in.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I think that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Welsh Office would object to that allegation.

Mr. Foulkes: The Minister is not quite the father of the Government, but he is quite near it.

The Secretary of State is very much a hate figure in my constituency. I am glad that he is ultimately responsible for any action taken against the Government in this regard. The other day—I do not know whether I am out of order in saying this, Mr. Lofthouse, but I am sure that you will correct me if I am——

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Gentleman must address his remarks to clause 1 stand part.

Mr. Foulkes: I was coming to that, Mr. Lofthouse. I just wanted to say that I saw the Secretary of State wearing an Adam Smith Institute tie. When I commented that it gave away his true thinking and position in his party, the right hon. Gentleman said, "No, it does not; I am far to the right of the Adam Smith Institute." That shows the truth of what is happening.

Practical problems will arise, because the Bill has not been scrutinised properly. We have excellent civil servants, but—with the best will in the world—although all those civil servants and legal draftsmen produce Bills, Parliament is ultimately responsible for scrutinising them. We have constituency experience: people come to our surgeries and raise practical problems. We understand the difficulties and can draw attention to them in the House.

Let us suppose that an employer challenges the interpretation of part of the Bill in court. As I understand it, normally it has been the practice to refer to proceedings in Committee and to what the Minister said in response to a question from a member or the Opposition spokesman, as being the definitive interpretation of that part of the Bill. We have not gone through the Committee issue by issue, item by item, so it will be vague and difficult to understand exactly what is meant by any aspect if it is challenged in court.

Another issue that should have been explored is the change in age from 60 to 65 years. There are many potential pitfalls with which the Government have not dealt. I tabled a question the other day about the Greenock judgment in the European Court, its interpretation and whether the judgment would have any effect on that aspect. I received a vague reply from the Minister. I do not think that there is an understanding in the Department about whether there will be a practical effect. Perhaps the Minister will answer that.

9.30 pm

Another matter concerns people who work overseas. Increasingly, as we move into what we must now call the European Union, more workers travel overseas. They still work for a British employer and are still on the books in the United Kingdom. We needed to explore particular aspects of that, but we have not had an opportunity to explore them at all.

Questions were raised by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and by my hon. Friends on the Front Bench about the positive incentive to dismiss workers who are sick. That worries me. I would have enjoyed being on the Committee, especially with my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden, who, with his legal brain and penetrating mind, has the facility for getting to the essence of a particular issue.

I should have liked to explore what would happen if there was a positive incentive —as we think that there is —for employers to say, "Okay, this guy has been off sick too often. We'll dismiss him." Will it alter the ability of a dismissed worker to raise his case at the industrial tribunal? Will it increase or decrease the likelihood of his getting compensation and reinstatement? We should have had the opportunity to explore that matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley), who has just spoken from the Front Bench, raised the question of employment of disabled people in the Community. Although there is no statutory responsibility in relation to specific numbers, there is a requirement on employers to take on a certain percentage of disabled people. I agree with my hon. Friend that employers will be much more reluctant to take on disabled people and are therefore more likely to be in breach of their statutory responsibilities. That raises all sorts of issues.

Recently, half a million people with occupational pensions were literally conned into taking out private pensions. That is the sort of thing that can happen. I worry that such examples will be much more prevalent as we move forward with this kind of Bill. It is astonishing, and it comes from the doctrinaire right-wingers, but the Government are absolutely thirled to changing things. They are obsessed with change. They want to alter what has been accepted—in some cases on a bipartisan basis —for years as being the best thing in this country. As a result of those constant changes, there is greater confusion in the public and among employers. Mistakes are much more likely to be made. My hon. Friend the Member for Withington made that point extremely well. When those mistakes are made, it is the employees in particular who suffer.

For all those reasons, I am infuriated that we have not had an opportunity to discuss those points in Standing Committee. I have telegraphed my comments because I know that we have a time limit——

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): No, my hon. Friend has telescoped them.

Mr. Foulkes: Indeed. I am grateful to my hon. Friend. That shows the advantage of a good English public school education. I hope that *Hansard* will be able to sort all this out. Let us go back 60 seconds. I have telescoped my comments today because I know that some of my colleagues are eager to participate in the debate.

If we had been upstairs in Committee, I would have been able to amplify my comments more and we could have dealt with some of the problems and potential pitfalls. With regard to those potential pitfalls, I have total sympathy, concern and worry for the individual employees and employers who will suffer. If those pitfalls mean that the Secretary of State will once again face court action, I will rejoice and I am sure that most hon. Members will, too.

Mr. Flynn: Many of us have been around this course before. We had a gallop in respect of statutory sick pay in 1991. The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People was present at that debate as he is today and as he has been on many other occasions. We all feel affection for him. His lugubrious and sad aspect reminds me of a remark by an American writer about someone having the guilty look of a vulture who had stolen the wrong eyeball. The Minister of State is the soft man when compared with the hard man.

The hard man image is put on at the Nuremburg-style rallies which the Conservatives hold once a year. At those events, Secretaries of State rant insanely and make the most outrageous statements. They give silly lists and sing songs about what they are going to do and how they are going to find new victims and scapegoats every month of the year to blame for all our ills. However, all that is forgotten by the next year and something else comes along.

The Minister of State is a man of conscience and sensibility. He performs his sad task with a guilty air. However, it is probably better that the Minister of State does that than someone else. The Minister of State fulfils a function similar to that performed in Wales by the Minister of State, Welsh Office, the right hon. Member for Conwy (Sir W. Roberts). The latter Minister of State had the distinction for some time as being the only member of the Tory party in Wales representing Wales who spoke both English and Welsh.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office, has the same air of wistful sadness about him as the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People. I am sure that the Minister of State, Department of Social Security brings to his duties that same burden of guilt as he has borne since he left the job that he loved in Northern Ireland.

When we consider what happened in 1991, this is a story of deja vu and "I told you so." In 1991, my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) made it clear what was likely to happen. At the time, we were talking about only a small reduction to 80 per cent. The CBI made a submission and referred to the measure as

> "a fundamental breach of the partnership agreement between state and employers delivering a vital social security benefit."

[Mr. Flynn]

That has such an old-fashioned ring now. The Government have descended even further from the position in 1991.

Let us consider the national insurance scheme and what we have done to it. Lloyd George introduced that scheme and said that people would be given ninepence for fourpence. That was a very good bargain because the state was going to put the extra money into the scheme. It was regarded as a very civilising, advanced measure. We then had people who could think only in monetary terms and balance sheets.

In 1942, Beveridge said that the reason for introducing a national insurance scheme was that, in respect of the insurance that most of our parents had, which was industrial insurance—people came to the door and collected money—half the contributions were lost in the collection and salesmanship of the scheme. We are in precisely the same position now. The hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts), who is not always perfect in his views, in his publication called "An Age of Entitlement", has nailed the main fallacy of the Government's policy.

During the Division, I had an opportunity to talk to one of the Ministers who spoke to the Treasury Select Committee yesterday. I said that the nonsense is that the Government are telling us that the pensions that were paid in 1948—a time of great poverty, when things were very difficult—were of greater value then in real terms than they are now. They are also telling us that pensions paid out of the national insurance scheme in 40 years' time, when we will be far richer than we are now, will be less than are paid now. Their excuse is demographic change.

I do not apologise for giving the hon. Member for Havant extra publicity for his pamphlet, and my constituency will not receive the £1,000 which three Conservative Members' constituencies will receive after they took part in a publicity stunt for a commercial firm today. The hon. Gentleman's document makes it clear that the demographic change will be far less than anyone is expecting; it will last only for the time that the baby boomers are retiring, a very short period of 10 to 13 years, and then it will be over; it will be a temporary blip; and it should not skew our policies entirely in the way that the Government are saying.

I do not want to destroy the hon. Gentleman's career any more than we have done already, but I am sure that it will affect his career prospects. That man, who is known to be an acute observer of social affairs, has said that the Government have deliberately used and exaggerated demographic change to push their ideological wish in order to take money from a nationally provided insurance scheme and push it to the private sector.

Mr. Dewar: Has my hon. Friend noted the report published today by the Social Security Advisory Committee, which is the official watchdog appointed by the Government? It dealt with the related matter of the Government's theory that the whole budget of the welfare state is out of control and strongly dissented from that, suggesting that it was possible to sustain that theory only if we took the most gloomy view of the economic prospects of the country.

Mr. Flynn: That is absolutely correct. The insurance scheme is part of that. If we look at what has happened to the national insurance scheme under the Government, we will see an enormous increase from 6·5 per cent. in 1979 to 10 per cent.—a 50 per cent. increase in contributions. That is unprecedented. One need not continue that for the next 40 years; one need only continue about a third of that and one could give pensions that represent 40 per cent. of final salary. We could do that not by ruining the economy but by enriching the national insurance scheme and changing it in many ways according to the growth that is likely to take place.

In their 14 years in office, the Government have increased national insurance contributions by a far higher rate than would be necessary to maintain the population throughout the next century, with the kind of pensions——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is on to tomorrow's debate. I ask him to return to clause 1.

Mr. Flynn: A few months ago, I had the pleasure of speaking at a seminar organised by the civil service college for civil servants in Wales who suffer from severe disabilities. Many are wheelchair-bound or blind or profoundly deaf. It is a great credit to the Welsh Office that those talented people are doing productive jobs, but there are nothing like enough of them. The Welsh Office has not got anywhere near its quota, but it was an encouraging experience to meet the group.

9.45 pm

One problem is the perception of the capabilities of the disabled. We know that people with severe disabilities have a better record of attendance at work than able-bodied people. I also know that a civil servant who was severely disabled and in a wheelchair could not get into the civil servants' Box in the Chamber. That is a serious bar to their promotion. I know that disabled people find it difficult to get into Committee Rooms in the House—that is, if they have the correct passes, and so on. Those are practical difficulties which are in their way.

When the debate took place in 1991, the fears of the groups representing disabled people were made clear. It was said then, and it was denied by the Minister of State sitting before us tonight, that it would have an effect. We now know from objective evidence that the cut from 100 per cent. to 80 per cent. has had an effect. The CAB has made it clear that that is what is happening and it has given several examples of what will happen in the future.

The Minister of State has a distinguished record of helping the disabled and there is no questioning his sincerity. There is a question, however, about the results in the areas in which he is working and where achievements have been made. There is no question that the Minister of State, who is also Minister with responsibility for the disabled, is sincerely trying to help the disabled. All the cases that have been quoted—I do not want to repeat them because they were mentioned in the document from the CAB—make that point.

In the previous debate, claims were made that many companies provided alternative sick pay schemes and a report from the Institute of Fiscal Studies was brought in to support that. The report showed that the coverage was given usually for short-term sickness and that only a tiny proportion of companies would provide sick pay cover if someone was away for a longer period.

The Government, as in so many other matters, are taking away an efficient national scheme, which is cheap to run and to administer and replacing it with a highly inefficient and administratively top-heavy series of schemes that will provide poor service. We know what is going to happen. People will have an incentive to stay on in work and to risk their health when they are ill.

There are differences in the time people spend off work in different parts of the country because of sickness, and we know the reasons for that. Some hon. Members will know of people who have been crippled by their jobs, and yet have continued in them. We know of people who have been poisoned, deafened and had their lungs destroyed by their jobs. Those people take more days off sick because they are being killed slowly by the occupations that they follow. That continues into old age and into retirement, and there are differences which relate to the geography of the country.

This legislation is mean-minded, and it comes from a Government who have run out of ideas. The Government are vindictive and they are out to punish what they see as scapegoats. They want someone to blame. A person who is sick is clearly idling or malingering—that is the Government's view. They have a new scapegoat every month, be it single mothers or whoever. They have to have someone to blame and they know that the popular and tabloid culture might well go along with them. There is a quarry of popular support which the Government can use to chase the scapegoats and to give them a bad name, and that is what they are doing in this case.

The Government are turning our civilisation back. They are going beyond what the thinking was when this scheme was introduced, not long ago, in 1983. They are going way beyond what happened in 1942 when Beveridge brought out his report. The report received all-party support and those involved wanted to build a society that was more efficient, more kind and more just. This legislation is a retreat from all that.

Mr. Home Robertson: I apologise for missing the opening speeches. I was working at my desk when I saw the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on the monitor and I could not resist the debate. It is quite like old times for my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley and myself to be supporting my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar).

The Secretary of State has left the Chamber. He has no staying power. Perhaps his PPS could pass on the message that my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden has driven several Secretaries of State for Scotland to distraction, and there is every chance that the present Secretary of State for Social Security could well go the same way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newport (Mr. Flynn) referred to that famous nauseating speech by the Secretary of State for Social Security at the Conservative party conference about all the people who are clamouring to come to Britain as it is a land flowing with milk and honey and benefits. That rather squalid speech left out the Italian who came here inquiring,

> "dov'e il mafioso con la faccia di bambino?"

That meant, "Which one is the Secretary of State for Social Security?"

Perhaps I should declare an interest as an employer. I am happy to see the exclusion affecting small employers' relief. As a small employer on a farm, I may escape the strictures.

Mr. Dewar: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I should point out that he is falling into the trap laid by the Government. He is assuming that, because there is small firms relief, he will benefit. I am sure that my hon. Friend will accept that many small employers will not be all right.

The National Farmers Union has written to us explaining that the measure may hit small farmers, particularly those who pay more than the minimum agricultural wages. They are likely to be prejudiced. The NFU is strongly opposed to the changes in small firms relief.

Mr. Home Robertson: I am glad to hear that my subscription to the National Farmers Union for Scotland is not wasted. I am horrified to think that there are any farmers who do not pay more than the basic minimum agricultural wage and even more horrified that the Government are planning to scrap the agricultural wages board as that will take the bottom out of the market. I have no doubt that a number of small and medium-sized rural and urban businesses will be adversely affected by the clause.

We all know from constituency experience and dealings with businesses which run into difficulties what a risky business it can be to employ people. In the present climate, surely it is necessary to encourage firms to employ people. Yet here we are debating legislation which represents an employment tax when there should be employment incentives.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley said, this raises particular concern about the employment of some of the more vulnerable people such as disabled people and those who suffer from sickness.

If employers on the brink have to consider dismissing people who are persistently sick because they have the banks on their backs as well as the Secretary of State for Social Security, it will put extra stress on those with sickness in their families. People with all the financial commitments loaded on by the Government—interest rates, mortgage payments, hire purchase and other debts —could end up without work because their employers find it is too risky to keep them on due to repeated incidence of sickness which are clearly no fault of the individual.

The same point can be made about employing the disabled. Every cloud is supposed to have a silver lining and there may be circumstances in which employers think it advisable not to employ smokers. That would be a good thing. I say that in the presence of my hon. friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Rooney) and no doubt he will see me later. Seriously, that is a diabolical discrimination and it could do great damage to many individuals and small employers.

I am worried by not only the direct application but the principle behind the state unloading responsibility and liability for basic social policy. Employers will have to insure against the risk and meet the administrative cost of doing so. They will have to find other ways of protecting themselves from the risks that flow from clause 1. I imagine that insurance companies will require employers entering such policies to vet potential employees carefully. There will be no question of employing the disabled and that must be bad news. I am not surprised that the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People was looking at his boots just now——

Mr. Flynn: He was looking at his watch.

Mr. Home Robertson: I do not care what he was looking at. The right hon. Gentleman has a reputation for being a comparatively civilised character, yet he is acting on behalf of the absent mafioso—I mean the Secretary of State—in enacting legislation that will have a vicious effect on all employers and many employees. He has a lot of explaining to do.

Mr. Dewar: I will briefly speak on a couple of minor points, because I know that the Minister is anxious to address the Committee in the next minute or two. It may help if I add to the short list of points that the Minister might answer. I will not delay the Committeee long.

I am delighted that the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security is back with us. I learned today not to produce a metaphor in a speech, because the hon. Gentleman seized on it like a terrier seizing a bone and chased it around the Chamber in a fierce manner for a considerable time. I thought that he was transported back to the days when he was a prodigy at Conservative party conferences, but I know that he wants to forget them.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newport (Mr. Flynn) on his metaphors. We use them carelessly sometimes, but vultures and scapegoats go together. If a scapegoat is tethered it is extremely likely that vultures will gather round. That possibly explains why the right hon. Gentleman perches in the Department for Social Security as elegantly, persistently and patiently as he does. Clearly the scapegoats are taking a long time to die. We should be grateful.

It is clear that the essence of the Government's case has nothing to do with the £1,000 million a week that they must borrow to balance the books, or with getting to grips once and for all with public sector borrowing requirement problems. If there is a case, it is a flimsy one—and relies on the rather cynical view that there cannot be good management without direct financial incentives.

I do not share that view. In saying that, I am not lining up with inefficient management and asking for its continuation in the heart of British industry. The opposite is true. I have much sympathy—and it is not often that this will be said—with the speech of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring), to the extent that he produced a substantial list of remarkable British industry success stories, particularly from the motor industry, and pointed to radical and dramatic changes in the atmosphere in those firms which reflects a sharp and welcome decline in absenteeism because of ill health and other causes.

I absolutely accept that that is something that we want and that it is something that British management should be tackling. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) argued that good management is tackling that and succeeding, but they are doing so without the so-called advantages of clause 1 being on the statute book.

Therefore, I understand the Government's argument, but my understanding it does not mean that I accept it. I genuinely do not think that the case has been made out for the massive reorganisation and restructuring of the system, or for the massive transfer out of the public sector into the private sector. Without it British management will never get off the proverbial backside—and I use that as a figure of speech.

It being Ten o'clock, THE FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report Progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report progress.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business),

That, at this day's sitting, the Motion relating to Social Security (Contributions) Bill *[Ways and Means]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

The House divided: Ayes 302, Noes 261.

Division No. 44] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter

Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James

Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry

Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark

Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Michael Brown.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald

Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*

Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Statutory Sick Pay Bill

Again considered in Committee.

Question again proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

10.15 pm

Mr. Dewar: Before the interruption I was making one or two short points, and I do not intend to prolong them, but perhaps it is worth reminding those who were here then that I was praising the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds for the quality of his argument, but disagreeing with his conclusions. There is still time to put the matter right before we vote on clause stand part, but my brief message to Ministers is that no substantial case has yet been made to persuade us that the Bill should be supported or given a fair wind.

I shall briefly mention a couple of other specific matters. Regulations under the clause will be introduced at some point, and it is easy to miss the introduction of regulations in the House. As the Committee will know, to some extent we are in the hands of the Government. If I remember rightly, the regulations will be made under the negative resolution procedure, so we shall have to pray against them. In such cases we are not even guaranteed a debate —I am delighted to see that the Leader of the House is again loyally in his place to listen to the debate.

I am sure that the Minister of State will give us an assurance that he will use his good offices, although I realise that the matter is not entirely in his gift, to try to ensure that if there are prayers against any such orders—I promise him that there will be—there will be a debate, preferably on the Floor of the House.

It is not a partisan argument to say that we are being offered a package deal, and that the offset arrangements will be crucial. We have a breathing space between now and the introduction of the regulations, during which we can pursue the arguments not only with Ministers but with many of the interest groups involved. I suspect that the citizens advice bureaux and several of the welfare organisations will want to enter the lists.

I admit that we have all been doing a textual job on the nuances of what the CBI said, and what lay behind the typescript, but I am not always greatly enthused when someone says that their support for me amounts to a decision not to oppose me. That is probably a significant cooling, compared with the CBI's normal approach.

If there is a debate on the regulations, and it is held on the Floor of the House, no doubt the organisations themselves will have time to consult their members. I may regret my request; those organisations may even offer the Government warmer support, but at least the situation will have been clarified. Not only will we be able to measure their attitude to the Bill, but they may give us more clarification about the caveats, and about the reassurances that they want. It is not worth while for me to press the Minister too far, because I suspect that he is a prisoner of convention. He is a man of discretion, and I doubt whether he will kick over the traces.

As I said earlier, what worries the organisations is the thought that the Secretary of State, or the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, may have his way, and the big transfer will continue.

The Statutory Sick Pay Act 1991 got off to a standing start, we have suddenly seen the pace quicken with this Bill and we shall suddenly go down the road with the brakes off and the whole thing will be out of control. We need more clarification and more expert opinion in that area, as well on the subject of national insurance contributions.

Will the Minister say when the regulations are likely to appear? Presumably it will be well before April. After all, we are told that it is absolutely essential that we get the Bill through in the draconian fashion that has been chosen, because April approacheth and all sorts of preparations must be made. Presumably the same argument applies to the adjustments to employers' contributions and, therefore, I presume, we may begin anxiously looking for those regulations shortly after the turn of the year in January.

I know that the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) was trying to be helpful by saying that the fears that I was suggesting—not endorsing—may arise over the change in the point at which entitlement of statutory sick pay ends and that my fears over the translation from retirement age to 65 were not well grounded. I am happy to accept his word and I hope that it is true. When the Minister replies, perhaps he will say something about the cost of that change.

In the financial memorandum, if I remember correctly, the cost to employers of that change in retirement age is estimated at about £10 million. That strikes me as a small sum, but it may reflect the fact that we expect fewer women between the age of 60 and 65 to be drawing retirement pension and statutory sick pay. That estimate lasts until 2020. One of the most extraordinary changes that we have seen in the labour market and in social practice has been the way in which women have become economically active. It is a welcome development. About 45 or 46 per cent. of the work force are women and in a number of areas—my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) will be interested to know that Lothian is one of them—such as the Borders, which is good Liberal territory at the moment, the majority of the work force are women.

I expect that revolution to continue. If £10 million is the current estimate, is there any projection of that figure into the next century towards 2020? How will that affect the rather proud claim of the Minister that the offset makes the package better than neutral? I am not sure that that claim will hold, as I made clear at the beginning. Over the next 27 years, because of inflation, or because of the social change, there may be a real escalation in that figure. It may not be of interest to the Committee, but it is to me.

The Minister should also clear up the vexed question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), who has temporarily left the Committee and who talked as a small employer in the field of agriculture. Perhaps "the field of agriculture" is an unfortunate turn of phrase.

There has been a lot of talk about Peking flu. The Secretary of State cracked a little joke, picking up the Foreign Secretary's admonishment of those precious enough to try to pronounce Beijing in a Chinese accent. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) has travelled there on many occasions and knows the correct pronunciation. Like the Secretary of State, I will settle for Peking.

If an employer has a very small work force who are struck down by Peking flu or some other disaster, it can have substantial financial consequences in terms of statutory sick pay. It is a little like the old argument, with which Ministers will be familiar, about the effect on small firms of responsibility for maternity leave when a key employee cannot be replaced from the existing work force.

The Committee would appreciate a word or two about the stresses and strains on small firms, given the fact that about 75 to 80 per cent. of statutory sick pay relates to loss of work in the initial four-week period and must, therefore, be met entirely by the small firms. As the Committee will know, at present it is a six-week period and firms pay 20 per cent., if I remember rightly. It is now to be four weeks, but it is surprising how little difference in lost time the extension of four to six weeks makes. The vast majority of cases will still fall within that period and will have to be met entirely by the small firms. Before we move on, the Minister should make an effort to reassure us on that point.

I cannot resist saying that the Peking flu has been dramatically if rather quaintly illustrated in the life of the House of Commons in the past week or two to the hon. Members who have examined the beautifully printed letter from the manufacturer of the House of Commons mints, explaining that more than one third of its work force has been struck by the Peking flu. The supply of mints—not that to hon. Members but to those who are the ultimate recipients of the mint road that leads back to most of our constituencies—will therefore be badly affected. That struck me as a rather homely metaphor for the type of problem that can hit an aristocratic, but, I suspect, comparatively small firm with whose products at least we are all tremendously familiar. The Minister should deal with such matters because they warrant his attention.

I conclude, because I believe that one or two hon. Members wish to speak. I assure you, Mr. Lofthouse, that I shall not intervene again in the clause stand part debate. My closing point is that I do not feel especially partisan in arguing the case as I have done.

There are occasions when I have the impression that I am on the front line in a trench on the Somme in about 1916 and probably as likely to make progress. On this occasion, however, I do not feel like that, because I know that many Conservative Members—perhaps those who are not in the Chamber now, although I know that they exist—are very worried about the principle that was established in 1990 and that they will certainly not like the way in which it has been extended.

I have already mentioned quotations from the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) and, above all, the hon. Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) who, to be fair, has a distinguished record of independence of thought on Europe, which I am sure has the complete approval of the Secretary of State for Social Security. I suspect that his thinking has in no way displeased the Secretary of State who, I hope, will consider equally favourably the worries about what happened in 1990, which were so robustly expressed by the hon. Member for Beverley. Of course, the hon. Gentleman underestimated the energy with which the Secretary of State would continue the demolition exercise on the state's responsibility for statutory sick pay.

A further quotation that happens to come to hand is that from the hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) who said:

> "The companies in my constituency are worried because the principle that the Government should reimburse companies 100 per cent. has been broken."

[Mr. Dewar]

At that time, we were reducing the reimbursement rate from 100 per cent. to 80 per cent. He explained, beyond argument, that the principle of 100 per cent. reimbursement was being broken. He said:

> "Companies pay the costs of administration and they are perfectly happy to do so"—

I am not sure about that—

> "but 100 per cent. reimbursement is necessary because the principle is that companies are not in control of sickness—they do not cause their employees' sickness."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1990; Vol. 181, c. 668.]

10.30 pm

I deliberately read out that extract because it reflects one of the important subjects of debate and dispute between us. I could have quoted the words of Conservative Members who merely condemn what the Bill stands for, but the hon. Member for Newark has expressed a view that I believe Ministers contest. The essence of the Government's case is that employers can do something about the sickness of their employees. If employers are brutal, they can get rid of their sick employees. Employers could buy flu vaccine on a massive scale, as one Minister suggested earlier. The general thrust of the argument was that vaccine manufacturers might be one of the few growth sectors in the British economy.

I accept that good employers can do something to help the problem of sickness at work. I do not accept that they need the reform to galvanise themselves into action. Even though improvement is possible, the hon. Member for Newark is right to say that many of the problems are not created by or in the control of the employer. Different health statistics in different parts of the country are largely related to economic depravation, as well as other factors. If one operates in a community that has been victimised by economic history and circumstance, it is difficult to establish the sort of savings envisaged by Ministers who advocate the clause.

For a variety of reasons, I do not believe that the onus of proof has been discharged by those on whom it lies. Unless the Minister of State can do much more, in his patient and careful way, to remove our doubts, the clause will not measure up to the standards that the House of Commons should apply when making a judgment on what should be allowed to pass on to the statute book.

Mr. Terry Rooney (Bradford, North): I have listened to the debate and read the documentation on the Bill that the Government have published, and the calculations on the cost—or in this case benefit—to industry are different from those submitted with the Statutory Sick Pay Act 1991. It was then suggested that there would be a cost to industy of £100 million. There seems to be a gap of about £300 million. Perhaps the Ministers can have a quick chat while they are sitting next to each other and find out where the difference in the calculations occurs.

It is being suggested that employers can improve their employees' absence record by better management techniques, but it is also being suggested that the reduction in the period to four weeks for 100 per cent. compensation for small employers will benefit them. The two suggestions are contradictory. In the past three years of deep recession, large employers may have tolerated higher sickness levels because they were a means of coping with a decrease in production requirements, but exactly the opposite is true of small employers.

In the food industry, where it is vital for people to have 100 per cent. good health, the incentive to small employers should be to ensure that their employees stay off work for the maximum period necessary to allow them to recover. Sick employees must not be allowed to affect the food production. Environmental health officers would have much to say about any pressure being placed on management to ensure that sick employees in the food industry return to work too quickly.

The impact of the Bill will vary according to the size of the employer and the way in which the employer operates. Large employers such as banks, with, say 100 people per branch, may be able to cope with any level of absence for a short period, whereas firms engaged in a continuous process cannot cope with anyone being off work. The Bill will have different impacts on different sections of the economy.

Let me cite one industry in what is still classed as our manufacturing sector. Some 25,000 companies in Britain are engaged in the printing industry, which is the third largest employer among those constituting our declining manufacturing base. Of those 25,000 companies, some 200 have more than 1,000 employees, and 19,500 have fewer than 10 employees. Those small firms are engaged in a continuous process—if the employees are not there, the work simply does not get done and cannot be left to somebody else. What will be the impact of the Bill for such employers? They will not only be worse off to the tune of 80 per cent. of the costs of statutory sick pay for the first four weeks; they will also incur in full the additional burden of having to take on temporary employees—usually through agencies and usually at premium rates of pay.

One of the problems that we face in dealing with the Bill in such a short time is that we cannot give full consideration and full weight to those issues. Instead, we have to rely on dubious evidence submitted to the Committee by the Secretary of State.

The only other point—*[Interruption.]* Does my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) want to say something? If so, he should get up and say it. As I was saying—*[Interruption.]* I have again been interrupted from a sedentary position, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. If the hon. Gentleman is lost for words, he should sit down.

Mr. Rooney: Sometimes one's friends are not at one's side, Mr. Morris.

The impact of clause 1 on a given sector, size or class of employer is very difficult to assess.

A further difficulty with primary social security legislation is that its real impact is felt through regulations that appear some months subsequently, and those regulations cannot be amended—only accepted or rejected. We can only speculate—time alone will tell—but it seems to me that errors in the calculations and the falseness of the philosophy behind the Bill will result in an significant cost to business. I note that the business compliance cost assessment contained in the Bill gives no indication of what the cost will be; it refers only to the savings. I think that the cost will be enormous. That will have implications for the employment prospects of people who are currently unemployed. It will also have employment consequences for those of less than perfect health. A little more time should be devoted to that issue.

Mr. Scott: I was amazed by two aspects of the debate. The first was the flood of personal affection that seemed to flow across the House in my direction. The second was much more substantial: I was astonished that the Opposition, who have complained bitterly about the time allocated for the discussion of the Bill, should have thought it necessary to take 15 minutes out to contest the suspension of the 10 o'clock rule. That seems to me to be a rum set of priorities.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) asked about regulations. We estimate that the regulations will be ready to be discussed in February. Of course I will make a commitment in that context. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House was also present while the hon. Gentleman was making that point, and my right hon. Friend and I will stay in touch with the hon. Gentleman on it.

As I listened to the debate, I found it very difficult to detect any arguments that had not already been dealt with by my colleagues on the Front Bench in previous debates, but there are two points that I want to mention briefly. The first relates to the CBI and business reaction to the proposals.

Anyone who has read the CBI's brief knows that it says:

> "The CBI does not wish to oppose the SSP Bill."

The CBI may make detailed points on behalf of its members, but it does not oppose the Bill. Given the record of Conservative and Labour Administrations, anyone in an organisation of or for people involved in business and commerce would be out of their mind to regard Labour's record as anything other than lamentable. Right up to and including the last Budget, the Government have shown their concern for business, and for small businesses in particular. We have done so most recently with our deregulation drive to lift burdens off the backs of business, and we have more than compensated employers for the costs that they will incur as a result of reductions in national insurance contributions.

Mr. Foulkes: I was one of the hon. Members who said nice things about the Minister, so I am grateful to him for giving way. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said, all the substantive points

[Mr. Foulkes]

that the CBI made were against the Bill, but, because it is a Conservative organisation, it believes that it must be loyal. The Minister of State said that the Government support small businesses and that small businesses support the Bill. He is 100 per cent. wrong, because the Federation of Small Businesses

"therefore urges Members of Parliament to reject this Bill".

Even the Minister, despite all his sweet talk and silver tongue, cannot counteract that.

Mr. Scott: What I cannot counteract is the understanding of those who represent small businesses, who, reading the proposed plans for statutory sick pay, were unaware of the generosity of the Government's proposals for national insurance contributions, which have been slanted to help small businesses.

Mr. Flynn: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Scott: No, I shall not give way.

I want to deal with one aspect of the Bill that has been mentioned a number of times and for which I feel a direct responsibility—the employment of people with disabilities. There is no evidence that employers discriminate against disabled people in their employment practices. As at least one Opposition Member acknowledged, the opposite tends to be true: employers are becoming increasingly aware of the skills and abilities that disabled people bring to their enterprises. Evidence overwhelmingly shows that disabled people take less time off because of sickness and are more committed to making a contribution to the success of businesses. The experience of the Employers Forum on Disability in encouraging employers to have positive attitudes to the employment of disabled people is spreading widely and is much to be commended.

The hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) briefly mentioned the employment of disabled civil servants. More disabled people are joining the civil service. I recognise the difficulties that this place presents to disabled civil servants. We have commissioned an audit of the Palace of Westminster and its accessibility to disabled people, and the report will be considered by the House authorities in the near future. I commend the clause to the Committee.

Mr. Bradley: I thank the Minister for his assurances about the regulations. We are glad to learn that he will keep the Opposition Front Bench informed of their progress, and that we shall have an opportunity to debate them—on the Floor of the House, I hope.

I find it extraordinary that the Minister should be so sure of the support of small businesses. He is living in the past. There is evidence that small businesses, certainly those in the north-west and Manchester, are turning more and more to Labour and its policies. The fact that the CBI merely said that it did not oppose the Bill is testimony to that. I think that this is the first time that that organisation has not shouted its full support for the Government from the chimney tops; the Government are incredibly complacent if they take any comfort from what it has said on this occasion.

10.45 pm

I am especially saddened and surprised by the Minister's complacency about the position of people with disabilities. He may well be right in saying that when disabled people are in employment, they are recognised as hard working, diligent and valuable members of the work force; indeed, I cited evidence to support that view. However, with millions of people unemployed, it is now increasingly difficult for anyone to get work. Following these measures, and future measures involving incapacity benefit, fewer people with disabilities will be able to gain employment. I hope that the Minister will think again.

According to Lorna Reith of the Disability Alliance,

"we are deeply concerned that making employers take on more of the cost of SSP will make them even more reluctant to employ disabled people. There is substantial evidence available that disabled people face discrimination in the job market. This will only add to their difficulties.

That sums up what the Opposition have been saying.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): What will happen to Remploy, which has an especially high proportion of disabled employees? Will there be special provision for that company, which will inevitably experience more incidence of sickness? [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] The company, by its very nature, has a higher proportion of disabled employees.

Mr. Bradley: That is exactly the sort of point that we should have liked to discuss in detail in Standing Committee, had we been given the time. Clearly employers such as Remploy will experience difficulties.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose*——

Dr. Spink *rose*——

Mr. Bradley I will not give way. I am trying to finish my speech.

Disability organisations throughout the country have overwhelmingly recognised the difficulties that people with disabilities will experience in trying to get into the job market. That is why the Opposition wish to divide the Committee.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I had not intended to speak, but I cannot let what has been said go unchallenged. Opposition Members are confusing sickness with disability. People with disabilities have an outstandingly good record of faithful attendance. Remploy does not have a high degree of sickness. This is outrageous: Opposition Members are impairing disabled people's chances of getting jobs.

Mr. Rooney: For several hours, Ministers have said that there is a very generous settlement for small businesses in respect of the changes proposed in the Bill. Will a Minister confirm to the Committee that small businesses are currently reimbursed 80 per cent. of the cost of statutory sick pay in the first four weeks, but in future they will receive nothing?

Question put, That the clause stand part of the Bill:

The Committee divided: Ayes 297, Noes 226.

Division No. 45] **[10.49 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul

Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. Derek Conway.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*

Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

TRANSITIONAL AND OTHER SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

Mr. Dewar: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in clause 2, page 1, line 18, leave out ", and such savings,".

The Chairman: With this, it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 2, in clause 2, page 1, line 20, leave out from "1" to end of line 22.

No. 3, in clause 2, page 1, line 23, leave out subsection (2).

Mr. Dewar: This is first amendment of the group of amendments which stands in my name and in the names of my hon. Friends.

I approach this amendment perhaps with a little nervousness. Although it is an interesting technical matter which I wish to discuss and to probe, I am aware that in the rather grand setting of the House of Commons it looks like the work of a barrack-room lawyer.

One of the disadvantages of being on the Floor of the House is that amendments which would generally fit in a Committee upstairs and which would give us a quite interesting few minutes of discussion suddenly seem just a little modest for the space and the stage which they occupy. However, I am not going to be put off. As we are here on the Floor of the House, it is our duty to try to understand what clause 2 is about. I say "try to understand" because it is a technical clause and does not raise the great issues of policy and the great sweeps of principle which clause 1 raises, although there may be the occasional point where they overlap.

The first obvious common ground is that, whatever the clause is about, it relates to regulations which presumably will be made at some future date by the Government and by the present team at the Department of Social Security. The first basic thing to establish is exactly what the regulations are. My hon. Friends, and I suspect a number of Conservative Members, will sympathise with the fact that more and more we are presented with very short Bills. These are effectively one-clause Bills, as we keep being told. However, if one looks closely at the print, one finds that they spawn generation upon generation and tribes and nations of regulations and subsidiary orders. It is extremely difficult for the House to keep track of them. On many occasions, they result in Government by diktat.

I know that some of my colleagues from Northern Ireland have been present during the debate. They have to deal with interminable orders and almost no primary legislation. They must be at a considerable disadvantage in terms of the role of scrutiny which falls to the House.

I make no apologies for saying that, when I read clauses such as clause 2, little alarm bells start ringing, my antennae start bristling and I wonder whether I am being taken for a ride by the Executive and the legislature is being bypassed. *[Interruption.]* As my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) says so eloquently, "Again."

The first and really important question I want to ask the Minister is whether he will define the regulations and the occasions to which they apply. It is not as simple as it sounds; it never is in this place. I want to get it absolutely clear in my mind.

Can I assume that the regulations to which clause 2 refers are not the offsetting regulations dealing with the reduction in employers' national insurance contributions and which are an important part of the package? That must be so per se, but it is important to lay the ground rules before we get down to the nitty gritty of the argument.

I imagine that the national insurance contribution rule changes will be in another thicket of legislation which, genealogically can be traced back to totally different primary legislation. If we tried to trace all the measures, we would be left with a legislative family tree resembling that of the Hapsburg family, with so many roots and branches that it would be almost impossible to know where one was going.

Having established, with the helpful nod of the Minister who is anxious to make progress, that we are not talking about the offsetting regulations, what regulations are we discussing? We cannot define them by exclusion; we would have to go a long way round the houses to do that. We are looking for a positive definition and explanation from the Minister.

I asked in particular about the words "and such savings". What particular savings are they? To define that, it is important to look at the words "transitional and consequential provision", which are interlinked by a comma of some significance.

The Bill refers to

"such transitional and consequential provisions, and such savings, as he considers necessary or expedient".

I am interested to know what the transitional regulations would be.

When I think of transitional regulations, I think of financial buffers that are built in when a change is so sharp that it is unreasonable to expect people to put up with the costs. I think particularly of finance or the poll tax. I shall not talk about that, but hon. Members may remember that an endless series of transitional arrangements were laid before the House as the Government tried in vain to buy peace on that contentious issue.

Perhaps more relevant to the debate, as they refer to the DSS, are the transitional arrangements for the Child Support Agency which involve a phasing arrangement in the first year. I shall not go into the detail of the financial cut off, but that is an example of transitional or phasing arrangements to protect a small group of people who have been paying money under a court order and facing an increase of more than £20 but less than £60 a week. That is a good example of the transitional arrangements that comes to mind.

Am I far off the beam? Are we talking about that kind of transitional financial buffer? If so, in what circumstances would it apply in the context of the measure that we are invited to enact in clause 1? We want to get at the essence of the word "transitional".

Similar questions arise in respect of consequential provisions. I suppose that they are consequential on the change to clause 1—there cannot be anything else from which the consequence could spring. I invite the Minister to clarify the situation. The word "consequential" has a broad definition. My first thought—the Minister will be able to say whether I am far off the track—was that "consequential" might relate to clause 1 and a continuation of the kind of variation on the rate of rebate that began with the 1992 Act.

The reason for my puzzlement is that there cannot be any further downward consequential movement because the rebate has reached nought per cent. Not even this Government could operate a negative rate of rebate, where the unfortunate employer would have to pay something as a bounty to the Department of Social Security. That would be going too far. I hope that the Minister will rule that out.

Earlier, I quoted the hon. Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) who said that it was unlikely in his view—and how right he was—that the 80 per cent. rebate would rise rather than fall. It does not seem that the consequential regulations deal with the rate of rebate or its disappearance. It is important that the Minister gives some idea of what is transitional and what is consequential, and what savings are meant by the words "and such savings" in clause 2(1).

I take that matter seriously because I know that the Minister is keen on savings. They are one of the Government's principal obsessions. I note that they are keen on making savings at the expense of others rather than at their own. In any event, I am always suspicious when the words "and such savings" cross my course.

We know that administrative costs fall on industry, and some will still fall on the Department as a result of the system. For example, small business relief will remain, and that will involve paperwork and administration of one sort or another. Will savings be made by cutting that expense by further abolitions, trimmings or restrictions of small business relief—or, worse still, by telling businesses, "We expect you to meet the cost of savings to us"? Is that a possibility under clause 2? I hope that those points are reasonably connected and logical and that the Minister will be able to help.

The second amendment in the group refers to a longer proposed excision in clause 2(1), to remove the words

"or the operation of any enactment repealed or amended by that section during any period when the repeal or amendment is not wholly in force."

I must confess that as I get older I find the words, the wonders, the subtleties and the complexities of the legal draftsmen the harder to follow. I suppose it is because I am more and more of a refugee from the law. It is many years since I opened a law book in anger—or for money, which is perhaps more relevant. I am therefore perhaps struggling somewhere behind the pace when it comes to the textual analysis of those words which I am trying to remove—or which I am suggesting might be removed, because my views on the matter are not yet definite—from that part of the Bill. I very much hope that the Minister will be able to help me.

11.15 pm

The problem is that the regulations coming into force are:

"the provisions of section 1 or the operation of any enactment repealed or amended by that section"—

that is, clause 1 of the Bill—

"during any period when the repeal or amendment is not wholly in force."

Quite a substantial point arises, in which I want to engage the Minister. I was going to say that I hope that he will try and follow me. I was not suggesting any fault on his part. It may be simply that my explanation is not as clear as I would want it to be, but I will do my best.

I am sure that the Minister has a copy of the Bill in front of him. Clause 1, which is what we are concerned with, says:

"the operation of any enactment repealed or amended".

That means that we must be referring, by definition, to section 158(1)(a) of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman said clause 1; he is reading clause 2, I think, if I may say so.

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Lady may say what she likes, but I am referring to clause 1. I am afraid that she has not followed my argument and it may be my fault. [HON. MEMBERS: "Start again."] No; I am not starting again. This is a point that I am genuinely curious about so let me try and develop it. Clause 2, to which the amendment has been tabled, refers to

"operation of any enactment repealed or amended by that section"—

that is, section 1. Therefore, when we consider what it applies to—the amendments or repeals—we have to go back to section 1 to find the candidates. That is absolutely clear. It is section 1. If the hon. Lady goes back to section 1 she will see that the list of candidates is comparatively short.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Secton 1 or clause 1?

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Gentleman, the name of whose constituency escapes me, makes a fair point.

Mr. Dickens: Littleborough and Saddleworth.

Mr. Dewar: I resist the temptation to ask where that is, but there is a danger of becoming frivolous. I want to follow the point through and I am distracting myself.

The hon. Member makes a fair point. I am of course referring to clause 1 in that context, but a minute or two ago I referred to section 1. As this is referred to in the text of the Bill, it is of course section 1, because it is written on the assumption that it will become an Act. Therefore there is a slight confusion because we are discussing this as though in a prism; it is at different levels and it is therefore easy to slip between the levels and, I quite understand, confuse the hon. Gentleman.

The list of candidates for appeal or enactment is, as I said, short. Obviously, the main and most important candidate is section 158(1)(a) of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992. The bit that I am trying to excise from clause 2 refers to the repeal or amendment of that section

"during any period when the repeal or amendment is not wholly in force."

I take it, and I may be wrong, that that cannot apply to section 158(1)(a) of the 1992 Act because clause 1 goes on to say that that section

"shall cease to have effect."

If, once the Bill is enacted, that clause ceases to have effect it clearly cannot be a candidate for something that refers to its appeal or amendment during any period when that appeal or amendment is not wholly in force.

Surely, if something ceases to have effect, to use a shorthand of politics, it dies at a stroke immediately the Act is brought into being. Therefore, it cannot be what is referred to when we are talking about a

"period when the repeal or amendment is not wholly in force."

That is an incompatibility. To put it in good lay language, "It doesn't fit."

I am perfectly prepared to listen to what the Minister has to say on the matter and he may be able to persuade me otherwise, but I deduce that section 158(1)(a) of the 1992 Act is not a candidate. It must be taken off the list as it does not meet the test, or fit into the jigsaw of the complex patterns that are wrought by the draftsmen in clause 2 of the Bill.

I want to be fair, however, and there are other—although minor—possibilities. Clause 1(2) refers to

"section 81(2) of the Social Security Administration Act 1992"

and

"paragraph 2 of Schedule 11 to the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992".

I do not think that it can mean section 81(2) of the 1992 Act because that is very narrow in its terms, if I remember rightly, and is also not likely to meet the requirement that it might be hanging around, not wholly in force, half in and half out, like a ghost in the legislative corridors. Section 81(2) does not fit that bill, as I think that hon. Members in the Committee who remember it will agree.

We may therefore be reduced to paragraph 2 of schedule 11 to the 1992 Act, which refers to

"circumstances in which entitlement to statutory sick pay does not arise"

and the switch from "over pensionable age" to "over the age of 65". In a sense, that seems to be the most plausible of the candidates, but it is a very narrow issue, which is peripheral to the main thrust of clause 1.

Although I am always open to guidance, I am in some doubt about whether the words that I have suggested that we should excise in amendment No. 2 should go on the basis that they are not really needed. If I am right in my detective story and paragraph 2 of schedule 11 is the only appeal or amendment to which the clause can refer, perhaps the Minister can tell us in what circumstances that could arise.

It is a simple concept. At some date, entitlement to statutory sick pay, which at the moment is available to women before the age of 60—assuming that they pass all the other tests and criteria such as availability for work and so forth—and for men up to the age of 65, will change. As I understand it, it is not like the phasing in of the arrangements for the retirement age under the state pension scheme. The change will be introduced immédiatement—perhaps I am being unfair to those above in the Press Gallery. It will come into force suddenly; instead of 60 and 65 we will have 65 and that will be the end of the matter.

If I am right, I again do not understand how it meets the test of a

"period when the repeal or amendment is not wholly in force."

I hope that I have not in any way confused the Committee with those few remarks, but those genuinely innocent-looking amendments repay some examination. The more we look at them, the more we come to the conclusion that there are matters at stake which should be clarified before we move on.

Obviously, I shall listen carefully to what the Minister has to say. It may be that I will want to speak again when I have heard his explanation. Some of my hon. Friends may also want to participate in the discussion. *[Interruption.]* I can assure the Leader of the House—once again I congratulate him on coming back to the Chamber—that I have every intention of properly exhausting this issue. I intend to do my job conscientiously.

Another matter that I should mention, simply for completeness and because it is involved in this group of amendments, is amendment No. 3, which deals with a suggestion that we leave out subsection (2). I suppose it should really be sub-clause (2) in view of the strictures that we heard earlier on this matter.

I do not intend to advance any complex arguments on this matter. I will perhaps do something that is very unfair; I will simply read subsection (2) to the Committee.

Mr. Newton: Three times?

Mr. Dewar: No, just once. I will then invite the Minister to explain the provision to us, because it is a peculiarly obscure offering.

Subsection (2) states: "Section 175(2) to" 175(4)—I am interpolating that to make it clearer—

"of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 (general provisions as to regulations and orders) apply in relation to the power conferred by subsection (1) above as they apply in relation to a power conferred by that Act to make regulations."

For the life of me, I am not clear what that means. Of course, that is a fault on my part. If hon. Members are ignorant and recognise that their powers of comprehension are letting them down, the best thing to do on occasions like this is to make a virtue of it.

I suspect—I may be totally wrong—that some hon. Members may be suffering from the same inability and frustrations as me. I know that the Minister, who has been well briefed by his men and women of skill and expertise, will have mastered this before he came into the debate and therefore should be able, without too much trouble, to guide us through the intricacies.

I think I know what section 175 of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 is about, although it is very general in its message. But I am not at all clear about

"subsection (1) above as they apply in relation to a power conferred by that Act to make regulations."

I am not sure how it all fits together. Even if I say it quickly, it does not sound any better.

I am asking the Minister to unravel this—I think "unravel" is the right word. Indeed, I am asking him simply to take us gently through the intricacies to make it all clear. If he can do that, he will do a considerable service to the Committee. I am happy to subside to my bench with a receptive mind and try to follow exactly where the Minister will now lead us. Perhaps from that point the discussion can proceed.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Committee is greatly indebted to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) for drawing our attention to the curious parts of clause 2. Of course, I have now made the fatal error of reading it. If we cut through the terms of subsection (1) and take out all the qualifications, it could be read as follows:

"The Secretary of State may by regulation make . . . such savings, as he considers necessary or expedient for . . . the operation of any enactment repealed or amended by that section".

Mr. Flynn: That could mean anything.

Mr. Home Robertson: I feel profoundly uncomfortable at the thought of giving the Secretary of State, who is absent from the Chamber now, powers personally to introduce regulations to enable him to make

"such savings, as he considers necessary or expendient"

for any purpose whatever.

11.30 pm

In the absence of the Secretary of State, the Minister of State has the opportunity to cut free, and demonstrate that he is the reasonable man we all know he is. My hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden was a little unfair to the Government when he suggested that section 158(1)(a) of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 and section 81(2) of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 would disappear immediately on enactment of the Bill.

My hon. Friend quoted the words

"shall cease to have effect",

and that is what the Bill says, but such things can happen by stages. Perhaps that is why the Government seek the powers under the clause—so as to make it possible to phase in the scheme. The Minister may have some scope for "lifting the burden"—if I may use the Government's terminology—from businesses. Instead of the burden of paying the higher share of statutory sick pay being transferred at a stroke, just like that, to employers, it could be phased in.

No doubt if the Secretary of State were here he would have no truck with that kind of thing. He would want to put the boot in to the employers straight away. But he is not here at this stage of the evening, and the rest of us are all right behind the Minister of State, because we know that he is a reasonable man.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): He is our candidate.

Mr. Home Robertson: My hon. Friend must control himself.

It might be possible to phase in the burden, and if that is what the provision means, it could be useful.

Mr. Scott: Rather than going into the technicalities of the draftsmen's wording of the clause, I shall attempt, as briefly and clearly as I can, to explain the purposes for which the provisions are included in the Bill. As is clear from the Bill, subsection (1) enables the Secretary of State to

"make such transitional and consequential provision, and such savings, as he considers necessary or expedient for or in connection with the coming into force"

of the substantive provisions of clause 1.

Mr. Enright: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Scott: No, I should like to get on. If the hon. Gentleman listens and there is time left when I have finished, he can come back and ask me questions.

There has been some misunderstanding about the use of the word "savings". I cannot remember whether it was

[Mr. Scott]

bells ringing or antennae prickling that the hon. Member for Garscadden described, but as soon as the Opposition see the word "savings" they think that something sinister is going on. However, "savings" in this context have nothing to do with money. The word is a technical term used in legislation; when changes are made and a new scheme or pattern is introduced, anything that one wishes to retain from the previous legislation is called a saving. That is it. There is nothing sinister about it, and it is a sensible provision to include. That is one fox down.

The provisions of subsection (1) are, I am advised, a common feature of social security legislation. The Committee knows that the main thrust of the Bill is to end the right of employers to recover 80 per cent. of the statutory sick pay paid out to their employees from remittances of national insurance contributions. However, we must provide clear guidelines for employers explaining how the change will work in practice on 6 April next year, when the new arrangements come into effect.

It is said that, when Adam and Eve were leaving the garden of Eden in somewhat difficult circumstances, Adam tried to reassure Eve by saying, "We live in an age of transition, my dear." Whether that was any comfort to Eve, I do not know. *[Interruption.]* This is a state of transition, and few of us like going through stages of transition and change unless they are manifestly beneficial.

We need to be able to tell employers what effect the change will have on the recovery arrangements in respect of those employees who are off work sick and entitled to SSP at about the time of the change. The Government's intention is to enable employers to be able to continue to recover the appropriate amount of SSP paid for days of sickness up to and including 5 April 1994, even if the employer cannot recover that amount until after that date.

Only SSP paid for days of sickness on or after 6 April will be affected by the change in the reimbursement arrangements. That is the sort of provision that industry would expect us to make for the reimbursement arrangements covering the changeover date itself. It follows exactly, and in a similar form of words, the practice adopted in April 1991 when the reimbursement rate was reduced from 100 per cent. to 80 per cent. With the agreement of employers, all SSP due for days immediately before the change was recoverable at 100 per cent. and the reduction to 80 per cent. applied only from 6 April 1991.

It is clear that the powers conferred on the Secretary of State to make regulations relate not only to clause 1(1), which abolishes the 80 per cent. reimbursement arrangements, and—the hon. Gentleman was right—the consequential amendments to section 158(1)(a) of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 but also to section 81(2) of the Social Security Administration Act 1992, which covers recovery from compensation payments, and the other provisions covering the extension of SSP entitlement to working women over the age of 60. They would all be covered in the transitional provisions. They are clear and practical and have been tested and worked well. We should reject the amendments.

The amendment to delete clause 2(2) would undermine the existing primary legislation contained in section 175(2) to (4) of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992. It deals with the arrangements under which subordinate legislation in the form of regulations, orders or schemes is exercisable by the Secretary of State. The provisions are already enshrined in primary legislation and have therefore been agreed by Parliament.

We all take it absolutely for granted—but it must be spelt out somewhere—that orders and regulations have to be exercised by a statutory instrument, to use a technical phrase. The clause that the Opposition want to omit is not new, and is no more sinister than the word "saving" to which I have already referred. It is a regular feature of social security legislation under Governments of both parties, I understand, and it enables the more mundane and non-controversial detail of legislation to be implemented by way of secondary legislation, or statutory instruments.

The amendments have nothing whatever to do with the merits of the proposed changes. We want to ensure that employers can know well in advance the nature and detail of the changes that they will be asked to administer from next April. The amendments would no nothing to assist them in that aim. Employers need clear and comprehensive instructions. Under the Bill, they will know exactly what they will have to do, and I ask the Committee to reject the amendments.

Mr. Dewar: May I first thank the Minister for his courtesy. I found what he had to say genuinely interesting. I shall not pursue the amendment to delete clause 2(2). I did not think that it was sinister; I thought it was impenetrable. I failed to understand it, but the Minister has helped me.

I shall resist the temptation to follow up the Adam and Eve joke made by the Minister of State. I shall certainly not repeat the sotto voce comment of my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) that involved fig leaves and referred to various parts of the Bill.

I have learnt a little from what the Minister said. I liked his explanation of savings. He was right—I was blinkered and was thinking entirely about finance and cash, as I am sure other hon. Members were. It must be something to do with the Thatcher years—perhaps I have become infected. It never occurred to me that there was a homely dressmaking analogy, and that, after the necessary legislation had been cut out, a few fragments would be left that could be put into the rummage bag to be used on another occasion. I believe that that was how the Minister was describing the process.

The fact that something is a common feature is not necessarily a reason for accepting it. If I was in a perverse mood—which I am not—I would try to look through the text again and square what I found there with the elegant explanation that I have been offered. I do not think that doing so would help the Committee; it might entertain me, but that would be a selfish test to apply. I believe that we should let the matter rest.

It may be that suspicious Conservative Members have assumed that we shall press the group of amendments to a Division, but in view of the explanation that we have heard, I do not think that it would be sensible to do so. I realise that it is not my decision and is a matter for the Committee. I shall go one better than advising my right hon. and hon. Friends about what to do. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Dewar: I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 1, line 29, leave out 'and' and insert 'shall'.

The Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 5, in page 2, line 1, leave out from beginning to 'be' in line 2.

No. 6, page 2, leave out lines 4 and 5.

Mr. Dewar: I am afraid that the amendment takes us back into familiar territory. There is nothing mysterious about the group of amendments. The subject matter is familiar, because it is often raised when we discuss the passage of Bills through Committee—with good reason. I am delighted that the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) has sidled into the central position on the Front Bench to deal with the issue. We definitely need fresh thinking, and I fear that the Minister of State may, over many years, have been conditioned to resisting sensible proposals.

The text of amendment No. 4 does not tell the Committee much, but it is necessary to consider the amendment to get the argument into play. The amendments take a slightly unusual form, but involve the old business of affirmative and negative resolutions. It is clear that the Bill has raised strong feelings and much interest outside the House. The textual arguments on the intentions, nuances and opinions of the various lobbying organisations have made it clear that there is a willingness to express opinions. The issues involved are considerably sensitive.

In those circumstances, it would be sensible if orders—even if about transitional matters, halfway house arrangements and the position that arises when the rule change occurs halfway through a period of an employee's sick leave—should be brought to the notice of the House; we should not wait for an hon. Member to notice them and challenge them.

I immediately concede that I believe that the regulations to which I am attempting to apply the positive and affirmative procedure do not refer to the rebate level—the rebate has gone. That is one effect of the Bill that the simplest of us, even I, have managed to grasp. Nevertheless, the amendments raise important matters, and I hope that the Minister will be prepared to view them sympathetically.

11.45 pm

I realise that there is always a balance to be struck. I am quite keen on balances. I sometimes have difficulty in seeing things in black and white. That is perhaps one of my faults. I accept that the Executive always have arguments for saying that they do not want the system to become gummed up with too many applications of the affirmative resolution procedure. Clearly, if legislation is subject to the affirmative resolution, it must come at least before a Committee, if not to the Floor of the House. If we insisted on that procedure being applied in respect of a wide sweep of legislation, we might make this place even more unworkable than it is at the moment.

I am not suggesting for a moment that there are not arguments counterbalancing what I am saying—points to be put on the other side of the argument—and in the few minutes that we have left before the guillotine descends, hon. Members may want to address that point. My own view, however, is that there is enough real meat in the arguments that we have had over the past few hours and in previous days—and, indeed, over a number of years—to justify the use of the affirmative procedure in respect of regulations that are tied, and trace their ancestry back, to this particular unfortunate Bill. In short order—because I am anxious to hear the Minister—I therefore commend the amendments to the Committee.

Mr. Hague: As the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said, we are talking about the old business of the affirmative and negative resolution procedures—in this case in connection with the transitional or consequential provisions. The hon. Gentleman has asked me to give fresh thought to the matter, and I have done so. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will find that I have reached a familiar, though balanced, conclusion.

It has been the normal practice of the Government and of previous Governments to ensure that statutory instruments that give effect to non-controversial provisions consequential on the main changes in legislation should be dealt with under the negative resolution procedure. Parliament has previously decided which statutory instruments it wishes to be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure and therefore to closer scrutiny. Those are specifically referred to in section 176 of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992.

For instance, the Government's proposals to change the present small employers' relief provisions, which will be brought before Parliament in due course, are subject to the affirmative resolution procedure. But the transitional arrangements, which give effect to non-controversial transitional and consequential provisions, are not unreasonably left to be dealt with under the negative resolution procedure.

Any statutory instruments made under clause 2(3) will, of course, be laid before Parliament, open to the tabling of a prayer and debatable in the House. But I can assure the hon. Member for Garscadden and the Committee that any statutory instruments introduced under the arrangements in the clause will not be controversial—even in his estimation; they will be aimed solely at providing sensible —*[Interruption.]* It is a shame that the hon. Member for Garscadden is not listening to my explanation, after all the questions that he asked.

Such statutory arrangements will be aimed solely at providing sensible workable arrangements so that employers can continue to recover an appropriate amount of SSP liability for days of sickness up to and including 5 April and for the other objectives listed previously.

Mr. Flynn: The Minister would assist himself and the Committee if he put away his brief and explained what he is talking about in simple language.

Mr. Hague: To those of us on the Conservative Benches, it was both simple and very clear.

The Opposition's amendment amounts to a delaying tactic, and I suppose that, as such, it has been successful. If we were acting in the balanced way in which Governments and Parliament actually do, the hon. Member for Garscadden would withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Dewar: I do not intend to withdraw the amendment, and I hope that I will have the support of my right hon. and hon. Friends. For a horrible moment, I thought that the Under-Secretary was about to say that he had taken a wise judgment on the matter—a new concept in DSS mythology; at least he avoided that.

The explanation that the hon. Gentleman produced was that Parliament had previously decided which statutory instruments should be subject to which procedure. I do not

[Mr. Dewar]

want to be one of those who talks over-zealously about the sovereignty of Parliament, but the fact that Parliament has previously decided does not stop Parliament deciding something different and, on this occasion, rather more sensible.

I accept—and as a reasonable man I made a nod towards the fact—that these are subsidiary regulations and not central to the thrust of the Bill, but they may be important to individuals. They certainly are important to the future good government of statutory sick pay. As Labour Members have repeatedly made clear, we believe that statutory sick pay has been weakened and that uncertainties have been built in by the misconceived measure that is being put on the statute book.

In those circumstances, it behoves the House to keep a measure of control over what is happening, and the best way to do so is to ensure that regulations laid under section 2, as it will become when the Bill is enacted, are brought to the attention of the House so they can be properly examined and the arguments——

It being six hours after the commencement of proceedings on the Second Reading of the Bill, THE CHAIRMAN *proceeded to put the Question already proposed from the Chair, pursuant to the Order.*

The Committee divided: Ayes 264, Noes 303.

Division No. 46] **[11.50 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin

Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John

Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

Question accordingly negatived.

The Chairman *then put forthwith the other Questions necessary for the disposal of business to be concluded at that hour.*

Motion made, and Question put, That the clause stand part of the Bill:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 306, Noes 232.

Division No. 47] **[12.03 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*

Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Andrew MacKay.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 3

CORRESPONDING PROVISION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND.
1974 c. 28

Motion made, and Question put, That the clause stand part of the Bill:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 300, Noes 220.

Division No. 48] **[12.16 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gryllis, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. Andrew Mackay.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Armstrong, Hilary

Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. John Spellar.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 4

CITATION, COMMENCEMENT, FINANCIAL PROVISION AND EXTENT

Motion made, and Question put, That the clause stand part of the Bill:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 297, Noes 208.

Division No. 49] **[12.30 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James

Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. Michael Brown.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*

Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris

Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to the Third Reading [Queen's consent signified]:—*

The House divided: Ayes 298, Noes 204.

Division No. 50] **[12.44 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*

Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*

Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman

Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga

Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Derek Conway.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*

Tipping, Paddy
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Social Security (Contributions) Bill

[Ways and Means]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Social Security (Contributions) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the following provisions—

National health service allocation

(1) In section 162(5) of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 (destination of contributions: national health service allocation), in paragraph (a) (allocation in case of primary Class 1 contributions) for the words from "the earnings" to the end substitute "to much of the earnings in respect of which those contributions were paid as exceeded the lower earnings limit but did not exceed the upper earnings limit;".—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Before I call the Minister, it may be for the convenience of hon. Members if I remind those wishing to catch my eye during the debate that they should note that the ways and means motion covers only the changed method of allocating national insurance funds to the national health service, dealt with in clause 2 of the Bill. Nothing else is relevant.

12.55 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. William Hague): As the House is aware, a ways and means resolution is needed where there is provision for payment into the Consolidated Fund of receipts that do not arise from taxation. In this case, such a resolution would provide for payments to be made out of the national insurance contributions received by the Secretary of State towards the cost of the health service, as provided by clause 2 of the Bill that will be before the House tomorrow.

The Bill is concerned primarily with an increase in national insurance contributions. The ways and means resolution does not relate to that in any way. It is required only for the minor corrective provision concerning the health service allocation out of contributions, with which we are taking the opportunity to deal in the Bill. There is no change in the policy intention and no change in existing practice. I invite the House to approve the motion.

12.59 am

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The resolution is important because it is clearly retrospective. The House has always been critical of retrospective legislation, particularly where it applies to taxation and, for the purposes of the Bill, the resolution is the equivalent of taxation.

I recall the Housing Finance (Special Provisions) Act 1975——

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): Was the hon. Gentleman a Member then?

Mr. Cryer: No, I was not.

That Act made retrospective application for Clay Cross councillors. The then Conservative Opposition spokesman said that such retrospective legislation was the slippery slope to fascism. Given the Conservative party's attitude at that time, it is relevant to inquire why the Government now seek a resolution that provides retrospective authority for expenditure of some £4·6 billion.

That is a large sum of money, yet it appears that there is doubt about the vires of the actions of Ministers in

[Mr. Cryer]

allocating money from national insurance contributions. Why, therefore, have the Government taken so long to table a resolution to clarify the position? It is quite extraordinary. This is a not inconsiderable sum.

Has a legal challenge to the Government been mounted on the basis of previous legislation? How was previous legislation so defective that it now needs the authority of the House to authorise expenditure of £4·6 billion?

Will the Minister assure me that the resolution will not impose a retrospective charge on any national insurance contributor, because people outside the House would be outraged if, after making national insurance contributions, they found that a resolution passed on 15 December made them liable to make extra payments? That is the basis of my opposition to retrospective legislation, especially on taxation.

If the resolution does not impose retrospective increases in national insurance contributions, Ministers must therefore have made payments to the national health service from existing national insurance contributions, which they have found to be at fault. This resolution is not simply a routine resolution but a resolution to get Ministers off the hook, their having made payments of doubtful legal validity.

The resolution says that it

> "shall be deemed to have had effect as from the commencement of section 1 of the Social Security Act 1989."

It seems extraordinary that, in effect, the operation of the resolution is backdated four years. There may be a straightforward, innocent explanation for the delay in these payments, about which there is a scintilla of doubt, but how wide is a scintilla? Is it a slight chance, or has an official in the Department told Ministers, "We have been making payments of £4·6 billion to the national health service without any legal authority"? Or did some phrase in an earlier piece of legislation raise that scintilla of doubt in the minds of civil servants? Perhaps they said, "We had better have belt and braces: we had better make the position absolutely clear in the latest Social Security (Contributions) Bill."

That, however, does not answer the final question: why have the Government chosen to rush the Bill through at the last minute, when for four years the legislation has contained a defect requiring this enormous payment to be authorised by a ways and means motion?

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): One of the problems with social security legislation is the way in which the Government rush into it. They have guillotined such legislation on many occasions, denying the House and the public an opportunity to scrutinise it properly. As a result, mistakes and uncertainties creep into the legislation.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We should bear in mind that the Bill to which the motion relates is due to churn its way through the legislative sausage machine tomorrow. We dealt with the money motion relating to the Statutory Sick Pay Bill the night before the Bill was debated. We are similarly disadvantaged in the present instance. The procedure has been reversed: we are dealing with a ways and means motion before discussing the Bill's content.

It is important to raise such issues on as wide a basis as possible within the terms of the motion. We have not benefited from any debate on the Bill; there has been no Second Reading debate, in which the Minister could have explained the background and procedures in detail. In rushing the Bill through, the Government are adopting a highly defective procedure, forcing the House to consider the ways and means motion in order to hear the Minister's proposals—cold and separate from the Bill itself. That was the Minister's choice, not that of the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) was right to raise the issue. It is possible that, in the ordinary course of events—if the Government had not imposed this curious procedure on the House—no question would have been raised about the motion. However, in this instance we have had no Second Reading debate and no debate in Committee of the whole House, which we had for the Statutory Sick Pay Bill.

According to the Minister, the basis of the Statutory Sick Pay Bill was the fact that many people were taking time off because of illness: he claimed that the sick pay obligation should be transferred to employers, who would chase employees and try to stop them being ill. That is a curious view of human nature. I wonder whether the payments authorised by the ways and means resolution will improve the national health service and the health of the nation—if, indeed, any fresh money is involved—to such an extent that the Statutory Sick Pay Bill will not be necessary. The Government often boast about all the money that they are spending on the NHS, but it does not seem to be having any effect.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it just possible that the hon. Gentleman—who is an excellent performer—is going a little wide of the issue?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): No. As far as I can tell, the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is fully within the rules of order.

Mr. Cryer: I am very grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I know from your ever vigilant handling of our proceedings that no hon. Member need try to usurp your excellent conduct in the Chair. Indeed, I would defend you against any of the insults implied by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow).

I do not want to go on for too long. However, my questions are serious. We have some vivid memories. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) will recall vividly the criticisms advanced against retrospective legislation, from the Conservative Benches, in respect of the Clay Cross councillors. If those criticisms were advanced honestly at the time, I wonder why the Government are moving this retrospective ways and means motion asking Parliament for authority to pay £4·6 billion since 1989. I assume that that money has already been handed over to the national health service. However, we do not know whether that has happened because the matter is not very clear and we have not had the debate that we should have had.

I hope that the Minister will respond to those serious questions. He moved the motion very briefly. He could have taken the opportunity to elaborate on some of those points and that would have pre-empted a contribution from the Opposition Benches. It would have saved parliamentary time. I am having to make up for the Minister's very short introduction and that is not something that I particularly like doing.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): My hon. Friend keeps referring to the £4·6 billion for the national health service. Is he absolutely confident that the Government will ensure that that money is spent to improve the national health service?

Mr. Cryer: If the Government do not do that, they will be in breach of this ways and means motion. This motion is the ways and means of finding the money to authorise that expenditure by the Government. Under the heading

"Financial effects of the Bill",

clause 2 refers to

"authority for payments amounting to some £4·6 billion from October 1989 to April 1994."

Part of that £4·6 billion must be paid from money that has yet to be received and the motion authorises that money until April 1994. It will be interesting to hear from the Minister precisely what future payment is involved and how much of the ways and means motion represents retrospective payment for earlier defective legislation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover made an important point. If the House tries to short-cut legislative procedures, including ways and means motions and money resolutions, it is always possible for defective legislation to be passed. In some cases, Ministers may make illegal payments if the legislation is defective.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and I agree about many things. However, I believe that there are occasions when retrospective legislation is important. My hon. Friend referred to a series of incidents in relation to the Housing Finance Act 1972. I voted for that retrospective legislation, as did my hon. Friend. I have also voted for other retrospective legislation.

Does my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South agree that the NHS badly needs this money? It would be better for us to argue that the money should be paid over because the NHS needs it and there are a thousand and one reasons for allocating it. I do not want my hon. Friend to go in too hard on the Minister. I would like to think that the money will be spent. It is important to find out where the money will go. Is it going to go on management or on nurses? Will it be used to reduce the waiting lists?

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend makes a very important point. There are two parts of authority which the ways and means motion gives. One is for the retrospective part—that is, presumably, money already spent. However, since clause 2 provides for payments up to April 1994, of course there are future payments, and that is the section that I was dealing with.

I want an assurance that the Minister will follow only the authority of the ways and means motion, which means that money has to be spent on the national health service. Of course, as a side issue—we cannot go into it in too great detail—about the actual allocation of the money, it is a block amount, and the ways and means motion does not specify the detail within the national health service. However, I take it that it is agreed that, when hon. Members vote on the motion, they will expect that the money will be spent on an care for patients and not on administrative superstructure.

Mr. Bennett: My hon. Friend should strongly refute the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that it might be perfectly all right for retrospective legislation to approve the actions of other people but not of Ministers. If we allow Ministers to act illegally and then to get retrospective legislation to make their illegality legal, we will dramatically reduce the power of the House of Commons to control Ministers.

Mr. Cryer: I share the view about retrospective legislation. There are occasions when retrospective legislation might be necessary—there is no question about that. My point about the ways and means motion and its retrospection is not of my making: it was put forward during the period of the previous Labour Government by the Conservative Opposition, when they used the phrase, not I, that retrospective legislation was the slippery slope of fascism. That was not said by a wild-eyed, goggle-eyed, right-wing Conservative Back-Bench extremist, although that is a possibility with so many candidates for such a description present: it was said by the Conservative party spokesman. It seems fair that we should judge the actions and attitudes of the Government in assessing the ways and means motion on the basis that what was right in 1974 to 1979 should be right, in their values, today.

I do not want to go on much further, but those are two important points. The point that I was making before dealing with my hon. Friends' contributions was essentially that, if Parliament does not carry out the legislative procedure with some deliberation, we will find ourselves confronted with errors. It seems as though we are confronted with such an error, which is being put right by the Bill and the ways and means motion, authorising the collection of the money and its expenditure. This is a lesson, because it is a hurried procedure. As I have said, it is topsy-turvy. We have to spend some time on the motion. My hon. Friends are seeking information from me when, really, it should have been given on Second Reading and perhaps in Committee, when we dealt with the Bill on the Floor of the House. That is why this time is being taken.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): I am listening to my hon. Friend's contribution with great interest and no little concern. I must confess that I had not intended even to be present to hear him, but I am extremely pleased that I remained.

I am very worried about the £4·6 billion, or the amount which apparently has already been paid, because I do not understand where it has come from. Am I to gather that there are billions of pounds floating and being allocated at whim by Ministers without authority? Why have we not known about that? I regard myself as a fairly assiduous and conscientious Member, and I am disturbed to find that money is apparently floating and that it has not been obvious to me that that is happening. Does that tell us something not only about procedures for the scrutiny of Bills, but about procedures for the scrutiny of Government accounts? Can my hon. Friend shed any light on that matter for me?

Mr. Cryer: I thank my hon. Friend for raising that point. She probably was not able to rush rapidly into the Chamber to hear the commencement of my speech—probably because her access was blocked by other hon. Members who were trying to get in to listen.

I mentioned the point that she raised at the beginning of my speech. If there were a defect in the legislation which requires the ways and means resolution, it is extraordinary that it has taken at least four years to be found out. I ask the Minister whether the matter was discovered by the

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potential legal challenge or whether it was simply that a civil servant discovered that there had been a defect in the drafting of the legislation from a previous Act.

This is a technical exercise, according to House of Commons research paper 93/113, to remedy a defect. The ways and means resolution is to authorise an enormous expenditure and we have not heard what proportion of that has already been paid. It authorises future expenditure, up to April next year, of a huge sum of money, £4·6 billion, without any explanation. We are going to give authority to the Minister because of the defect.

By way of comparison, if that had happened in a local authority, the Government would have been fulsome in their criticism. Ministers are in a privileged position, because if local authority councillors had been in a similar position and had discovered that payments were not completely justified legally because of a defect in a resolution that had been passed by a committee, they would have faced surcharge.

Ministers do not have that terrible penalty over their heads. If there is a defect, they simply come back to the House with a ways and means resolution and a bit of legislation to accompany it, and they are free of any encumbrance. It is worth bearing it in mind that the House produces legislation in which perfectly ordinary, decent people who are trying to do their best in the community make an error and find themselves facing bankruptcy, disbarment from office and even the seizure of their possessions.

The Minister is in exactly the same position as a councillor would be. A mistake has been made for which he is seeking rectification to authorise what had been illegal payments. I hope that the Government do not accept the position with smugness. While we disagree with their policies, we accept that they are not spending part of that money on luxury yachts to go off to the Caribbean.

Mr. Skinner: How does my hon. Friend know?

Mr. Cryer: So far as we know, they are not doing that. Let us assume charitably that they are not.

The Government should take a more charitable view of the work of local authorities, bearing in mind the fact that the House has been confronted with a ways and means resolution and retrospective provision, something which they were so critical about in the past. We should examine retrospective provision with a critical eye. I hope that the Minister provides comprehensive answers, because the House deserves nothing less.

1.23 am

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I wish to support my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and to express my disappointment that the Minister made so little effort to explain to the House why the resolution was necessary and why it took the Government so long to realise that there was a problem. Technically, of course, the Minister cannot address the House again unless we give him permission to do so. It seems discourteous of the Minister not to have given a full explanation of what went on in this case.

I suggest to the Minister that, on the whole, it has been a good policy that, when Ministers apologise and make it clear that mistakes have been made, the House has been understanding. However, when Ministers try to brush something under the carpet and get away without making a full explanation, the House has been less sympathetic and can take a lot longer to find out what is happening. I was disappointed that the Minister did not make more of an attempt to explain why the errors occurred, and why they took such a long time to come to light.

Many of my constituents are concerned about their national insurance contributions and whether the rules can be changed retrospectively. The Bill is another example of that. We are always warned to look at the fine print, but as the government can change the fine print retrospectively, what is the point of looking at it?

The Government have to set out clearly on what occasions they can justify retrospective legislation. No doubt my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) can think of occasions when retrospective legislation can be justified, but it is hard to justify when it is used because Ministers have made a mistake. Did they make the mistake when the original legislation was drafted? Have they had further advice that the payments they are making are illegal? Is it that the original legislation was not covered by an appropriate ways and means resolution? What exactly has gone wrong?

Mr. Skinner: I wish that my hon. Friend would listen carefully. I was making the point in a philosophical fashion —there are bound to be occasions when Labour Members believe in the government intervening and planning to level things out to help those at the bottom to get to the top. There are bound to be occasions when retrospective legislation is necessary to put right the wrongs of 14 years of Tory government. I am not talking about this specific Bill, I am talking in a philosophical fashion. I wish that my hon. Friend would get back on the rails.

Mr. Bennett: I thank my hon. Friend for that, but I shall not be drawn into the wrongs of the past 14 years.

It is reasonable for retrospective legislation to put right what has happened outside—in other words, to make life better for our constituents. However, it is not right to use retrospective legislation to let Ministers off the hook and make legal what they did, which was probably illegal. That dramatically reduces the accountability of Ministers to the House of Commons. If they are challenged in the House of Commons and found to have done something wrong, or if they are challenged in the courts, they can simply come back here and reverse the decision.

Mr. Skinner: I am not arguing that point. I have no doubt about what I would do with that lot, but I shall not go into that now. There are occasions when we have to use retrospective legislation for our own purposes. On this occasion, there has been a gigantic fiddle somewhere. I want my hon. Friend to expose it in the next couple of hours.

Mr. Bennett: I can understand that my hon. Friend might want me to expose it in the next couple of hours, but I certainly do intend to use the next couple of hours. I shall leave plenty of time for my hon. Friend to make his own speech.

I want the Minister to explain why it was necessary to use retrospective legislation. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and I sit on the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. We repeatedly find that Ministers have amazing powers by regulation to correct mistakes. However, the Social Security Act 1989 and the Social Security Act 1975, which were absolutely littered with statutory instrument-making powers, were not correctable by regulation.

Mr. Skinner: We are surrounded by Select Committees examining everything under the sun. I do not get involved in that sloppy consensus, but they are supposed to be looking into every nook and cranny. They go on fact-finding tours all over the world to examine how other people are doing it, yet somehow or other £4·6 billion has slipped away. It is high time that members of those Select Committees did a job of work and found out where that money is going. Does my hon. Friend agree? Will he do something about it? Is he a member of a Select Committee? Yes, he is. Can he deal with it? My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is the Chairman of a Select Committee.

Mr. Bennett: I thank my hon. Friend for that helpful intervention. Members of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments do not have the power to go tripping, as do members of other Select Committees. They have the boring task of examining a large number of regulations. In the last 12 months, the Committee has considered almost 3,000 regulations from a Government who talk about deregulation. The speed at which regulations appear is remarkable. It is odd that, in this instance, the Government did not in four years introduce a regulation to make good the legislation.

Mr. Cryer: Library background paper No. 113 makes it clear that, by a fluke, the House must consider a Ways and Means resolution, as we are, and primary legislation, because section 143(4)(a)(ii) of the Social Security Adminstration Act 1992 states that primary legislation is required where an increase in primary or secondary class 1 contributions is greater than 0·25 per cent. The House laid down the provision that requires the matter to be dealt with by primary legislation—much to the embarrassment, I suspect, of the Ministers who brought this measure before the House.

Mr. Bennett: I am puzzled by my hon. Friend's statement, because there is often a limit, by way of regulations, by which the Government can increase or decrease an amount of money. If the Government want to exceed the total set out in primary legislation, they can do so in two stages. If the Government had known what they were doing, instead of dealing with the matter in one stage by way of primary legislation and a ways and means resolution, they could have altered the amount each year since 1989—and thus remained within the limit to which my hon. Friend referred. The Government ought to explain why it was necessary to approach the matter in the way that they did.

My constituents are most concerned that the Government do not appear to know what they are doing or to be accountable to Parliament—and that when it appears to suit the Government, they simply change the rules.

I shall be reluctant to hear the Minister's explanation because he should have paid the House the courtesy of providing one at the beginning of this debate. As he has already spoken, another Minister should wind up.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. In these circumstances, the Minister has the right of reply. He moved a substantive motion.

Mr. Bennett: I am glad to hear that the Minister has the right of reply, and I shall listen to him with interest.

Mrs. Wise: My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) expressed concern over where the money will go, but my concern is where it is to come from. Where are the Government obtaining £4·6 billion? No explanation is given in the Bill. Can my hon. Friend shed any light on how much of that £4·6 billion has already been paid out and how much has still to be paid? If not, perhaps he will ask the Minister to do so. We cannot tell how much money has yet to be injected into the national health service as a result of the Ways and Means resolution.

Mr. Bennett: Perhaps it would be more appropriate for the Minister to answer my hon. Friend's questions. It is a pity that he did not cover such points at the beginning of the debate.

1.34 am

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I would like to have heard what the Minister had to say on the subject, because I have listened carefully to my two hon. Friends talking about this money and, quite frankly, I am staggered by that £4·6 billion. It seems as though this legislation was very fortuitous. We thought initially that the legislation was a one-off job, arising out of the unified Budget. The Government said that they had to get it done quickly because of the need to sort out the employers' payments and all the rest of it, and to make sure that everything was straight and above board.

Several times I have seen Ministers on television, saying that it is necessary to get the legislation through this week, and that they cannot wait another moment because of all the intricacies that follow in getting the legislation through. Then I listen to my hon. Friends the Members for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), and I find out that a massive sum of £4·6 billion seems to have been unaccounted for all that time.

We have so many people examining such things. There is a body called the Audit Commission. Does the Audit Commission follow those events? I should like to know. Earlier I mentioned Committees; they are set up to examine things. The Chairman comes on the television and says that they have discovered £200 million gone missing, and there is a big story. It is in every newspaper. They talk about a great find when they have uncovered some drugs. Yet here tonight, in the twilight hours—it is "The Twilight Zone", is it not?—suddenly we are told that £4·6 billion is unaccounted for.

I want to know, is it £4·6 billion? If the Government have not been able to identify it since 1989, how can we be sure that we are talking about 4·6 billion quid? The Minister can get up and intervene if he likes; I shall not object to him speaking as many times as he wants, provided that we can get to the bottom of the matter. I would like to know from the Minister: is it £4·6 billion? What guarantees do we have that it is not more than that?

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend must be aware that, on past occasions, with both money resolutions and ways and means resolutions, because the Government have not covered every detail of what is required they have often had to come back to the House for another money resolution or ways and means resolution. My hon. Friend's question about the current ways and means resolution is

[Mr. Cryer]

therefore very pertinent because we do not want to have to come back here late at night because the Government discover another £1 billion that is not authorised.

Mr. Skinner: It was only because I heard my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South discuss it in the first place that I realised what a total mess the Government have made of it. The Government have been involved in many scandals in the past 14 years, but I ask you—£4·6 billion, and they conveniently come and drop it across us just before Christmas. Is it not handy? I suppose that is the reason why we have got that tonight. It could all have been revealed and dealt with in the debate tomorrow.

Of course, the debate should have gone on anyway. We should not have been having this debate tomorrow. My hon. Friend and I and one or two others made a proposition some time ago in which we demanded that we carry on for several more days before Christmas. We could have examined the issue in that time. We could have had perhaps a three-hour debate or a full day's debate.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) could have been in and he could have taken account of it and then he could have set up his Select Committee. It could have examined the matter in detail and perhaps might have stopped the Government from doing this.

I think that the Government should still stop. They ought to have the decency to pull this legislation out because we do not know whether the sum is £4·6 billion; they have plucked the figure out of the air. We are told that it will go on until 1994. Which element is the part from 1989 until today and how much continues after that? As far as I know, the Minister never explained all that, so we are in the dark about that sum of money, some of which is retrospective. I have a point, and if the Minister gets up to speak again, it could be the end of the debate.

Mr. Cryer: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Peter Atkinson (Hexham): Sit down.

Mr. Skinner: I am prepared to, provided that I will get the chance to speak again.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend not agree that, first, the Minister only took a minute to introduce this ways and means resolution and, secondly, when Members on the Government Benches shout out that they want the debate to finish, it is because they do not want debate? They are the people who make proud boasts about controlling public expenditure, yet they do not want a debate. The Government have produced this back-to-front system, wherby we have to deal with the money resolution before the debate on the Bill, when they could have explained everything. Yet Government Back Benchers want to cut out debate entirely.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend knows only too well that the Minister only took one minute and those Back Benchers seem to dismiss £4·6 billion because, after 14 years, the Government are full of arrogance and contempt, not just for people like us, but for the British people. They have been in power that long, they think that they can get away with anything. A gang behind them thinks that all they have to do is back the Minister and that is the end of it. It is a pity that no Members of Parliament from the Tory Benches have the guts to understand—£4·6 billion has been plucked out of the sky. What could we do with that? Where should it have been spent? That is what I would like to know.

Mr. Cryer: On the health service.

Mr. Skinner: Yes. It might have saved all those hospitals from being closed. I saw it announced today on the television that the Government are shutting Bart's. I wonder whether they were taking that into account when Golden Virginia was talking about shutting Bart's and all those other hospitals. I wonder whether she asked, "What about this £4·6 billion?"

As far as we know, money has been available. The Government cannot tell us; they do not even know whether £4·6 billion is the correct figure and they have not told us how much will stretch over into 1994. The whole business is a can of worms—it stinks to high heaven.

I am fed up with Ministers saying that the Labour party wants to spend money right, left and centre. They are spending money and they do not even know it. They sacked the Chancellor of the Exchequer because he lost £10 billion in an afternoon, and he was nowhere near a betting shop. Some of the Tories cheered because the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer had got the sack for losing £10 billion in an afternoon. No one held him up with a gun, did they? It just went. Some of the same Ministers are glorying in the fact that the ex-Chancellor now has to look after the safe at Rothschilds. I would not have him handling the safe if I were Rothschilds—not after losing £10 billion —*[Laughter.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I realise that the hon. Member has taken wing, so to speak, but I remind him of the narrow nature of the ways and means motion before us.

Mr. Skinner: I was just making an analogy. There has been a constant discussion on both sides of the House about the loss of £10 billion in an afternoon, after the demise of the exchange rate mechanism, which some of us had been trying to persuade the Government to withdraw from long before. Now we find, late at night, that £4·6 billion has suddenly been plucked out of the thin air before a debate takes place tomorrow, and no one seems to know how it has come about.

It is retrospective legislation. My hon. Friends the Members for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood), who has just come in, and for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) know all about retrospective legislation, because they have been involved in trade unions which have been hammered by such legislation.

It is a scandal that the Government are carrying on in this cavalier fashion with other people's money. There are people in this country who do not have two ha'pennies to rub together. People are lying on the streets. Yet the Government come along and tell them that there is £4·6 billion—if it is £4·6 billion. Who knows—it could be £8·6 billion. It is high time the Government were held to account.

The sad thing is that Tory Members are attacking Labour authorities because they spent an extra couple of bob. The Government introduced the rate support grant, or the equivalent of it, the other week. They told local authorities that they would be capped if they did not stick to the levels set, and they said it again yesterday at the Welsh local government review. It is always the same. Yet the Government can lose money hand over fist.

I should like to know what will happen to the £4·6 billion when it gets to the health service. Who will get the money? Will it be given to the management? We hear all these stories about the increase in the number of managers in the national health service. I should like to know precisely where the money will go. I do not want the Minister to tell me that he cannot explain it because he is not in the Department of Health. I am fed up with Ministers saying that they do not know the details.

The other day, I was flabbergasted when I heard Lady Thatcher speaking on television. She had the gall to tell us that she did not understand things in detail because she dealt with only the big issues. This is the same woman who followed the Belgrano in the Falklands war. She watched it every inch——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must stick to the point.

Mr. Skinner: I am sticking to the point. I am saying that the Government have plucked £4·6 billion out of thin air—they cannot explain it—and a former Prime Minister now has the gall to tell us that she did not follow things in detail. After a year-long miners' strike, who does she think she is kidding?

Mrs. Wise: My hon. Friend is asking where the £4·6 billion will go. I understand that some of the money has already gone, so we should be asking where it went. Will my hon. Friend ask the Minister—if my hon. Friend cannot supply an answer—about not only where the £4·6 billion or the amount that has already gone came from, but what it was spent on if it was taken without authority for the purpose described in the motion? Presumably, when the Government raised the money from national insurance contributions it should have been earmarked for some purpose. If some of it was taken without authority for the NHS, what went short which otherwise would have received money raised from people's contributions?

Mr. Skinner: Where has the money gone? Let us assume that £2 billion has gone. We do not know where it went. My hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) is in a position to find out.

Tonight, the Government should pull off this ways and means resolution in so far as it affects the £4·6 billion, or they should do it tomorrow. Tomorrow, there should be a manuscript amendment in which we call for that part which is included in the Bill to be taken out and then my hon. Friend, who is on the Select Committee for Health, together with her colleagues, should set up an investigation and find out where the money went.

One thing is certain: the people in my constituency have not seen that money spent, because waiting lists in the health authority in Derbyshire have spiralled. I can tell the House where some of the money might have gone. It might have gone to line the pockets of those Tory spivs who run the health authorities up and down Britain.

That is a fair bet. We keep reading about massive wage increases for the spivs who run the health authorities, and some of them have been lining their pockets left, right and centre. When the Select Committee discusses the matter, I want my hon. Friend the Member for Preston to find out how much of the money has gone to finance the people running the health authorities, which ought in any case to be democratically controlled. That is another subject that I want to deal with; I shall come to the quangos later.

Mrs. Wise: In addition to the interesting points that my hon. Friend is making, would he care to reflect on the brass neck of Ministers who can deem things to have taken effect, although they should have been done four years ago, and to contrast that with the Government's rigidity on time limits for making benefits claims? People with excellent reasons for not having made a claim are told, "No, there is no statutory authority for any retrospective payment." Why do the Government not apply that reasoning to themselves?

Mr. Skinner: We all know that the money has not gone into the social fund. People used to have a chance to apply for some assistance, and various entitlements, and if they failed they could appeal against the decision. People have no chance to appeal now; all that has been taken away. The Government have gone on in that way for the past 14 years, but now they have to learn the lesson that they no longer have a majority of 150 or 100. They are down to 17. Who knows, the majority may be even lower in 12 months' time. There are the Ulster Unionists, who, according to——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman knows what I am going to say. What he is talking about is not relevant to the matter under discussion.

Mr. Skinner: What I am trying to say is——

Madam Deputy Speaker: I know what the hon. Gentleman is trying to say; I am telling him that he should not be saying it.

Mr. Skinner: Everybody should be aware of what is supposed to be a narrow ways and means resolution in connection with the Government's ability to carry through their legislation tomorrow. Normally that would be run of the mill. But it has been discovered that £4·6 billion, some of which is retrospective, is referred to in the Bill but not explained. You cannot tell me, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we can afford to turn a blind eye and allow what would normally be a technical resolution to slip through when my hon. Friends the Members for Preston and for Bradford, South have identified £4·6 billion that has suddenly been discovered by this tinpot Government.

Mr. Cryer: Would my hon. Friend care to comment on the blanket nature of the ways and means resolution? It simply asks for £4·6 billion. There is no account of how the money has been spent, and nothing in the Bill or in the explanatory and financial memorandum about how the balance of the money to be authorised under the resolution until next April is to be spent. In other words, the alleged guardians of the public purse have brought a generalised ways and means resolution to the House with no explanation. My hon. Friend will want to demand chapter and verse of all the expenditure covered by the £4·6 billion.

Mr. Skinner: That is what I am demanding. The heading is:

> "Financial effects of the Bill",

and we had better get back to those, because I have been called to order. We have a narrow technical ways and means resolution which could mean anything, and the explanatory and financial memorandum says:

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"Clause 2 provides authority for the future payment of some £1 billion per year to the National Health Service out of National Insurance contributions."

We are not complaining about that, because we understand that money raised in this way can be used for the national health service. However, clause 2 also authorises payments amounting to "some £4·6 billion". "Some"—that is a fancy word in respect of large sums of money. What does it mean?

I challenge all the clever accountants and auditors among Conservative Members who work for all the posh City firms: if the word "some" was used in that context in a set of accounts, would they accept them? Would they accept the phrase "some £4·6 billion"? Why do not the Government state clearly what is meant by "some"? They do not because they do not know—it is another Lamont job. We could be talking about £14·6 billion.

This is the Government who constantly tell people at general elections not to vote Labour because Labour will borrow money, but they live in never-never land. The Government are living on tick and they have the cheek to include the word "some" under the heading "Financial effects of the Bill". They should say that the sum is exactly £4·6 billion, if that is the case. It is no wonder that the Government are in a hell of a mess.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Come on.

Mr. Skinner: I challenge the hon. Gentleman to tell his constituents next door to the Isle of Dogs—on Canvey Island—that he is voting with the Government to allow "some £4·6 billion" to be spent although he does not know on what, he is not even sure whether it is £4·6 billion and the people of Canvey Island are being ripped off left, right and centre. He should explain that to them.

Dr. Spink: The people of Benfleet and Canvey Island are interested in the fact that this year 115 patients are being treated under the national health service for every 100 who were treated just four years ago.

Mr. Skinner: The people of Benfleet and Canvey Island have seen the waiting lists increase and be fiddled. They understand only too well that they are part of the 1 million casualties who cannot be treated under the NHS. I had to respond to the hon. Gentleman, Madam Deputy Speaker, because he seems to think that this is a trivial matter. I am talking about "some £4·6 billion" and I want an exact figure to be included in the Bill. The Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) used to be the former Chancellor of the Exchequer's Parliamentary Private Secretary. He is reckoned to be an expert on money, so will he tell me what "some" means in this context?

Mrs. Wise: I am disappointed in my hon. Friend because he is, uncharacteristically, being too kind to the Government. I am correct in my stricture because he has not yet commented on the fact that we are not discussing only one error. Anyone could make one error, although most of us do not make an error amounting to £4·6 billion. The Government are not only having to deem something to be effective from 1989 but having to deem something—something else, presumably—to be effective from 1992. That means that there are at least two errors.

My hon. Friend should be very severe with the Government. They are treating the matter with levity and seem to regard it as a huge joke, but they are having to correct two errors. If I had spent money that I did not have, on no matter what worthy cause, no one would be sympathetic if I told the bank or the House that I was deeming that I had it four years ago.

Mr. Skinner: I do not think that they are errors; that is where my hon. Friend and I disagree. The phrase "some £4·6 billion" has been put in deliberately so that the Government can say, as they have done in the Scott inquiry, that the provision did not really constitute legislation or even an Order in Council. They needed to be able to pull the wool over people's eyes. My hon. Friend the Member for Preston accused me of being kind to the Government—I know that she did not mean it in this context—but the Government are carrying on in a shady manner. It is all part of the Government's corrupt activity.

The financial memorandum also includes another sum. It states:

"Clause 1 will increase contributions to the National Insurance Fund by some £1·9 billion in a full year."

What are the Government coming to? What sort of shop are they running? Imagine someone going into a shop and asking, "How much is it?" and being told, "It is some £3." It is the same procedure as used for museums: people can decide whether or not to pay when they go into museums—some pay, some do not.

The Bill associated with the ways and means resolution——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We are dealing with clause 2 only.

Mr. Skinner: I am talking on clause 2: I just mentioned the sum of £1·9 billion because it is another deliberate error designed to make the matter vague.

Let us forget about clause 1 for a minute. In fact, according to Madam Deputy Speaker, we must forget it for ever.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Today.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, clause 1 can be debated tomorrow, which is, in fact, today. Parliament has a cock-eyed system—it is tomorrow now, but the debate is taking place today.

Clause 2 mentions "some £4·6 billion", but only a few days ago, the Government made lots of mistakes over the Northern Ireland business. What happened? The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said that he was conscientious and so went to the Prime Minister and said, "I am awfully sorry. I offer my resignation because of the Government errors, whether or not they are deliberate."

The Ministers should do the same over the Social Security (Contributions) Bill. Why have they not got the guts to go to the Prime Minister and say, "Here we are—we have made another series of mistakes. We are not sure on the amount of money, we do not know what it is for, where it has come from and where it has been spent." Ministers should have the guts to resign instead of coming to the Chamber and laughing like Cheshire cats as though it does not matter. There are people outside lying on the stones who have not got a roof over their heads, while the Government try to say that they cannot account for the £4·6 billion.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is right to call for the Ministers' resignation. Will he bear in mind that the retrospective provision under the ways and means resolution goes back to 1989? The current Chancellor of the Exchequer has wreaked a wrecking path through several Departments, one of which was the Department of Health, and he may be responsible for the error. Will my hon Friend enlarge on that subject, because it worries a number of people, both inside and outside the House, to think that a man who may have been responsible for a serious error and the illegal payment of perhaps £3 billion or £4 billion is now in charge of the nation's finances?

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has told only half the story. He is right about the then Secretary of State for Health—the blue suede shoes man. In fact, his shoes are not blue—except when he has spilled ale on them. The other half of the story is that the current Prime Minister was in the Exchequer at about that time. He came from the belly of the banking establishment. He could not do a bus conductor's job, but finished up with Standard Chartered bank. It was a gigantic leap, as we all understand. Most Tory Members come from the belly of the banking establishment. Then they find out that £4·6 billion has gone missing——

Mr. Cryer: Some £4·6 billion.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, some £4·6 billion. They find out that that sum has gone missing and they expect to pull the wool over my eyes. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South is right: in view of what has happened, they ought to pack their clogs and get off out of it.

The number of times that the Government tell us that we cannot handle money. I am fed up to the back teeth with coming in here and finding that this tin-pot Government have lost money again. And whose money is it? It is not theirs. They put taxes up left, right and centre. They do it in a different fashion, of course. "VAT is not tax," they say. "Insurance contributions such as those under discussion today are not really tax." Of course they are. Tax has gone up by the equivalent of about 7p in the pound in the past few years.

That money belongs to people out there who are slogging for a living—those of them who have a job—or who are among the 4 million who are out on the stones. Those people would like to know where the money is going. Why has not Mr. Andrew Neil of *The Sunday Times* —the Tories' friend—exposed this scandal in his paper, which reckons to discover all these things? What has happened to all the BBC documentaries? From 1974 to 1979 we had a Labour Government; I know that it is a long time ago, but I remember it.

Mr. Cryer: Me, too.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend and I remember those days. My hon. Friend remembers them particularly well because he was running the country then. I will give my hon. Friend credit: I cannot remember a single ways and means or money resolution that was incorrect during my hon. Friend's time.

Mr. Cryer: There wasn't one.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend never stood up on a money or ways and means resolution in all that year and a half.

Mr. Cryer: I assure my hon. Friend that the last Labour Government never lost £46, let alone £4·6 billion. We never had to put a motion such as this before the House in order to make up for illegal expenditure.

Mr. Skinner: Now my hon. Friend tells me that he was not there in 1976; he must have joined a bit later, at the time of the Lib-Lab pact. They were dark days indeed.

Mr. Cryer: I ought to correct my hon. Friend in case his irony is lost in the record of our proceedings, which may show that I joined at some time during the Lib-Lab pact. I assure my hon. Friend that I joined before that, in order to revive small industries and co-operatives, which enjoyed an unprecedented period of prosperity and happiness during my two years.

Mr. Skinner: Let me make a quick comment in answer to my hon. Friend. We had a manufacturing base then. Now we are down to a manufacturing base of about 4 million, yet the Government talk about GATT and how we will suddenly jump off the springboard. We do not have a springboard to jump off—I will finish with that point, Madam Deputy Speaker.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South talked about ways and means resolutions then; and he talked about the fact that we never lost £4·6 billion—or, at least, the Government did not; I did not lose any. It is true that the IMF came in. Is it not odd that we hear all the talk about the IMF in 1976 and 1977, given that, although that should never have happened, it pales into insignificance compared with the £4·6 billion, and the £10 billion that the last Chancellor of the Exchequer lost in one afternoon? I took a principled position, along with some of my hon. Friends, on the IMF. North sea oil was round the corner. They should have told that Mr. Witteveen that they had the oil money. That is what they should have said to him. They caved in, but the money involved was peanuts compared to the £4·6 billion.

It is 2.10 am and suddenly we have discovered that the Government do not know where the £4·6 billion has come from. Is it any wonder that the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People has to apologise about that backlog of disability claims every time he answers parliamentary questions? It is all part of the Government's approach to affairs.

The Government are riddled with the idea that they need not care about ordinary people as long as they can sluther legislation through. We are coming to reckoning day, so Ministers had better be looking around for directorships in privatised industries before they are all swallowed up. When they are in opposition, they will need them. We will pass a Bill if I get my manifesto accepted—one Member of Parliament, one job. That will be one of the things that we shall do straight away.

I have got to get back to "some £4·6 billion". Where will that money go? We shall pick up the papers in a week or two and read that the Department of Health is having new carpets fitted at Richmond house, which as just been decorated again. The Government will spend money like water, and perhaps we have alerted them to the need to stop it. Perhaps tonight's debate has put the mockers on it. I do not think that the Minister will understand that.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend has raised a nagging doubt in my mind about the resolution. He may well be right. Bradford hospital trust, which was established by the

[Mr. Cryer]

Tories and is run by business men not for the national health service but as a first stage to privatisation, spent £250,000 on a new entrance hall to Bradford royal infirmary. It decided that it would create a better atmosphere. When someone who is bleeding to death is admitted to Bradford royal infirmary, he will have a better atmosphere as he passes through the doors and passes out. By authorising this resolution, we might be authorising that sort of payment, which was made a year or two ago —just as this some £4·6 billion was.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, the Government spend money on such things and if they get their way—I suppose that they will, because Conservative Members will trot through the Lobby at the appropriate moment—we know what will happen. I could think of a thousand and one things that the money could be spent on in Bolsover. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South mentioned spending money on insignificant things, but just think what we could do with this money. We should tell the Minister of the various ways in which we could help people in hospitals with that money.

Mrs. Wise: Does my hon. Friend accept that, although it may be wrong to spend money on, for instance, Richmond house and new entrance halls, funding should be devoted to some aspects of accommodation? Is he aware that, in many parts of the country, including Preston, nurses are being turned out of nurses' homes for reasons that are by no means clear? The decision fails to reflect the value of having nurses on site and available on call to deal with emergencies or disasters. Nurses in Preston were given notive to quit two weeks ago and will be leaving just after Christmas. If some of the money were made available to prevent that from happening, it would be extremely well spent.

Mr. Skinner: Of course it would.

Apparently Westminster hospital has been closed, or is in the process of being closed——

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): They have closed it.

Mr. Skinner: So they have already closed it. I saw a march on television: people were marching through the streets to try to save the Royal Marsden, which is a cancer hospital. Yet here we are, having suddenly found £4·6 billion. We are talking about posh areas of London. I wonder what people think when they find out that the Government have misplaced £4·6 billion, or perhaps even more. I wonder what my hon. Friends' constituents think: all my hon. Friends know of people who want operations. They could have had those operations if we had known about this money.

Mr. Lewis: My hon. Friend mentioned Westminster hospital, only a few hundred yards from here. It is now boarded up. Is my hon. Friend aware that the hospital that was built to replace it—and two or three others—was nearly £200 million over budget? Is it not possible, given the amount of overspending involved in the £4·6 billion, that that is part of the money that has been lost?

Mr. Skinner: That is a relatively small sum compared with £4·6 billion.

I was talking to a friend of one of my constituents today. Apparently, my constituent is in hospital. The hospital wants to get him out, because it has not enough money and beds—although he is not well enough to leave. It is trying to sort things out at the local authority end to get him out sooner rather than later; and here we are, talking about £4·6 billion that has gone missing. It is the same all over the country.

The Government should pull the business off the Order Paper, and give us a proper explanation. We should be able to deal with the measure later, after January. Why should we allow it to slip through? All the Tories can get the majority, but if they had any decency in their hearts they would not allow it to go through now; they would put it to one side, so that we could deal with it later, when we know precisely how much money there is.

Mrs. Wise: I think that one point has escaped my hon. Friend. There is an increasingly close and important interface between NHS provision for the population's health needs and community provision, which is dealt with via local government. Is my hon. Friend sure that it would not be better for the £4·6 billion—or however much of it remains to be spent—to go to local government, allowing it to remedy some of the faults in community care, rather than being spent for other purposes, however worthy?

Mr. Skinner: I have no doubt of it, but we are living in the real world. We are talking about a Government who have been fiddling community care allowances. They reckon to have spent more money on that, but we know what they were up to: they were shifting the money, so that local authorities now have to find more money than is coming in. My hon. Friend makes an idealistic point—she is idealistic about these matters; I do not expect this lot to take any notice.

Of course some of the money should go to local government. I can think of lots of ways in which we could spend it. We could improve the social fund allowances, instead of losing all the money somewhere in the ether.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend believes that the Government should pull the motion off the Order Paper and bring it back in January. I would like it to be brought back in January so that the Government can explain to us in detail where the part of the £4·6 billion which has already been spent has gone and where the balance of that money is going to be spent. Does not my hon. Friend agree that those who claim that they want to control public expenditure should tell Parliament where they have gone wrong, how much they have spent illegally and where they are going to go right in future?

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend was obviously not listening to me earlier. We all suffer from that from time to time. We make our speeches and then we switch off. However, I will reiterate the point for my hon. Friend's benefit, because he is on the right track.

We know that the figure is "some £4·6 billion". We do not know whether it is precisely £4·6 billion. I suspect that the figure is "some £4·6 billion" because the Government want to leave a little leeway. However, that little bit of leeway could be £5·6 billion. The Government should take the motion away. They should not bring it back to the House tomorrow as that would be to quick. There must be proper examination. The motion should be returned to Parliament after the Christmas recess.

We also want a breakdown of precisely what the £4·6 billion means and the information should be placed in the Library. We want to know how much has already been spent—if it has been spent. We want to know how much should be allocated for the next financial year. That information should also be placed in the Library. We want to know precisely where in the health service the money has gone; if it has gone there and where it is going in future.

We want to know what projects the money is going to be spent on. It is not good enough for the Government to simply say that it is being spent on the national health service. My Opposition colleagues and I want to know exactly where the money is being spent. How much is going to the Tory spivs who run the health authorities? There should be a register——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We are cantering around the course yet again.

Mr. Skinner: There are some hon. Members in the Chamber who have not heard this before. I can tell by their eyes and body language that they are hearing this for the first time.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Yes, but I am not hearing it for the first time.

Mr. Skinner: No, you are not and I will tell you something else. I think that you have understood everything that I have said because you have been very quick to point out that you have heard it already. That means that, unlike some of my hon. Friends, you have been listening. Do not get me wrong. That is important for a Deputy Speaker or a Speaker. I have been in the Chair. You have to listen. To sit in the Chair and listen is one of the most irksome duties.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): Especially to have to listen to someone like you.

Mr. Skinner: Or to listen to someone like the hon. Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce), who bores the pants off nearly everyone when he congratulates the Government every day. Quite frankly, I do not believe that his constituents believe all that tripe. I just wish that,m on occasion, the hon. Gentleman would intervene and have a crack at them. We might be more appreciative then.

You are right, Madam Deputy Speaker. You have been listening and she heard what I said. The new point that I was making was that a breakdown should be placed in the Library. Information about where the money has gone and where it is to be spent should be distributed to everyone. We should know how much is available for the next financial year and whether the totals are correct.

Mrs. Wise: I wonder whether my hon. Friend has given enough weight to the use of the word "deemed" in clause 2(3). I appreciate his suggestion and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South, that the ways and means motion should be temporarily removed from the Order Paper and brought back later. Does my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover agree that, at the same time as bringing back this item deeming the £4·6 billion to have been accumulated, which has apparently been spent without authority, it would be a very good idea for the Government to bring back another piece of retrospective legislation, since they are now into retrospective legislation, which would deem that they had never reduced the top rate of income tax?

Just think how much money would be available for the national health service, community care and the many other things that people are crying out for if they extended the principle of deeming. *[Interruption.]* Will my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South allow my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover to listen to my point? If they brought forward a retrospective motion deeming that they had never reduced the top rate of tax, that would greatly ease the problems for which that £4·6 billion is intended.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I suggest that the hon. Member for Bolsover does not go down that road.

Mr. Skinner: I am not going down the road that strays from the Bill!—*[Interruption.]* We have set up a proper relationship here, and I am not going to spoil the ship for an ha'p'orth of tar. I shudder when I see the word "deem"—I do not know about anybody else. Every time I see the word, I think, "Hello, money here—solicitors and money." It is a fancy solicitor's word, is it not? One can always guarantee that, where the word "deem" appears, there is a solicitor and some money behind it. I am always a bit worried about that. I think that the word has been introduced to give vagueness and generality to what the Government are trying to say.

I appreciate that we have discovered a scandal of gigantic proportions by the Government. Conservative Members laugh. They think that it is nothing. We are talking about £4·6 billion—retrospectively. People chide us when we talk about giving retrospective payments to others who are living on next to nothing. Conservative Members should tell their constituents that the Government have just discovered another £4·6 billion that they are not sure about—it might be £4·6 billion. It is time that they stopped their laughter, because it is born of arrogance and contempt not only for the House of Commons but for the British people who have had to find such sums.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): One aspect that we might not have to examine for the £4·6 billion is the social fund. I received a letter from my benefit office today, saying that, unfortunately, it is unable to give applications the same priority as it was earlier in the year and that it has therefore had to turn down one of my constituents. That shows that that section of the Department is not spending as much money as it should because it cannot meet demands that it would have granted if they had been made earlier in the year.

Mr. Skinner: I explained earlier that we know some areas where it has not been spent. At the bottom of the matter is that we have only just had a unified Budget. We had a five-day debate on the Budget and on the Queen's Speech, yet——

The Treasurer of Her Majesty's Household (Mr. Greg Knight) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Will the Serjeant at Arms please go to the Lobbies, to see if there is any reason for the delay?

The House having divided: Ayes 249, Noes 41.

Division No. 51] **[2.30 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allen
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and
Mr. Andrew MacKay.

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Beggs, Roy
Bennett, Andrew F.
Clelland, David
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davidson, Ian
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McAllion, John
McMaster, Gordon
Mudie, George
Olner, William
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Terry Lewis and
Mr. Eddie Loyden.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I sat in the Chamber for the last two and a half hours of that debate, and I listened with great interest to the contributions of my hon. Friends the Members for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), for Preston (Mrs. Wise) and for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett)——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We will deal with the main Question first.

Question put accordingly:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Hanson *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance in protecting the rights of the House. Some of us sat through the debate for two hours, waiting to hear the Minister's response to the important points raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Bolsover and for Bradford, South. The Government produced a closure motion, which did not allow the Minister to answer those points. Will I, as a Member of Parliament, hear an answer to the important points raised by my hon. Friends, which the Minister refused to answer because of the closure? Will we have an opportunity to learn where the £4·6 billion has been spent and will be spent, and where that money is to come from in future?

Madam Deputy Speaker: In my experience, the ingenuity of hon. Members in acquiring that information does not need further protection from the Chair.

The House having divided: Ayes 251, Noes 37.

Division No. 52] **[2.45 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John

Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Clelland, David
Cryer, Bob
Davidson, Ian
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McAllion, John
McMaster, Gordon
Mudie, George
Olner, William
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eddie Loyden and
Mr. Andrew Bennett.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Social Security (Contributions) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the following provisions—

National health service allocation

(1) In section 162(5) of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 (destination of contributions: national health service allocation), in paragraph (a) (allocation in case of primary Class 1 contributions) for the words from "the earnings" to the end substitute "so much of the earnings in respect of which those contributions were paid as exceeded the lower earnings limit but did not exceed the upper earnings limit;".

(2) After subsection (6) of that section insert—

> "(6A) In the case of earners paid other than weekly, the reference in paragraph (a) of subsection (5) above to the lower or upper earnings limit shall be taken as a reference to the equivalent of that limit prescribed under section 8(3) of the Contributions and Benefits Act.".

(3) The above amendments shall be deemed to have had effect as from the commencement of the 1992 Act; and corresponding amendments to section 134 of the Social Security Act 1975 shall be deemed to have had effect as from the commencement of section 1 of the Social Security Act 1989.

PETITION

Denham Aerodrome (Noise Pollution)

2.54 am

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I present a petition on behalf of the residents of Maple Cross in the district of Three Rivers just north of Denham aerodrome. This petition can be added to several others which have already been presented by hon. Members in the House who represent constituencies to the south, east and west of the aerodrome. The petitioners suffer from the noise pollution of light aircraft using Denham aerodrome, especially those undertaking circuit training and bumps.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the House to pass legislation as a matter of urgency to implement the provisions of the "Review of Aircraft Noise legislation —Announcement of Conclusions" paper dated March 1993 following the consultation paper "Control of Aircraft Noise" published in August 1991; and that such legislation should establish a range of noise control levels for designated aerodromes, especially those where circuit flying is permitted; that such legislation should include provisions whereby the polluter pays for the cost of remedying any breach of the legislation and meeting any conditions which may be imposed by the lead authority to reduce substantially the noise generated by light aircraft; and that frequency of aircraft engaged in circuits and bumps should be restricted when flying from aerodromes in the vicinity of residential areas and that they be precluded from such operations on all weekends during the months of June to September inclusive; and that the House gives the Secretary of State powers to designate such aerodromes where circuit and bumps are permitted as distinct from those where normal take-offs and landings are permitted for light aircraft travelling between one aerodrome and another.

Wherefore your petitioners will, as in duty bound, ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I beg to move, That strangers do withdraw.

Notice being taken that strangers were present, Madam Deputy Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order No. 143 (Withdrawal of strangers from House), put forthwith the Question, That strangers do withdraw:—

The House divided: Ayes 6, Noes 82.

Division No. 53] **[2.56 am**

AYES

Bennett, Andrew F.
Graham, Thomas
Heppell, John
Mudie, George
Short, Clare
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jimmy Wray and
Mr. Kevin Hughes.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Brandreth, Gyles
Butler, Peter
Chapman, Sydney
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Cryer, Bob
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davidson, Ian
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dover, Den

Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Fabricant, Michael
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Gallie, Phil
Gillan, Cheryl
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Hague, William
Hall, Mike
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Illsley, Eric
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lewis, Terry
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Loyden, Eddie
Luff, Peter
McMaster, Gordon
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Moate, Sir Roger
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Pickthall, Colin
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Trend, Michael
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

Question accordingly negatived.

PETITIONS

High Speed Rail Link

3.7 am

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I have the privilege to present to the House a petition signed by 7,722 residents of the borough of Gravesham. They are petitioning that improvements should be made to the proposed route of the high speed rail link as it passes through Kent. The petition shows the very strong feeling that injustice may be done, especially to the residents of Pepper Hill, Northfleet.

I shall paraphrase for the sake of brevity. It prays that the route that skirts the estate of Pepper Hill in a tunnel should go under the electricity substation; that the vertical alignment of the rail link should pass under the A227 Wrotham road, and that the line, as it passes through Singlewell, should be in a tunnel.

It also prays that the high speed rail link should not be designated for freight traffic, thereby avoiding the need for passing loops with their attendant impact on nearby residents. It prays that full consideration be given to the environmental concerns of the residents of the borough of Gravesham in the planning of the entire route as it passes through the borough.

I beg leave to present the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Clinical Waste Incinerator, Letchworth

3.8 am

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): I present the petition from the residents of Letchworth and the surrounding area who have formed a group to oppose a proposed clinical waste incinerator in Stotfold road, Letchworth.

Letchworth is the world's garden city and it is proposed to put a clinical waste incinerator with a 75 ft high chimney and a huge building in the green belt on the edge of the town near a school and a large housing estate. Some 19,105 of my constituents fear for their health. They are worried about the pollution that will be caused, the unsightly nature of the development, the noise and traffic, and the fact that the incinerator is to be positioned in the green belt. They have therefore requested

> "that the House of Commons should invite the Secretary of State for the Environment to call in the planning application for a Clinical Waste Incinerator . . . and deal with it personally."

They have also requested

> "the Secretary of State to take full account of the extent of public opinion against the proposal."

The petition concludes:

> "And your Petitioners as in duty bound, will ever pray".

To lie upon the Table.

St. Cross Hospital, Rugby

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

3.9 am

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I thank my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health for so generously and courteously providing me with some of his time. His gesture is much appreciated by me, as well as by my constituents. I am delighted to see that I am supported by some of my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell), who wishes to be associated with the opposition to the consultative document issued by the Warwickshire health authority as it relates to St. Cross hospital. My hon. Friend the Member for Daventry knows Rugby exceedingly well, and has done so over a considerable period. I am delighted to have his support. I know that he represents several thousand of his constituents.

We are certainly not alone, because with us also is my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan), who is sitting in his usual place. I know that, if he is fortunate enough to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, that he wishes to make a substantial and, I am certain, worthwhile contribution to our deliberations.

I wish to refer tonight to a consultation document produced by the Warwickshire health authority and the Warwickshire family health services authority that suggests that Rugby St. Cross hospital should be downgraded from a general to a local hospital. St. Cross has benefited extensively from recent health reforms. In the early 1980s, Rugby became a health authority in its own right—a measure for which I can take considerable personal credit. As a result, a new maternity unit was built, together with a new pathology laboratory, improved operating theatres and wards, a new boiler room and kitchens, and even additional facilities at Admirals Court for those who are mentally handicapped. The hospital was transformed.

Three years ago trust status was introduced and, not surprisingly, Rugby was once more in the forefront and was in the first wave. It benefited substantially with a £17 million extension in geriatric and psychiatric care. The hospital of St. Cross now provides an excellent service to my constituents and those of my hon. Friends the Members for Blaby and for Daventry. It serves a population of about 110,000 people.

I recently wrote to every GP who uses St. Cross and all, without exception, said that they oppose any reduction in the current quality and type of service. One GP said:

> "I am heavy user of the St. Cross laboratory facilities. I, like you, feel the hospital of St. Cross is essential in its current format for the wellbeing of the local community".

A second GP wrote:

> "Our business plan from the very outset included specific wording in which we expressed our support for St. Cross and our intention to continue referring unless there were overriding other considerations. We did not believe that the quality of service would be particularly increased by sending patients further afield".

Incidentally, I am delighted to see that my right hon. Friend that Leader of the House is now present for this important Adjournment debate. His presence does not surprise me, as I know that he is an assiduous listener on such occasions. I am delighted to welcome him.

A third GP writes:

> "We are a fund holding practice and we use St. Cross for 76 per cent. of our in-patient activity and 96 per cent. of our out-patient activity, so you can see that any down-grading of St. Cross would seriously affect our patients."

A fourth GP writes as follows:

> "As a fund holding practice we make considerable use of St. Cross. The practice are very happy to support in whatever way we can the campaign to ensure that St. Cross stays open."

A fifth tells me:

> "If the proposed changes go ahead at St. Cross hospital, it will result in a vastly reduced standard of medical care for the people of Rugby and surrounding areas."

I strongly support those informed medical views. The House will understand that here are doctors speaking, not simply members of the public. I do not say that in any disparaging way. I merely seek to draw the attention of the House to the views expressed by those who know best the importance of our local hospital.

I argue that the consultation exercise and the consultation document are inept. The document, which is interestingly entitled

> "Tell us what you think about future health authorities in Warwickshire",

was not sent to the Rugby NHS trust or, indeed, to Members of Parliament. I put it to the House that that was a studied act of discourtesy. The trust actually had to ask the local press for a copy of the consultative document, and I, in turn, only received my copy from the trust as a photostat. I put it to my hon. Friend the Minister that that scarcely constitutes helpful or efficient consultation by the health authority.

On receipt of the document, I immediately wrote to the chief executive of the Warwickshire health authority and to the Warwickshire FHSA. I reminded them that waiting lists at St. Cross are better than average and that the quality of health care is indeed much appreciated by patients and their families. I said that for St. Cross to be fundamentally changed in the way suggested by the Government would be an act of health service vandalism. I have not changed my declared view. The hospital would lose all emergency orthopaedics and trauma, and all emergency work in general surgery and gynaecology. The accident and emergency service would be reduced to a daytime-only minor injury service.

The document asks whether people in Warwickshire would be prepared to travel a little further. I suppose that everything hinges on how "little" is defined. In the case of my constituents, that would mean travelling to Nuneaton or Coventry or Leamington Spa—considerable distances in each case. Incidentally, the estimated additional cost to the ambulance service has been estimated by the chairman of the Rugby NHS trust as more than £500,000 annually. I will return to the question of added ambulance costs a little later in my speech.

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister will agree that there is a much more important issue than cost, and that is time. So often in health matters, speed is the essence of recovery; for my constituents, a longer journey to get to any one of three other hospitals could literally mean the difference between life and death. The document says that the length of time that people have to wait for hospital treatment might be reduced by concentrating some services in fewer locations. That is much easier said than done. It suggests that there is some spare medical capacity. If there is no spare capacity, new build will be required, which seems an inefficient way of using scarce resources.

I was interested to read in the document, under the heading, "Our Role As Purchasers":

"Our ability to influence services arises from the fact that we are a major purchaser of them."

This is the big stick. So much for patient choice or for fundholder choice. It clearly does not matter what patients or GPs want; the health authority knows best. I can see my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry nodding in agreement. He and I know this hospital and many of the GPs involved. It would clearly be most unfortunate if the health authority were to decide which services were to be provided and where. That precept undermines one of the fundamental principles that has been laid down by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Elsewhere, the document says:

"We feel"—

note the word that is used—

"that we cannot continue to buy the present level of hospital services in Rugby. The problem is that individual hospital specialties are relatively small and potentially more expensive than the same specialties provided in Coventry and Nuneaton."

I ask the House to note the word "potentially". The authority clearly does not know what costs are involved, but that did not stop it issuing a document that has caused the utmost worry and concern to my constituents and to those of my hon. Friends the Members for Daventry and for Blaby. I should like to emphasise the strength of that concern.

The health authority, I was advised only this week, has so far received more than 13,000 letters all opposing its proposals. A petition has been raised and it bears more than 90,000 signatures. In addition, public meetings have been arranged and attended by literally thousands of my frightened constituents. I organised a meeting on 5 November and 750 people attended inside the hall—its maximum capacity—and a further 500 were outside. Of those 500, 200 were still present an hour and a half later when I went out to address them, having completed the meeting inside. A march was organised and attended by more than 3,000 people. I have received well over 600 letters on this one specific issue.

I was elected Member of Parliament for Rugby in 1979, 14 years ago. I have never known such a spontaneous expression of anger and outrage as that caused by the Warwickshire health authority's document.

I referred to the concerns that were expressed by GPs. They are not alone. Warwickshire county council carried an unanimous resolution expressing

"total opposition to any reduction in the range, level and quality of general hospital services in Rugby."

Rugby borough council, at a meeting last night, approved the following:

"That this council totally opposes the implementation of all suggestions outlined for Rugby in the Warwickshire Health Authority's consultative document and furthermore requires that all services which are currently provided by the hospital of St. Cross be maintained."

I should like to quote a letter from North East Warwickshire community health council. In its letter addressed to me and dated 29 November, it says:

"My council received the Discussion Document . . . and were unanimously of the view that essentailly they would not wish to see the present pattern of purchasing of health care changed within Warwickshire."

St. Cross is close to the M1, the M6, the M45 and the A1-M1 link. I need hardly remind the House of the incidence of motorway accidents, and the need to get victims to hospital as quickly as possible. The fact that St. Cross is likely to lose its acute services, and the fact that its accident and emergency services are likely to be substantially downgraded, will not help those who lie injured on motorways, even if they live or are outside Warwickshire.

This evening, my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry handed me a letter that he had received from the Two Shires ambulance MHS trust. It is dated 6 December. I was interested to read the following:

"There are large sections of the motorway"—

the M1, that is—

"the A5 and A45 where road accidents are taken to the Rugby hospital. From an Ambulance Service point of view, it would mean that when an emergency crew is deployed to be patient in the north of the constituency, it would be committed much longer to taking the patients to either Coventry, Nuneaton or Stratford on Avon. This would mean that additional emergency crews would need to be employed at an approved cost of £150,000 which needs to be considered against the savings made by reducing the service at St. Cross."

I remind hon. Members that £150,000 is additional to the figure of £500,000 that I mentioned earlier, which was quoted to me by the chairman of the Rugby NHS trust.

So far, I have met Ministers—here again, I must acknowledge the courtesy that I have received from my hon. Friend the Minister, who has been very helpful. My hon. Friend the Minister of State has also given me advice, and has listened to my arguments: I am grateful to him for his courtesy. I have met the chairman and chief executive of Warwickshire health authority, and the chairman of the regional health authority; I have condemned the health authority's ill-considered proposals absolutely. Let me make it abundantly clear that I will oppose them in every way I can, both inside and outside the House.

3.27 am

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): I welcome the opportunity to support my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey). I also welcome the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick), who has a special interest in the issue: I believe that a friend of his was in the hospital concerned.

As the House will know, my constituency stretches from the outskirts of Leicester in the north to the Warwickshire and Northamptonshire border in the south. In the north, we have three excellent hospitals, all of them in Leicester: Leicester royal infirmary, Leicester general and the Glenfield. All three have become NHS trusts in the recent past and are now progressing extremely well. Indeed, Leicester itself is very well served by its hospitals. I have visited Leicester general and the Glenfield in the past month and was greatly impressed by all that I saw of the new trust hospitals.

The south of my constituency—parts of which are some 25 miles from Leicester—is a largely rural area. There, it is a very different story. There is an excellent local hospital in Lutterworth, but, for a general hospital dealing with accidents and emergencies, my constituents look to Rugby.

In the south-west of the constituency, many villagers and residents have Rugby telephone numbers. They shop in Rugby; they use Rugby station; and, of course, they use St. Cross hospital in Rugby. If the accident and emergency service is taken away, my constituents will have to travel not the five miles—perhaps—to Rugby, but as many as 20 miles to Leicester, Coventry or Nuneaton, which is even further. That is not acceptable, either in regard to the time

[Mr. Andrew Robathan]

factor—people should not have to rush to deal with some acute necessity in an emergency—or as a service to the local community.

If the Government's NHS reforms are to be successful, they must be perceived to be successful. The Rugby NHS trust—St. Cross hospital—was in the first wave of NHS trusts. It has been a great success and an example to the country. A parish councillor wrote to me saying:

> "I myself spent a considerable time as an inpatient last year in St. Cross hospital and I was very impressed, not only by the enthusiasm of the staff for their newly acquired trust status but also by the professional and caring attitude shown."

There is no doubt that St. Cross is a success as a hospital for the area and as a trust.

As a Leicestershire Member, I would not presume to dictate to Warwickshire health authority how it should run its affairs. My role is to speak for the needs and interests of my constituents in south-west Leicestershire. Their interests are undoubtedly best served by a first-class general hospital in Rugby.

The proposals to downgrade the hospital to local status are unwise. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will join me in asking Warwickshire health authority to reconsider the proposals and keep St. Cross as a general hospital for all the people in the area—for those in Rugby and also those in the south-west of my constituency.

3.30 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr.. Pawsey) on securing the debate in the ballot and on getting this far procedurally. I came to the House at 6 am yesterday. One of the more excitable Conservative Members used the procedure known as "I spy Strangers" and we ended up with no Adjournment debate. That was the end of my sleep. My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth was confronted by the same problem this evening, but he defeated that ploy as a result of the large number of hon. Members around the House who were waiting to hear his debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend on that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth has described the importance of the matter to him and to his constituents. My hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) also explained the importance of the hospital for his patients who use the hospital.

The purchaser, the health authority for the county of Warwickshire, has issued a discussion document in which it raises the possibility, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth said, of downgrading Rugby hospital. Let us recap briefly on a purchaser's role.

The activity of purchasers has now been entirely separated from hospital management. The job of the bodies with the budget for the health needs of the people in their areas is to purchase the health services required by the people in that area. The purchasers have to take decisions based on that. They are now powerful bodies as the have most of the purchasing budget.

Budget-holding GPs also have influence, but the main influence on health services will increasingly be the purchaser, health authority or health commission in each area, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth said. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has said, the abolition of health regions places an even greater onus on the smaller number of health authorities now that there are more mergers of health authorities.

The purchaser's duty is to balance the needs of residents in each area in terms of access and proximity to general hospitals or other health services with other matters, which will sometimes include questions of cost.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth pointed out, quoting from the discussion document which has led to the debate, that costs have increased. My hon. Friend pointed out also that it has said that the costs of the Rugby hospital, specialties being relatively small, are potentially more expensive. That is the key word, because it has obviously taken the view that there could be an element of costs involved. Those matters have to be balanced by the people who have to make such choices.

The fact that my hon. Friend has said that fund-holding GPs wish to use the hospital and do use the hospital, and of course have the same cost pressures on them, is important because they are taking decisions to use the hospital, which might be a very good sign. However, when such matters come to Ministers, that is not always the case. It is only when there is a major change of services and there are objections from the local community health council that we see such proposals and have to balance all those factors.

My hon. Friend has made a strong case for his constituents who wish to continue to use the hospital and that is an important factor which must play a central role in any discussion of the nature and location of services in an area. I congratulate him on having put the case so strongly.

As my hon. Friend said, and as I have repeated, it is a discussion document, not a statutory proposal. The health authority, in its wisdom, has decided that it should have an additional stage in the procedure. Instead of just coming up with a proposal and putting it out for statutory consultation, it has come up with a document which raises certain possibilities and it has asked people to comment. People have clearly commented—my hon Friend commented tonight. He has received a great many letters on the subject and I can confirm that we also have received an unusually large correspondence. Those matters must be taken into account.

My hon. Friend will understand, I hope, when I tell him that I cannot comment in detail on this matter because it has not come to Ministers for consideration, but I should like to make two general statements about it. First, my hon. friend, as the local Member of Parliament, has an important voice in the matter and he has used that voice to great effect tonight. Secondly, in any matter to do with intentions, health authorities—this is not just about Warwickshire, it is about others—cannot just act in isolation and come up with ideas that they have plucked out of the air; they must take people with them and that includes local Members of Parliament.

I am sorry to hear that my hon. Friend was not sent a copy of the document. That was remiss of the health authority. I have no doubt that it has taken steps to make amends. The health authority has to take local Members of Parliament and other representatives with it. I assure my hon. Friend that I am certain that the health authority will listen very hard to local voices and that what has been said in the House tonight will be an important contribution to that debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-three minutes to Four o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 16 December 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords]*

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the British Waterways Bill *[Lords]* may, notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders or practice of this House, proceed with the Bill in the present Session and the Petition for the Bill shall be deemed to have been deposited and all Standing Orders applicable thereto shall be deemed to have been complied with;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the present Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the last Session;

That as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read for the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the last Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill, together with any minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on the Bill, shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the present session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the last Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the last Session.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Late Payers

1. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on his proposals to remedy the practice of late payment to suppliers.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has received a number of letters supporting the Budget announcement of consultation on measures to promote prompt payment. Responses to the consultation paper, which should be addressed to the Department of Trade and Industry, should reach that Department by 31 March 1994.

Hon. Members: We cannot hear.

Madam Speaker: Order. I have already given instructions that the microphones should be switched on. Perhaps we can proceed as it is being taken care of.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Hon. Members on both sides of the House tell of small businesses in their constituencies whose survival has been put at risk by late payments from large companies. Will my hon. Friend investigate allegations that such practices are condoned or even encouraged by managements of certain companies? Does he agree that that is another example of the unacceptable face of capitalism which threatens the survival of small businesses, the growth of which the Government have done so much to encourage?

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend's complaint is clearly echoed in many of the representations that hon. Members on both sides of the House have received. The Government deplore big companies taking advantage of small companies by the wilful late payment of bills. Many of those small companies have to pay in cash or in advance when big companies can delay payment. That is exactly why my right hon. and learned Friend has produced the consultation paper and I hope that it will be well received.

Mr. William Ross: Surely the best way to bring the big companies to their senses is to make them pay interest on the bills that they owe? Would not it help companies of all sizes if interest rates generally were reduced?

Mr. Nelson: That is indeed one of the proposals that are being mooted in the Government's consultative paper. Clearly, there are problems with legislation, in that it interrupts the contractual arrangements between companies. My right hon. and learned Friend in putting forward the proposals, clearly believes that there is an endemic problem, which is not just a reflection of the period of high interest rates, but has become a matter of culture in business payments. It needs to be dealt with and we look forward to the response to the paper.

Fuels

2. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the effect of taxation on the consumption of carbon dioxide-producing fuels.

The Paymaster General (Sir John Cope): Taxes on energy products are one factor affecting their consumption and hence total carbon dioxide emissions.

Mr. Evans: I thank the Minister for his reply. Does he agree that we put political considerations aside when we put VAT on fuel and that we were more concerned with saving the planet? We put a generous compensation package in place—the most generous ever—which made the figure proposed by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) a weak, wet 50p. We beat that 50p. Does the Minister further agree that if we wired up that lot opposite, they would not produce enough energy to turn on the lights of Madam Speaker's Christmas tree?

Sir John Cope: As usual, my hon. Friend tells the truth with a flourish. The Labour party supports Rio and the reduction in borrowing, but it is not willing to accept the consequences.

Mr. Wigley: In the context of road fuels, has the Minister had representations from those involved in bus companies? The way in which the rebate works will considerably increase the cost of bus transport, probably to a greater extent that the Treasury has anticipated. Is he studying the matter? Can he tell the companies that the Treasury will find a way round the problem?

Sir John Cope: We always study carefully all representations that we receive. However, the cap on the bus fuel rebate will also encourage energy efficiency which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, is part of the point of the measure.

Mr. Dunn: Is not it a fact that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) complained about the way in which his proposal was treated only after the Budget was announced, when he realised that the Government were meeting the amount for which he had asked? Should not he make it plain that he did not complain before the Budget?

Sir John Cope: It came out clearly in the debates last week, following the Budget, that the hon. Member for Garscadden did not raise the matter until after the Budget statement.

Ms Harman: Will the Minister admit that 70p a week compensation for a pensioner couple will not cover the VAT on their fuel bill? Does he recognise how bitter and angry those pensioners will feel when they recognise that, in addition to the VAT, they will have to pay 70p a week on their insurance premiums, which will wipe out the effect of the VAT compensation? Is not that typical of this Conservative Government? Even when they are forced grudgingly to give a little with one hand, they take it all back—and more—with the other.

Sir John Cope: The decision on compensation will add £1·30 a week to the single pension and £1·85 a week to the married couple's pension by April 1996, when the measure is introduced in full.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if we are to meet the objectives of the convention on climate change, to which we signed up in Rio, we need to encourage more energy efficiency in the domestic sector, which my right hon. and learned Friend has done in his Budget by doubling the home energy efficiency scheme? We also need to burn hydrocarbons more efficiently in the transport sector. My right hon. and learned Friend has encouraged that by his pledge to increase the price of hydrocarbons by 5 per cent., which is a very tough target in real terms over the next few years.

Sir John Cope: All this goes towards fulfilling our Rio commitments which, as I said just now, the Labour party supports, although it will not accept the means outlined by my hon. Friend.

Public Spending

3. **Ms Abbott:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the effect of his public spending plans for growth in the economy.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Taking full account of effects of the Budget, my forecast is for GDP growth of 2·5 per cent. in 1994.

Ms Abbott: Yesterday, under questioning in the Treasury Select Committee, the Chancellor admitted that the total effect of his tax changes would be to put up income tax by the equivalent of 7p in the pound and to put up the average family's tax bill by £9 a week. You can debate—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must put a question to the Chancellor.

Ms Abbott: Does the Chancellor agree that whatever one says about the effect of his public spending proposals on growth, the country will never trust the Conservatives on tax again?

Mr. Clarke: In the long session yesterday in the Select Committee, I certainly accepted that I had raised taxation to a certain extent and that I had reduced public spending as well to get down the level of public borrowing, which would otherwise be a constraint on recovery. The effect on the individual man and woman will depend not only on one feature of that, but on what happens to economic recovery.

At present, the British economy is the only major economy in western Europe enjoying any growth. We have inflation down to its lowest level for 26 years. We have unemployment coming down again today, which is not an experience shared anywhere in western Europe. That is what will affect the well-being of ordinary men and women, if we can strengthen the recovery. That is the context in which the hon. Lady should put her criticisms of tax policy. She and her party do not have the first idea —at least, they have given no hint of it—of what they would do about borrowing and how they would sustain the recovery.

Mr. John Townend: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that cuts in public spending have less effect on consumer confidence than do increases in taxation and, therefore, less impact on growth? Does he accept that the overwhelming majority of Conservative Members welcome the cuts in public spending under the Budget and the contribution made to bringing the Budget deficit under control? Does he further accept that there is still an enormous amount of waste, overmanning and inefficiency in the public sector, especially in local government? Will the Government launch a national campaign to cut that waste and to make further public savings?

Mr. Clarke: Obviously, it depends on how one makes the spending cuts. I agree with my hon. Friend that there is plenty of scope to cut out waste in the public service. Many dedicated public servants do just that. We have never embarked on an exercise of reducing public spending quite so sharply as we have on this occasion. It will not damage the economy, because a great deal of the savings will come from administrative improvements and from holding down the pay bill of those who work in the public sector to a level —for the same reasons as the pay bill will be held down in the private sector—to create the conditions in which we can have economic growth and today's welcome fall in unemployment can be repeated month after month. That is why we take the tough and necessary decisions on tax and spending. I will be grateful to my hon. Friend for his support when we do so.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: As well as increasing taxes "to a certain extent", the Chancellor has also committed himself to a very tight new control total for the non-cyclical elements of public expenditure, allowing for growth of only 3·8 per cent. between 1992-93 and 1998-99. Is not it the case that, at the same stage of the economic cycle under Baroness Thatcher's Government, comparable spending rose by 12·5 per cent? Is not it therefore incumbent on the Chief Secretary to say just what hardship and pain are to be caused to achieve these undesirable and hitherto unachievable spending targets?

Mr. Clarke: As a Government, we are in a position where we are very conscious of the need to constrain public spending. We have improved the opportunities for the private sector to be released and achieve growth, investment and new job creation. We have set a very challenging target for ourselves, but it is not impossibly challenging at a time when we have got inflation down. The headline figure is 1·5 per cent.—the lowest for 25 years. It is the first time since 1960 that inflation has been below 2 per cent. for almost every month in the year. That makes the spending targets realistic. When we made our spending decisions—as the hon. Gentleman will recall—we protected all our priorities. Spending on health and higher education was up, we had the new apprenticeship scheme and we protected our spending on law and order. It is a well-judged spending package.

Budget Response

4. **Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received in response to his Budget.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Budget has been widely welcomed throughout the country.

Mrs. Gillan: At this festive time, will my right hon. and learned Friend agree with the owners of small and medium-sized businesses who have made representations to me that his Budget is a major step forward in creating the stable economic environment in which they can trade? Further, does he agree with them that the specific measures taken to help small businesses in the Budget, together with the low interest rates and unprecedented low rates of inflation, make it possible for them to look forward to a very happy and prosperous new year?

Mr. Clarke: I believe so, and I am glad that my hon. Friend has had the same reaction from the small business people she has met as I have had from the people I have met, who have been generous in their comments on my Budget. Mr. Stan Mendham, who is by no means always uncritical of the Government, has been very praising of the Budget. A commentator described me as having something of a bee in my bonnet about small business. That is the case. I believe that in order to improve the prospects for investment in small businesses, it is legitimate to deregulate and take the burdens off them and encourage more risk capital and self employment in this country. I believe that it is in the small and medium-sized business that we will get the growth of employment that we require throughout the 1990s. I am gald that my hon. Friend approves of the fact that we laid such heavy emphasis on the needs of small business in the Budget.

Mr. Sheldon: Facing the consequences of the severe recession, is it not clear that the balance of payments deficit is more important than the Budget deficit? With the pound increasing in value steadily during the past six or nine months to a considerable extent, is it not also clear that this is the time to reduce interest rates, cut imports and encourage exports?

Mr. Clarke: I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman, who is very experienced in these matters, acknowledges that we are now firmly on top of the deficit in the public finances, and so is turning his attention to the balance of trade. He will know that, at the moment, it is difficult to get accurate figures on our trading position as we introduce the new system because of the introduction of the single market. Because our economy is so much stronger and demand is rising here compared to the continuing recession in Germany and France, there is a tendency for people to wish to sell into our economy, which is affecting our position. Otherwise, our trade figures are extremely good and our currency has been remarkably stable for the past few months—it has not been strengthening noticeably. Most importantly, British industry is retaining its competitiveness. We are still holding the advantage from devaluation. Our unit wage costs have fallen this year, and we are in a competitive position. I shall keep an eye on all the matters on which I usually keep an eye when deciding monetary policy, but I am reasonably optimistic about the British trading position as we come out of the recession.

Mr. Heald: I welcome the measures in the Budget which deal with small businesses. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the measure suggested by the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown)—slapping an extra 1 per cent. on national insurance contributions for the self-employed—would be a disaster for small businesses and would affect the competitiveness of British industry?

Mr. Clarke: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Skinner: What about what the Government are doing later today?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend was speaking about an increase in the national insurance contribution for the self-employed. The hon. Gentleman is wrong. We are raising it for employees this evening.

If implemented, the proposal made by the right hon. Member for Yeovil would, as my hon. Friend said, damage the interests of self-employed people. Self-employment grew rapidly in the 1980s and, in a modern economy, it is desirable that we reduce the burden on people going for self-employment, rather than increasing it in the way proposed by the Liberal Democrats.

Mr. Beith: The Chancellor presumably recognises that the rate of contribution by the self-employed is below that paid by employed people and employers. As the Budget strategy depends very much on low interest rates and low inflation, will the Chancellor look carefully and favourably at the proposal made by the Treasury Select Committee today, which carries the support of all but one member of the Committee, for a central bank that has autonomous responsibility for monetary policy? Is not that the way to lock in low interest rates and low inflation? Will he give that suggestion the most careful consideration?

Mr. Clarke: I can agree to give the proposal careful consideration, but it requires much further debate and discussion. I am grateful to the Select Committee for its report. We shall have an opportunity, through the Bill being presented today by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), to debate those matters in the House. I have an open mind on the subject, although people try to guess my opinion. I have a feeling that the Select Committee's proposal is becoming rather a fashionable cause. We should consider it with care, also taking into account such matters as parliamentary accountability for an increasingly more autonomous Bank of England.

Mr. Bill Walker: Has my right hon. and learned Friend received representations from the Scotch whisky industry, which has been telling me that the sensible treatment of excise duties in the Budget will have a substantial impact on its sales at home? Is he aware that that will increase the revenue to the Treasury and help the position abroad, because it sends the right messages for an industry that exports almost £2,000 million worth of products?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend and I am glad that I was able to follow the precedent set by my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston-upon-Thames (Mr. Lamont) in acknowledging the problems of the Scotch whisky industry and not increasing excise on its products. I hope that the industry will be able to take advantage of that and will recover its strength. I also hope that the industry derives the enormous benefits that could potentially accrue to it from the successful conclusion of the GATT round, which is the best piece of economic news that this and most other trading countries have received in 1993.

Mr. Gordon Brown: After the Chancellor's admission yesterday that the typical family will pay the equivalent of 7p in the pound more in income tax, will he also confirm that the typical family will, from April, be paying £10 a week more in seven separate tax rises and three new taxes? Will he also confirm that, while the wealthiest 1 per cent. received 33 per cent. of the income tax cuts made in the 1988 Budget, middle and lower-income Britain is now paying 95 per cent. of the tax rises from this year's Budget? Are not the Tories now exposed not only as the party of higher taxation, but, as it always has been, as the party of unfair taxation?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman uses what he describes as a "typical family". It is not an average family, but a family that he takes out of the middle ranks of those earning. I have acknowledged that we are increasing taxation. I made an hour and a quarter's speech describing my taxation increases. The hon. Gentleman's mistake is to say that that is the only effect that the Budget will have on the average family. If the hon. Gentleman had his way, he would follow policies that would increase inflation, again increase interest rates—now at their lowest level for 16 years—increase public sector borrowing, slow the recession recovery, reverse the fall in unemployment and probably cause it to increase again, and once more make this country extremely uncompetitive in world markets. That would do far more damage to the ordinary person than my Budget, which sorts out the problem with public finances so that we are clear to have a stronger recovery in the 1990s.

Economic Competitiveness

5. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet his French counterpart to discuss economic competitiveness in Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I met Mr. Alphandery, the French Finance Minister, along with Finance Ministers from the other member states, to discuss European competitiveness at the recent European Council and ECOFIN meetings. I expect that we will discuss this issue further at future meetings.

Mr. Lidington: When my right hon. and learned Friend next meets his French counterpart, will he employ his customary energetic diplomacy to remind the French Finance Minister that an economic plan for Europe which involves higher borrowing, more help for state-funded white elephants and cuts in working hours would not encourage investment, but would cause any potential investor simply to shake his head sadly and take both money and jobs somewhere else?

Mr. Clarke: I think that my hon. Friend is assuming that the French Finance Minister is a bigger supporter of some proposals that come from the Commission in Brussels than he actually is. My colleague Mr. Alphandery is as big a sceptic as I am of some proposals, such as those my hon. Friend listed, that have been emanating from people with less well-judged ideas. The French Government have been imposing some strict austerity measures recently. They are making changes to their social security system to make it affordable and to reduce the costs on their employers. They have reduced their minimum wage for young people because they have found, as we would if we were to introduce one here, that the minimum wage created unemployment among young people. I assure my hon. Friend that my colleague Mr. Alphandery is somewhat nearer to his views and mine than he fears.

Nevertheless, France is not having the recovery that we are. It has a higher level of unemployment than we do and

I think that the French Government are looking with interest at what is happening on this side of the channel and propose to follow many of our measures.

Mr. Hoon: The French Government have obviously decided that the best way of promoting their economic competitiveness is in the negotiations with the German Government on the terms of the creation of a single currency. How does the Chancellor intend to influence those negotiations? Or is he content that Britain should remain on the European sidelines?

Mr. Clarke: We are not on the European sidelines. It is true that at the Finance Ministers' meetings that I attend I am more often in total agreement with the German and Dutch Finance Ministers and usually with the Spanish Finance Minister than with Mr. Alphandery. Nevertheless, Mr. Alphandery and I are agreed on about four fifths of the issues. Last week's debate was based on the Opposition party's crazy premise that all the Finance Ministers of western Europe were sold on the idea of borrowing enormous sums and spending enormous sums to create extra jobs.

I am in complete agreement on currency with the other members of ECOFIN, including the French and the Germans. Now we have to concentrate on achieving convergence in our economic performance to achieve that stability of exchange rates, which will follow. My French and German colleagues are as keen as I am on getting inflation down to the levels that the British are now achieving and on getting public sector deficits down to the level that we are now on course for. [HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."] The gulf exists between the British Labour party and other governing parties in western Europe.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that Europe is increasingly uncompetitive and over-regulated? Does he further accept that the growth in the world will take place outside Europe, in north America, south America and the Pacific rim? When will he create policies for Britain's manufacturing and construction sectors to enable us to take advantage of the real growth outside Europe?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. We must make ourselves competitive with the countries in the Pacific rim and north America that are our rivals in world trade, but that point is increasingly appreciated in western Europe. As my hon. Friend talked about burdens on employers, he will be glad to know that at the recent summit in Brussels it was agreed that we should have an inventory of social regulations that bear down on employers and add to the costs of employment.

Mr. Winterton: At my request and that of the manufacturing alliance.

Mr. Clarke: I am glad that my hon. Friend went ahead of us to ask for that. We regard that as a considerable success in our negotiations.

Mr. Darling: Does the Chancellor accept that taxation and transport links affect Britain's competitiveness? As the Chancellor does not know when, or even whether, the channel link will open and as he put up taxes when the Conservatives said at the previous election that they would not, why should we believe a single word that he or any of his colleagues say at the next election?

Mr. Clarke: We are borrowing more money from the European investment bank than any other member state and investing it in Britain's infrastructure—for example, the Heathrow express, the Jubilee line extension—*[Interruption.]* They are under construction. Until recently, expenditure on Britain's road programme was about 40 per cent. higher in real terms and railway investment in Britain was 40 or 50 per cent. higher than five years ago. We are investing heavily in our infrastructure and we are ahead of our partners in Europe in developing it using European instruments—*[Interruption.]* The debate that we had last week was based on the dire proposition of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who had not read the document that he was talking about, that Mr. Delors was offering us some money to build the channel tunnel high-speed rail link. That rail link has not yet been built because it has not been designed.

Mr. Jessel: With regard to economic competitiveness in Europe in the auction of works of art, will my right hon. and learned Friend join me in congratulating my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General on the successful outcome of the long and difficult VAT negotiations, preventing that valuable market from being driven out of Britain and the Common Market to Geneva and New York?

Mr. Clarke: I happily join my hon. Friend in those congratulations. I happened to be there when the final decision was taken in the Council last week, and he is right to say that all the negotiations have been carried out with considerable skill by my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General.

Education Expenditure

6. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of total expenditure was devoted to education in 1980-81, 1984-85, 1988-89 and 1992-93.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Michael Portillo): For the years in question, the percentages of total expenditure devoted to education were 11·8 per cent., 10.7 per cent., 11·8 per cent. and 11·9 per cent.

Mr. Griffiths: I thank the Minister for that reply. Does he agree that our spending on education as a percentage of total expenditure is not as high as that of most of our competitors and that, in particular, we have a dismal record on nursery education on which we need to spend far more in order to give our children the best possible start in life?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman heard the figures that I gave, which I do not think he expected, and I spared his blushes by not mentioning that the number of schoolchildren had fallen by 1 million during that period, so that expenditure per child had risen by 50 per cent. in real terms. The hon. Gentleman is interested in international comparisons. He might think that education was of a high standard in Germany and Japan, but the percentage of gross domestic product spent in Germany and Japan was 3·2 per cent. and here it is 4·8 per cent.

Mr. Forman: Is it not abundantly clear from my right hon. Friend's exchange with the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) that my right hon. Friend shot the hon. Gentlman's fox? Is it not equally clear that the Government believe in investing in human capital and have had consistent policies to that end over the past 15 years? Are they not right to insist that those who benefit directly from higher education should bear a greater proportion of the burden?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is well placed to comment on those matters. He knows that we have increased the proportion of our young people in higher education to about one in three, which is a rise from one in eight in 1979. He also knows that the number of young people participating in further education will increase by about 250,000 in the next three years.

My hon. Friend says that it will be right for students to bear a greater share of the burden. We certainly believe that where the state provides means-tested help for students' maintenance, it is right that students should make a greater contribution by taking a greater proportion of their funding through loans that are repayable if they find employment at about the average level of earnings. I am sure that that is fair and just. It enables us to make that enormous increase in educational provision.

Mr. Andrew Smith: How on earth does the Chief Secretary square what he has just said with the reports of his views that the target of one in three need not be met and that the country does not need that many graduates by the year 2000? He believes in putting the right-wing dogma of cutting expenditure over the needs of education. He said that he wanted to impose the cost of education on students. Does not that show that he puts the dogma of right-wing Tory ideology over the need for investment in education and opportunities?

Mr. Portillo: I shall tell the hon. Gentleman what I think is important. So far, all the discussion has been about how much money we are putting into education. There should also be a discussion about the quality that we get out of education, the number of people whom we educate and the qualifications with which we put them into the outside world. The hon. Gentleman cited certain of my views. If he has the documents in which I stated them, he should lay them on the table. If not, he should stop indulging in gossip.

Balance of Payments

8. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the prospects for the balance of payments.

Mr. Portillo: Unit labour cost performance is excellent and competitiveness has been much improved. In spite of weak activity abroad, the trend in the visible deficit is downard, with exports at record levels.

Mr. Arnold: Does my right hon. Friend agree that that performance is a considerable tribute to British exporters? Will their performance not be further enhanced by the successful outcome of the negotiations on the general agreement on tariffs and trade, into which the Government have put so much effort in recent months?

Mr. Portillo: I thank my hon. Friend for those remarks. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, in particular, has been a major force in pressing for the most liberal outcome to the GATT negotiations. The GATT outcome is estimated to be worth $270 billion to the world economy. My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the President of the Board of Trade have put great emphasis on that benefit to the world economy. That benefit far outweighs the individual difficulties of countries. Although we well understand those difficulties, they are definitely less important than that benefit.

My hon. Friend refers to the benefits to British industry. Earlier, my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) spoke about the Scotch whisky industry, which exports £2 billion-worth of its products and faces tariffs of 30 per cent. in Japan, of 250 per cent. in Singapore and of 20 per cent. in New Zealand. The GATT deal is set to sweep away those tariffs progressively, which is good news for British industry.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: Is the Minister aware of the deep concern in South Yorkshire about the state of the engineering and steel industry? Yesterday, United Engineering Steels, which is one of the United Kingdom's prime exporters and at the core of United Kingdom industry, had to shed 400 jobs. That company is convinced——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must ask a direct question now.

Mrs. Jackson: My direct question is: what will the Government do that they did not do in the Budget to support this country's core manufacturing industry, so that the jobs of highly skilled workers and engineers in our constituencies are not lost?

Mr. Portillo: The House heard my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor say earlier that unemployment fell last month. It fell across the country and, incidentally, it fell in Sheffield.

The engineering industry depends on the success of other British industries, for instance, our car industry. As a result of the competitive conditions that we have sustained in Britain, we are attracting the bulk of investment into the European Community. That is because we have maintained competitive rates of taxation and that, in turn, is because we have imposed restraint on public spending. British industry has responded magnificently, improving its productivity in manufacturing by more than 4 per cent. in the past year and reducing its unit wage costs, while those costs have risen in Japan and Germany. That has given British industry a real competitive edge. The hon. Lady should be celebrating that, not carping.

Mr. Jenkin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the prospects for our balance of trade have significantly improved since we withdrew from the exchange rate mechanism a little more than 12 months ago? Does he further agree that if we were to enter a single currency in the EC, which would involve huge costs to sustain both it and the disparities in the EC, Britain would be made less competitive and it would be bad for our balance of trade?

Mr. Portillo: The prospects for our balance of payments have been altered in recent months. I do not know whether my hon. Friend is aware that the deficit for 1992 has been revised downwards, from £12 billion to £8·5 billion, and that our forecast for the two years ahead has also been revised down, from £17·5 billion to £9·5 billion in 1993 and from £18·5 billion to £9·5 billion in 1994.

I believe that the really important factor is not any change from moment to moment in the exchange rate but the underlying improvement in competitiveness which is due to higher productivity and the control of unit wage costs. A single currency is not currently on the European agenda.

Inflation (NHS)

9. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what account he took of the level of national health service inflation in determining his allocation of resources to the Department of Health.

Mr. Portillo: The Government reached a view on the appropriate level of national health service spending, taking into account the GDP deflator and the scope for efficiency improvements.

Ms Lynne: Is the Minister aware that the British Medical Association says that the real inflation figure in the national health service is 3·9 per cent? Does he agree that the announcement in the Budget will therefore lead to a decrease in NHS spending power?

Mr. Portillo: I calculate that in the year ahead the NHS will be able to treat 4 per cent. more patients than this year. Once again, I urge the hon. Lady and other hon. Members to concentrate on outputs, not inputs. Surely what matters is how many people get treated, not how much money gets put in.

The hon. Lady underplays the tremendous scope in the NHS for improving efficiency. Last year, the northern region was able to increase its efficiency by nearly 4 per cent., as was the Oxford region, with the west midlands region only a little behind—the Mersey region was very close, too. For all those reasons, we can increase both efficiency and the number of patients who are treated.

Mr. Marland: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the way to solve a problem is not necessarily to throw money at it but to get better value for money? Is he aware that the NHS trusts in Gloucestershire are doing just that? Gloucester Royal hospital will treat nearly 250,000 people this year—it is a trust. The Gloucestershire ambulance service, also a trust, is continually improving its service to patients, too.

Mr. Portillo: The reforms that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and her predecessors have introduced have transformed the ability of the health service to provide efficient health care and to ensure that ever more patients are treated well and efficiently. The hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) was wrong to talk about a rate of inflation in the health service. Inflation in the health service is largely a matter of pay in the health service. That pay is under the control of management in the health service, and so it should be.

Taxation

10. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the impact of the average family's tax bill of all the increases in taxation announced in his Budget last month.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): On average, the main tax-related changes proposed in my right hon. and learned Friend's Budget will cost households around 90p a week from April 1994 and an additional £1·80 a week from April 1995.

Mr. Jones: Is the Minister aware that, during the election campaign, my constituency was covered with posters announcing the so-called "Labour tax bombshell"? Since then, there has been a Tory tax explosion. Will the Minister explain why his party lied during the election about its tax proposals?

Mr. Dorrell: We saw earlier this afternoon the exact nature of that Labour tax bombshell. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) stood at the Dispatch Box and called for increased public expenditure without giving the House any indication of how he intended that expenditure to be paid for. We will listen to the Labour party on the subject of lower tax when it tells us how it would finance its spending programmes.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list official engagements for Thursday 16 December.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Callaghan: Is the Prime Minister aware that, exactly one year ago, a man who was suffering from mental illness climbed into a paddock of a zoo and was savagely mauled by lion? Despite the public dismay and concern over that incident, there are still thousands of mentally ill people who are tramping the streets of our major cities. They often live in cardboard boxes and are unable to look after themselves. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that that is a national disgrace? Will he tell the House what action he will take to get those people off the streets and into places of care and protection?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, a great deal of action has been taken—most noticeably in London—to get many people, both those suffering from the ailment to which the hon. Gentleman refers and others, off the streets. That has been remarkably successful, and we will continue with that policy.

Mr. Lamont: Does my right hon. Friend recall his admirable speech at the Conservative party conference in which he said that the Union between Ulster and Britain was of immense importance to the Conservative party? Did not that echo his comment during the election that he stood with passion and commitment for the unity of this country? Is my right hon. Friend aware that that stands a little oddly beside his statement that this country has no strategic interest in Northern Ireland? Will my right hon. Friend therefore declare today that he believes in the Union, that he wants it to persist and that he believes it has been in the interests of the people of this country?

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that it stands remotely oddly with the joint declaration which I set before the House yesterday. The joint declaration reaffirms in unmistakeable terms the commitment that we have consistently given to the people of Northern Ireland, and I reaffirm that again now.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister agree with the Chancellor of the Exchequer who told the Treasury Select Committee yesterday that the tax increases in this year's Budget were the equivalent of an increase of 7p on income tax?

The Prime Minister: What my right hon. and learned Friend said yesterday was that the aggregate sum of money raised after three years would amount to a crude equivalent of 7p. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, that takes no account of growth in the economy and many other matters. When the right hon. and learned Gentleman talks about taxes, perhaps he might contemplate some of his proposals for new taxes. He is committed to eight more taxes, without any indication of how he would fund his spending promises or meet the debts that occurred as we helped vulnerable people through the recession.

Mr. John Smith: Does not the Prime Minister realise that the Chancellor told the Select Committee yesterday that the increases would amount to between £15 billion and £17 billion? Is there anything more crude than promising not to increase taxes before an election and putting them up by £15 billion afterwards?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman clearly does not realise that he is referring to the cost of Budget measures over the next three years. He is obviously deficient in understanding and has produced an entirely spurious one-off tax increase. I can understand why. I quote what the acting general secretary of the Fabian Society wrote about the right hon. and learned Gentleman in the "Labour Review". *[Interruption.]* I hope that the Opposition will laugh in a moment because this is what was written about the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his party:

> "If the characteristics being exhibited by the Parliamentary Labour Party were translated into the conduct of a single individual, she or he would certainly be in therapy."

Mr. John Smith: May I put a straight question to the right hon. Gentleman. *[Interruption.]* I know that his party does not want to hear it. Does he deny that before the last election, the Conservative party promised not to increase taxes?

The Prime Minister: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman deny—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] Does he deny what his hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) said about unemployment? He has had nothing to say today about unemployment, nothing about inflation and nothing about the eight taxes to which he is committed. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must settle down. I want to hear the Prime Minister. *[Interruption.]*

The Prime Minister: The Opposition do not, because they will not like it. Let us hear from the right hon. and learned Gentleman about his proposed taxes on tourism and development, his payroll tax, his education tax and the fact that he wants to have the same level of corporation tax as our competitors in Europe. What about his pollution tax and his windfall tax? The man does nothing but propose new taxes day after day.

Mr. Richards: Is my right hon. Friend aware that small businesses in my constituency are absolutely delighted with the Chancellor's Budget and that, together with low inflation, low interest rates and increasing confidence, they are looking forward to a period of steady growth in the foreseeable future?

The Prime Minister: I have no doubt that that is the case. It is largely the growth and success of small businesses that are bringing down unemployment, and have been doing so month after month throughout this year. When unemployment figures go up, that is the only issue that concerns Labour Members. When those figures start coming down, apparently it is matter of no importance whatsoever.

Mr. Ashdown: May I draw the Prime Minister's attention to the fact that 1·25 million people are close to starvation in beleaguered central Bosnia, many of whose lives will be further put at risk in the bitter cold yet to come if the local power station at Kakanj is allowed to cease operations? Is he aware that, without vital supplies, that will happen in 20 days' time? Is he further aware the vital supplies provided by Britain are now being blockaded by the Serbs and Croats? Will the Prime Minister see what urgent action could be taken to make the provision of those vital supplies a test case for the Geneva convention on free passage of convoys so that those lives could be saved?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, we are committed to the aid effort through the winter. We have made it clear, to pick up a point that will concern many hon. Members, that we still need to see the opening of Tuzla airport. We have so far provided more than £150 million-worth of assistance, and more than 2,300 troops are delivering that assistance, day after day, under the most difficult conditions. We are examining what we can do to deal with the present difficulties in Bosnia. The co-operation of parties on the ground will be needed to enable us to deliver the humanitarian assistance that we are prepared to deliver and fund. Throughout the conflict, our record has been second to none, and we will continue to do all that we can to ensure that people receive supplies throughout the winter.

Mr. James Hill: My right hon. Friend knows that the economy is beginning to emerge. We are reducing unemployment every day and there will be more money in the coffers by the time of the next Budget. Does he agree that more money must be allocated by the Treasury to the Home Office to enable the pledges given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to be carried out, not only on the neighbourhood watch security patrols but on the numbers of police required? In Hampshire, for instance, we asked for 120 extra police and were given only five this year. Does my right hon. Friend agree that all those measures are part of the Conservative philosophy and that, in the not-too-distant future, money will be available to fund them?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary announced measures not very long ago which, if carried out, will enable approximately 5,300 police officers to move from dealing with administrative work out to the front line to deal with the matters that my hon. Friend mentioned. That action has been taken within the expenditure levels agreed by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary.

Q2. **Mrs. Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 16 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer that I gave some moments ago

Mrs. Prentice: Does the Prime Minister agree with the Chancellor on the subject of stopping tax abuse? The right hon. and learned Gentleman said in his Budget speech that claims that more money might be found in that way were much exaggerated. Does the Prime Minister agree with the Public Accounts Committee, which found another £1 billion tax loophole for the aristocracy? Would not the Chancellor be better employed closing such tax loopholes than stinging every family in the country for an extra £10 a week as a result of his tax-raising Budget?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady should know that my right hon. and learned Friend closed a number of genuine loopholes in the Budget. That will yield about £2 billion over the next three years. The loopholes so beloved of the Opposition Front Bench are not loopholes generally but measures such as ending relief on capital gains inheritance—which would leave less for parents to hand down to children—and reforming the rules applying to non-domiciled status foreigners, which is the Opposition's latest idea. All the main parties agreed, when that measure was reviewed in 1989, that the existing rules should remain because they made Britain an attractive business location.

The Opposition's loophole campaign is a smokescreen to hide the fact that they have no idea how to fund their policies. They are trying to convince people that they could do so by closing tax loopholes, but what they would do is take away measures that assist industry and introduce those that would cost jobs and assist our competitors.

Mrs. Angela Knight: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the general agreement on tariffs and trade provides important trade opportunities, not just for countries such as Britain but for developing countries? Removal of the trade barriers will give them the chance of export-led growth to benefit their economies and bring about prosperity.

The Prime Minister: Yes, I entirely agree with that. My hon. Friend will know that, at the Commonwealth conference, we agreed that a number of Commonwealth countries—including less-developed and developing countries—would send a mission to the main Governments around the world in the GATT negotiations, to ensure that there was a satisfactory settlement. I noticed yesterday that Malaysia, on behalf of the less-developed countries, had hailed the round as a victory for common sense.

Q3. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 16 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Worthington: Why have the Government put 7p on income tax, or its equivalent?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is clearly not very good at listening, or he would have heard the answer a good deal earlier, but I will tell him what the Government have done.

The Government have got interest rates down to the lowest levels for 16 years; inflation at the lowest level for 26 years; unemployment falling, while it rises everywhere else in Europe; growth that is faster than in any other country in Europe; a GATT deal to benefit industry; retail sales up; and a whole range of other economic improvements. That is the Christmas message to bring a smile to people's faces next year—not the misleading questions asked by the Labour party.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

3.31 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): With permission, Madam Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the successful conclusion of the world trade negotiations.

In Geneva yesterday, trade negotiators from 117 countries reached the most wide-ranging agreement ever. After seven years of long, hard and often fraught negotiations, it is a superb outcome. It is a result for which industry, commerce and consumers alike have pressed; it is a conclusion for which this Government have worked tirelessly through many crises, when protectionism threatened British markets and British jobs.

The new GATT settlement will help British industry by bringing down barriers to exports of manufactured goods and services. It will give manufacturers greater protection against piracy of their copyright, patents and designs. It will bring down prices for consumers—particularly of food, electronics and other manufactured goods; and it will strengthen the world trading system against unfair practices by individual countries.

Britain is the fifth largest exporter in the world of goods and commercial services. We export more per person than either the United States or Japan. Our markets are already among the most open. We stand, therefore, to be one of the biggest gainers from cuts in worldwide tariffs, quotas and other restrictions.

Sharp reductions in some very high tariffs in the United States and Japan will help Britain in strategic markets. The overall tariff reductions, across all countries of the world, will be around 40 per cent. An independent study by McGraw-Hill has indicated that a new GATT agreement could add up to 4 per cent. to our national output, generating up to 400,000 extra jobs over the next decade.

The European economies, as a group, are estimated to be the biggest single gainer; so the GATT deal can be expected to give a much-needed boost to confidence and recovery in our biggest export markets.

As late as last weekend, there was a real and frightening danger that negotiations might unravel. The world faced a choice between a retreat into protectionism, slump and higher unemployment, and free trade, growth and jobs. Happily, the right choice has been made. The director general of the CBI has rightly called this outcome

"a momentous and welcome event".

This Government have fought consistently to keep the negotiations going. It has been a long struggle. Last year, we faced the prospect not only of failure, but of a lurch into trade war between Europe and the United States.

Exports from Europe were threatened by new and punitive American tariffs. We were able to use our presidency of the European Community to get both sides back to the negotiating table and make progress on farm trade. We encouraged the new United States Administration to extend congressional authority in order to permit the GATT round to be concluded. We pressed for the agreement on tariffs at last summer's Tokyo summit —another crucial meeting and another crucial building block in the final result.

At this autumn's Commonwealth summit, we launched a special mission to all the key Governments of the developed world. This sent the clearest possible signal on behalf of one quarter of the world's population that free trade was a prize for developing countries too. Trade, more than aid, is the most certain route to economic development.

I believe that very great credit is due to Sir Leon Brittan, the European Community's negotiator; and to Peter Sutherland, the director general of GATT. But others have played a crucial part, including the United States negotiator, Micky Kantor. All three had the courage to take on their tasks at a time when it was far from certain that they would be rewarded by success.

Let me outline the main features of the agreement. First, excellent progress has been made on industrial goods but final details are still being worked out. A number of our largest export markets will move towards the total abolition of tariffs in industries which include pharmaceuticals, steel products and spirits. For example, the Scotch whisky industry, which already has exports totalling about £2 billion a year, will benefit from the complete abolition of Japanese tariffs.

Cuts in high United States tariffs on scientific equipment, chemicals, steel and ceramics, for example, will help in one of our biggest markets. Our textile manufacturers will gain from tariff cuts in the United States, and gain greater access to many economies along the Pacific rim.

Secondly, for the first time agriculture will be fully covered by GATT rules. Tariffs are being cut and subsidies reduced substantially, offering families in this country the prospect of lower prices of staple foods. In Europe, we have already begun the process of reducing farm production subsidies. Overall, those subsidies cost every family around £20 a week. The changes to the common agricultural policy which are already agreed, should—if passed on to the consumer—over a period lead to price cuts equal to 20p off a pound of beef or 6p off a pound of butter. Under the GATT agreement, other countries—notably, Japan and the United States—will now have to cut their agriculture tariff subsidies as well.

Thirdly, for the first time we have an international set of rules for free trade in services—the fastest growing sector of the world economy. Services account for two thirds of our output in the United Kingdom but only about one quarter of our exports; so, if we can break down barriers to trade, there is great potential for growth. The services covered range from insurance to consultancy. Many countries have made commitments on financial, telecommunication and transport services. This is only a start. Further negotiations with the United States must follow on maritime and financial services. But in the meantime we have maintained the City of London in a position in which it will attract new international business.

Fourthly, with regard to so-called intellectual property, the law of the jungle still rules in too much of the world. Expensive research and development by British pharmaceutical companies can be pirated—in effect, stolen—by countries which offer no protection for patents. The same is true of Britain's record industry, which estimates that as much as half of its market in the developing world is stolen by pirates. For the first time, we now have an agreed set of international rules on which we can begin to rely in our fight to give these industries the markets which they have a right to expect.

Free trade increases the need for businesses to be internationally competitive, but in Britain, we have world-class companies ready for the challenge. This new GATT settlement removes the threat of collapse in the world trade system—a system on which economic growth has been based for nearly half a century. It extends the benefits of trading rules into vast new areas of business. It brings further welcome reductions in tariffs on British goods. it is a platform for recovery, growth and jobs in Britain, the European Community and the rest of the world. I commend it to the House.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I thank the Prime Minister for his statement. The Opposition also welcome the successful conclusion of the Uruguay round. It has been a long and torturous negotiation, but the result, although long overdue, is an important step forward for the world economy. Having had responsibility for the Tokyo round, I know how difficult and detailed such negotiations can be.

Preserving an open and fair trading system is vital for growth, jobs and prosperity not just in this country but round the world. The dangers of beggar-my-neighbour protectionism must always be resisted.

The GATT agreement is, however, only a start. Does the Prime Minister agree that, for Britain to succeed, we must put far more effort into promoting our export performance in manufacturing and services? Will the Government recognise that following the deal, it is now even more vital that we invest in people and in their skills to ensure that we succeed in international trade by competing on the quality of the goods that we produce and the skills of our work force rather than on low wages and a self-defeating spiral of low skills and poor job security?

On the details of the Geneva agreement, I welcome the new agreements on intellectual property, which tackle the piracy of counterfeit goods and provide security for British companies that invest in the research and development of new products.

On the failure to reach a settlement on trade in financial services, is it the case that access to trade in those services in the United States will remain restricted? That is clearly a matter of considerable concern to the financial services industry in Britain. What steps do the Government intend to take to push forward negotiations to include financial services fully within the GATT framework?

On the environment, will the new Multilateral Trade Organisation be given a remit to recognise the importance in the modern world of linking economic development with environmental protection?

What changes have been made to the Blair house agreement to accommodate French agricultural interests? Can the Prime Minister assure the House that the deal in no way prejudices the urgent need to continue to reform and control the costs of the common agricultural policy? In relation to the proposed MTO, which will supersede the GATT secretariat, are we satisfied with the procedures for trade disputes? Can we be assured that the MTO will cover concerns for environmental protection and fair employment standards?

Does the Prime Minister agree that steps should also be taken to strengthen the role of the International Labour Organisation, and in particular to encourage enforcement of its conventions on fair labour standards and especially to help stamp out child labour? Although we welcome the benefits to consumers at the prospect of reduced tariffs on textile imports, surely no one in this country wants to buy products made by children in sweatshops that have no concern for basic human rights.

Although GATT offers important trading benefits for the developing world as a whole, do the Government recognise the special difficulties for Africa, which will probably gain little from this specific agreement? For that reason, can I urge the Government and the international community to do much more to reduce and write off the outstanding debts of the poorest countries? While trade is vital to the expansion of the world economy, can more be done to encourage new lending, investment and official aid so that all regions in the world can participate in the economic growth that we hope will occur?

The Prime Minister: Let me deal with the specific points that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has raised.

On the question of promoting exports, I am delighted to tell the right hon. and learned Gentleman that, at present, our exports are running at record levels. As he will know, we have provided more extensive and cheaper export cover to assist our export promotion. We have reorganised most of our overseas postings to ensure that greater assistance is given to British business men abroad.

A large number of trade missions have been led by senior Ministers and others in the Government, most of whom have come back with substantial order books. At the moment, we are examining what further measures can be taken to provide an even better service for our exporters in the future. I have no doubt that, with the reduction of tariffs overseas and the increased scope in services and in manufacturing, there is a remarkable opportunity for British companies, at a time when they are competitive and in a position to take advantage of that opportunity. We shall certainly proceed with that.

I share with the right hon. and learned Gentleman the regret that we did not get further on financial services, because it was not possible for the various countries to agree on a final conclusion. Some progress has been made. The sector is now covered by trade rules and there have been a number of major gains for United Kingdom companies. For example, United Kingdom banks and insurance companies will be guaranteed the right to do business in Canada on the same basis as United States and Canadian firms, although it is disappointing that a fuller result for that sector has not been achieved. We have fought hard to ensure that openness in the European Community market will be maintained and we won that battle in Brussels.

There is no question that development will be at the expense of the environment, and I do not believe that anyone seriously imagines that that will be a problem.

There were detailed renegotiations on Blair house at the margins some time ago. There were no changes to the Blair house agreement as a result of the European Community meeting over the weekend and expenditure on the common agricultural policy will be restrained under the ceilings that were agreed at the Edinburgh summit, in terms of the financial perspective of the Community.

I do not have any quarrel with the outcome on the trade dispute mechanism. I do not have the same affection for the ILO as the right hon. and learned Gentleman—that is a difference between us, as I am sure that he knows—but I share his views about child labour—*[Interruption.]* I am about to tell the right hon. and learned Gentleman precisely what has been done about it, if he will listen. The activities of child labour lead to dumping. In the Community we have powerful mechanisms to act against dumping and they were improved so that action could be taken more

[The Prime Minister]

speedily at the Foreign Affairs Council yesterday, which was attended by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary.

As for Africa, it is the view of the African states that this GATT round is of assistance to them. They made that perfectly clear at the Commonwealth conference where a large number of African states, both rich and poor—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may be interested to know that those members of the Commonwealth wholly support the outcome of the GATT round. The area of greatest difficulty, as the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson), who is not in her place, has said, is sub-Saharan Africa. As I said to the hon. Lady, if it turns out that the sub-Saharan countries face particular difficulty, our long historical connection means that we shall certainly do what we can to provide further assistance, both bilaterally and in other ways.

To ensure that they get further assistance with their debt, Opposition Members may be aware of the Trinidad terms initiative that I launched in 1989-90, which is by far the most generous write-off of debt that the world has ever seen. We have written off a large amount of debt under than and we are still pressing some people in the Paris Club to do so. I believe that we shall be successful. It is the view of the countries that benefit under those Trinidad terms that it is by far the most comprehensive and most generous write-off of capital and revenue debt that has ever been proposed and carried through.

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that it is a long time since the start of the negotiations, when I spent a happy week in Punta del Este with Mr. Alan Clark, among others? He has not yet described it in his diaries. May I congratulate my right hon. Friend and his colleagues on the achievements of the British delegation? I especially congratulate Sir Leon Brittan, as my right hon. Friend rightly did, and we must not forget Mr. Arthur Dunkel, who was the director general of GATT for many years, and who was a tremendous support in the early days of this round.

In agreeing with my right hon. Friend about the importance of the conclusions to trade throughout the world and to prosperity, may I ask him to say a little more about what will happen to financial services? At the start of the negotiations, the American delegation was among the keenest that there should be freedom of trade in financial services. What has happened? Are there now proposals to proceed with the negotiations at a later date in some other forum? What will happen on financial services? It must be very much in the interests of Britain, as well as of many other delegations, that the process should not come to an end and that further steps should be taken.

The Prime Minister: I agree with my right hon. Friend about that point. He is right in his supposition that there will be further negotiations on financial services; I hope that they can be carried forward speedily. It is unsatisfactory that we did not get further on financial services on this occasion. Having voiced that disappointment, I believe that one should not lose sight of the fact that this is by far the widest and most comprehensive world trade settlement, with large areas previously not within GATT now brought within it. It provides for a much more liberal world trading system and it is the biggest single advance in free trade for many years.

My right hon. Friend speaks with some knowledge of the matter. He was Minister for Trade and President of the Council of Ministers during the early stages of the GATT round. I join in his congratulations to Sir Leon Brittan and to Arthur Dunkel. They can both be proud of what they have achieved.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): The Prime Minister is right to say that this is a good day for the world and a good day for Britain. However, is it not the case that, for Britain to take advantage of increasingly open world markets, we shall have to do much more to build a high-value-added, high-investment, high-skill economy than has been done so far under this Government?

The Prime Minister is right to welcome the extensive debt write-off and the development assistance. However, if third-world countries are to have access to the opportunities that the end of the Uruguay round has presented, more attention will have to be paid to that area.

Many people will have greatly welcomed the Prime Minister's comment to the leader of the Labour party that he recognised that development damaged the environment. Does he, therefore, agree that almost the first task of the new Multilateral Trade Organisation should be seriously to consider environmental factors and the means by which we can incorporate environmental costs into the world trading system?

The Prime Minister: The fact that our exports are growing at a remarkable rate while overseas markets are very flat, especially in the European Community, suggests that to an extent greater than that for which the right hon. Gentleman gives them credit, our British exports are adding substantial value and are penetrating markets deeply as a result. One illustration is the German market. It is in substantial decline at the moment, yet British exports to Germany have increased; we have taken a much larger share of a much smaller market. That is substantially because of our competitiveness and because of the high-value-added nature of so many British exports.

There is sometimes a tendency—I do not attribute this to the right hon. Gentleman—to think especially of manufacturing in the old sense of large, labour-intensive manufacturing industries. In the constituencies of almost every hon. Member, there are now small, medium and high technology businesses which are, in essence, manufacturing industries. They now export around the world, not least to such places as Japan, against very stiff competition.

I agree with the right hon. Gentleman about debt write-off. The original Toronto terms, introduced by Lord Lawson when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Trinidad terms have been well ahead of what the rest of the world was prepared to contemplate in terms of debt write-off at that time.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the third world. One of the most comprehensive ways in which we can help countries in the third world is not to close our markets to their exports. That is why I welcome so much of the Uruguay round outcome. It opens markets to the third world to a far greater extent than ever before. The outcome is not perfect; it does not go all the way. However, it does a great deal more than ever before and offers substantial incentives to third-world countries to develop their exports.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the enormous effort that he has put into the agreement which is of great benefit to Britain. Does he agree, however, that there is considerable resentment in this country at the intransigence of the French, who demanded compensation for their farmers from the Community budget as a condition of agreeing to the GATT talks? Will he tell us how much that that will cost the EC budget, and what our proportion will be?

The Prime Minister: A number of countries during the round were pretty intransigent from time to time, although perhaps the difficulties faced in France got rather higher profile publicity than most. I know that the GATT agreement has caused the French Prime Minister considerable domestic difficulties. I do not particularly wish to add to them now. It is worth looking at what the agricultural agreement does: it reduces Community tariffs by 36 per cent. and cuts exports subsidies substantially. That was the essence of the Blair house agreement, and that has been maintained despite what may be said in other capitals.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Where does the British aerospace industry stand? What is the fate of the airbus? Why was the issue of aerospace taken out of GATT? Is the vendetta by the American President against airbus now over?

The Prime Minister: The reason why those aspects of civil aviation were taken out of the round at the last minute was simply that agreement on them could not be reached. But the British aerospace industry will continue to be covered by the present Community and United States bilateral arrangements. That means that the position stays as it is now and that it has not—as the hon. Gentleman and many others feared—been worsened by the outcome of this round.

It has been agreed that the Community and the United States will now negotiate for another year. I should say, for it might reassure the hon. Gentleman, that the United States has agreed to negotiate on the basis of the GATT Committee chairman's draft text, which currently provides for a reduction in United States indirect support for its industry. The Commission, as our negotiator, will continue to insist on the inclusion of aero engines and indirect support. The outcome should protect United Kingdom interests. The hon. Gentleman need have no doubt that we will press our negotiators very firmly on that point.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): My right hon. Friend will recall that my constituency in Leicestershire has many farmers and many people who are engaged in the knitwear, hosiery and textile industries. Does he recall that, following the Tokyo summit, he informed the House about his hopes for a reduction of the United States tariff barriers for British textiles? Will his hopes that we shared when he returned from Tokyo be realised following the GATT agreement? I join other hon. Members in congratulating him and his team, particularly Sir Leon Brittan, in their achievement.

The Prime Minister: The changes to the textile industry are helpful, but not as helpful as we expected them to be when we returned from Tokyo. The changes since Tokyo have meant that the extremely favourable changes that we had then are now less favourable. Securing improved market access for our textile exports was a priority for us in the negotiations.

The agreement that the industry negotiated some months ago improved market access. We have been able to build on that in the Uruguay round and significant cuts have been agreed in a number of United States textile peaks. That is very valuable for our textile exporters and it is something that they have long sought. That is undiluted good news. It is not as good news as it looked as though it would be after Tokyo. Good news it is; superb news it is not.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Prime Minister explain the phrase "unfair practices" which, according to his statement, are controlled under GATT? Does it, for example, include any control of child labour, or is he relying entirely on anti-dumping practices? He should know that, when dealing with the EC, most industries find it dilatory and inefficient in dealing with anti-dumping practices. Should not GATT have a social clause to give people in other countries health and safety at work rights, and trade union rights to ensure that they are employed under proper and decent working conditions? Are we not exploiting workers and child labour badly in order to receive their products in this country?

The Prime Minister: As I said in reply to the Leader of the Opposition, just today the Community improved its mechanisms for dealing with dumping, in terms of producing a more speedy response. I share the hon. Gentleman's view that, sometimes, across the Community, it has taken longer to respond to dumping than might ideally have been the case. I believe that that was corrected in the agreements made by my right hon. Friend the other day. We are trying to deal with the problem. The other circumstances that he set out lead to goods being produced and then sold at below the proper world market level. That is the definition of dumping, so I believe that we shall catch the practices about which the hon. Gentleman is concerned.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I add my congratulations to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on what has been achieved, particularly in agriculture, heralding as it does the end of competitively subsidised dumping on the world market and, we hope, the gradual phasing out of price support and the iniquitous set-aside scheme with which we in Europe have got stuck. While I recognise that it was probably inevitable, although regrettable, that the French had to be bought off with extra compensation, if necessary, for their small farmers, will he ensure that not only does that not exceed the guidelines already laid down for expenditure but that it is not paid out at the expense of compensation already agreed for British farmers?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps I should make clear to the House what happened with the French over the weekend. No agreement to provide the French with what I saw described in one Sunday newspaper as "billions of pounds" was made last weekend. The agreement reached was that the ceilings on expenditure in the Community will remain as agreed at Edinburgh before the Blair house agreement was renegotiated. The view of the Commission,

[The Prime Minister]

and most of the member states, is that the GATT agreement is compatible with common agricultural policy reform, so the question of extra compensation will not arise.

Even if it were to arise, it is agreed that there is no question of increasing the sums of expenditure. It is a free expression to suggest that there will be billions of extra pounds for French farmers. That flatly is not the case. When asked, after the conclusion of the European Council, whether French farmers had won extra money during the Council, I replied, "Not a penny." I reply again, "Not a penny."

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): I congratulate the Prime Minister on his recognition that sub-Saharan Africa will benefit little if at all from the GATT negotiations. That is a positive start. Will he look at the wretched rules of origin, which cause so many difficulties for such countries as Guinea-Bissau and Guinea-Conakry in terms of the export of their agricultural and fishery products?

The Prime Minister: I am not familiar with the details of that problem, but I shall seek advice on the rules of origin and have a look at them. To pick up the earlier point about the poorest countries—as I said, a large number of them are sub-Saharan countries—19 of them have benefited from the reduction of $1·75 billion of their debt, under the Trinidad terms.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Is European culture really such a pathetic withering little flower that it needs protection by the state? If French films are so good, surely people will flock to see them without state intervention. While the role of Great Britain and the Prime Minister in securing the GATT round was crucial, is it not a shame, given that we believe in free choice and open markets, that we backed that French demand which, in whatever sophistry it is cloaked, is nothing more than an unpleasant combination of censorship and protectionism?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, we would have preferred to have reached an agreement on audiovisual matters. A number of others would have preferred such an agreement to be reached. It was not possible. In the circumstances, the only option to protect the gains in the round was to take the audio-visual matters entirely out of the GATT agreement. Like my hon. Friend, I regret that. I hope that we can negotiate a satisfactory arrangement soon.

Mr. Brian H. Donohoe (Cunninghame, South): Given the Prime Minister's earlier answer to the question on the aerospace industry, can he tell us how small aircraft will be affected? There is a potential problem with Jetstream in the Ayrshire area. Will the Prime Minister assure us that that matter will be included in any negotiations with the United States?

The Prime Minister: Small aircraft and engines are included in the discussions. As I understand it, until those discussions are concluded there is no change from the present position.

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that this settlement of the GATT round comes at a crucial time to give the world economies that extra boost to get them moving again and that, as he has said, we shall benefit from it? Will he use his influence as Prime Minister to continue to encourage through the export services with the President of the Board of Trade the many—rather too many—small and medium-sized companies that could but do not yet export? If their hand were held a little, they might do that much better.

The Prime Minister: On that last point, my right hon. Friend and his colleagues are making a special effort through the business link scheme to do precisely that. My hon. Friend touches on an important point. One should make it clear that the GATT round now having been agreed is not immediately implemented. There will be a ministerial signing session, probably in April 1994. The final Act will need to be ratified by a number of countries. Then it will come into force, probably in late 1995 but conceivably as late as the beginning of 1996.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): How can everybody be with us? There are 113 countries that have signed the agreement. Some are bound to be losers. Why does not the Prime Minister admit that the multinational companies are the driving force behind GATT? Britain will be gatted. Of the top 500 multinationals, 278 are either in the United States or Japan and the rest are divided between all the other industrial countries on the Pacific rim. It is a joke if the Prime Minister is trying to convey to the people of Britain that we will benefit. He said the same when the multinationals wanted the common market in 1973; unemployment increased. He said the same about the single market four years ago; again unemployment increased——

Madam Speaker: Order. This is not the time for speeches. This is the time for questions. If the hon. Gentleman has a question to put to the Prime Minister, he should do so and then sit down and let us hear the answer.

Mr. Skinner: Why does not the Prime Minister answer this question: since Britain's manufacturing base is now down to 4 million, how on earth can this country leap across the boundaries to increase production? Why does not the Prime Minister tell the truth about what he said about jobs the other day? When I asked him how many jobs had been created, he said 400,000. Already he has stretched the number.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman has taken leave of what passes for his senses. I said 400,000 the other day and I said 400,000 today. He should get his facts right for a change. He is wrong again on other matters. Not only is he wrong, but he does not seem to carry with him his hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) or the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), who have said precisely the reverse.

Mr. Skinner: So what? [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I shall be proved right.

The Prime Minister: If anybody else were as confident about anything as the hon. Gentleman is confident about everything, we would all be rather well off. I for once am prepared to make common cause with the hon. Member for Livingston. I entirely agree with him when, in welcoming the GATT trade deal, he said:

> "This will create substantial opportunities for developing countries."

Not only does the hon. Gentleman think that, and he is entirely right, but so do the developing countries. But they, of course, also know less about their interests than the hon.

Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). If perhaps the hon. Gentleman had listened a little more carefully—he clearly did not listen the other day about jobs either—he would know that the developing countries in the Commonwealth sent a number of representatives to the main capitals to say how important it was for them to have a GATT agreement. Every single thing that the hon. Gentleman said was copper-bottomed, gold-plated rubbish.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I warmly welcome the successful outcome of the Uruguay round and pay tribute to the Government for the role that they have played in bringing it to a successful conclusion. Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is a downside to this agreement—he referred to it when answering some supplementary questions earlier? Does he accept that, if Britain is to be successful and competitive, it is important that for industries such as textiles and clothing—I could name others—the Government assist by providing an investment incentive? Will my right hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade do what they can to put pressure on the Treasury to ensure that there are incentives for investment so that British industry can take advantage of the Uruguay round and its successful outcome?

The Prime Minister: We certainly wish to ensure that British manufacturing industry both invests and exports. While my hon. Friend is right that the outcome for the textiles industry was less satisfactory than we had hoped it would be some time ago, the successful conclusion to the round does include a reduction in tariffs in the United Kingdom's main export textiles markets, most crucially, of course, in that of the United States. Therefore there is a better circumstance for textiles, but, as my hon. Friend implied, it is not as good as we had hoped it would be.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Does the Prime Minister accept that there will be a general and warm welcome for the decision to reduce tariff barriers against Scotch whisky—an important, high-quality export-winning product, not least in my constituency, where so many jobs depend on it? Is the Prime Minister aware that there is a need to build on the agreement to eradicate the internal excise discrimination in Japan, which continues to breach the 1987 GATT agreement because shochu is protected by a much lower level of tax than Scotch whisky? I believe that the differential between the two products ranges between six and nine.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady is right on both points. The tariff reduction on whisky in Japan is from 250 per cent. to zero—it has gone entirely. That is only part of the barrier against Scotch whisky exports in Japan. There are still substantial internal tax barriers. I raised those with Prime Minister Hosokawa when I was in Tokyo some time ago and we wrote to him again last week. We hope to see some movement in the comprehensive tax reform that the Japanese Government are now planning. The present position on internal tax discrimination against Scotch whisky is not satisfactory, and the Government continue to pursue it with the Japanese Government.

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the successful conclusion to the GATT round, which is a great success for Britain, particularly Conservative Britain which believes and is foremost in free trade. May I press my right hon. Friend on the common agricultural policy? We all believe that the CAP is far too heavy and costs far too much. In many respects, that may have restricted our negotiating position on the financial services area. Will he assure hon. Members, particularly Conservative Members, that we will now press further for greater reductions and a greater freeing of the financial services business in the world?

The Prime Minister: We shall certainly press for greater freeing of financial services. It is very much in our interests. We are one of the world's great providers of financial services, and the more that we can open up European markets—which is now happening—and Japanese and United States markets in particular, the greater the opportunity for the export of British financial services. My hon. Friend is quite right: it is a matter of critical interest to us and I give him my undertaking that we shall pursue it.

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): May I pursue the downside a bit further and refer the Prime Minister to the McGraw-Hill study that he mentioned earlier? What did the study say about identifying the sector of British industry that can now anticipate job losses, and what will be the scale of those job losses?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the net position is estimated to be a growth over 10 years of around 400,000 jobs. Beyond that, it is not really possible to identify in any great detail where there will be growth and contraction. That depends on too many factors for the statistics to have any real value. The calculation of 400,000 jobs is derived from the growth of world trade generally and the implications that that will have for manufacturing industry and the service sector in particular.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I compliment my right hon. Friend on his mastery of his brief this afternoon. Many countries gain an unfair competitive advantage by subsidising their exports. Did the new GATT settlement deal directly with that hidden barrier to free trade?

The Prime Minister: Yes, there are new rules on subsidies, anti-dumping and safeguard action. There are texts in all those areas to deal with unfair practices. They are a good outcome for Britain in particular, and the EC more generally. Disciplines, including a reasonable constraint on developing countries, have been tightened, but the texts are a great improvement on the current GATT rules.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): If, as the Prime Minister claims, the Government champion free trade as a means of helping the developing world, why did Britain abstain in the recent overwhelming vote at the United Nations condemning the United States Government for its illegal and inhuman economic blockade of the Republic of Cuba?

The Prime Minister: I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman is comparing like with like. I do not know of any country that would deny that this Britiash Conservative Government is one of the most free-trading Governments, in philosophy and practice, of any Government in the world. I am pleased to see the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) nodding in agreement. He may not necessarily approve, but he does agree.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Will my right hon. Friend accept my congratulations on his outstanding statesmanship during the past two days? Does be accept that his earlier comments on aviation policy suggest that the advantage of current levels of launch aid for aircraft manufacturers who manufacture planes of 100 seats or fewer will remain despite strong USA pressure to do away with that? Does he further accept that my constituents will warmly welcome that on the basis that Jetstream Aircraft is a manufacturer of turbo-prop aircraft?

The Prime Minister: I can confirm that there will be no change and I reiterate that the Commission will continue to insist on the inclusion of aero engines and indirect support. As I said a moment ago to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Donohoe), the outcome should be to protect the legitimate interests of the United Kingdom industry.

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I share the Prime Minister's relief at the outcome of the GATT negotiations and his view of the need to reduce support and subsidies for agriculture, but how does that square with the fact that, on 15 November this year, the Government agreed to an increase of half a billion pounds in the draft EC budget for 1994, most of which will subsidise agriculture? Will the Prime Minister give us a clear commitment that there will be no extra support for French agriculture, either within the guideline or otherwise, and that, if there is any prospect of such support, it will not be transferred from other areas of the EC budget, such as the structural fund that is designed to encourage employment?

The Prime Minister: A number of other countries apart from the United Kingdom, such as Spain, Portugal and Greece, would strongly resist any suggestion that money to support agriculture should come from the structural or cohesion funds. In our discussions at the weekend at the European Council, Prime Ministers of some of the southern states made it perfectly clear that, were there any suggestions from any of the northern states—it would certainly not come from this northern state—that money to fund agriculture should come out of the structural or cohesion funds, they would strongly oppose that, and they would be right to do so.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Is not the consequence of the GATT that third-world countries will be able to earn far more foreign exchange for themselves and therefore far more self-respect? Is not that better than the begging bowl approach so favoured by the Opposition?

The Prime Minister: Yes, my hon. Friend is right. Independent calculations are that the gain to developing countries from opening markets under these GATT round considerations will be greater than the total amount of aid from all the western democracies and Japan added together.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): With all the euphoria following the GATT, may I remind the Prime Minister that, some ten years ago, there was a traumatic upheaval in the British steel industry, when many thousands of people were made redundant and whole communities were decimated? The same development does not appear to have taken place in Germany, France or Italy, where subsidies still abound. When will the Government take firm action to look after our steel industry and prevent further redundancies?

The Prime Minister: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman did not draw the conclusion that most other people would have drawn, which is that British Steel is now a world-class company trading profitably because it is under private ownership. I hope, therefore, that there will be a good deal of support from Opposition Members in future for the privatisation of industries. The large number of industries that were in the public sector and very expensive to taxpayers are now in the private sector yielding resources to taxpayers.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but we must now move on.

Business of the House

4.21 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): With permission, I should like to make a statement about the business for the first week back after the Christmas Adjournment.

TUESDAY 11 JANUARY—Second Reading of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

Money resolution relating to the Non-Domestic Rating Bill.

WEDNESDAY 12 JANUARY—Proceedings on the Non-Domestic Rating Bill.

Motion on the Insider Dealing (Securities and Regulated Markets) Order.

THURSDAY 13 JANUARY—Opposition Day (First Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion, subject to be announced.

FRIDAY 14 JANUARY—Private Members' Motions.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee B will meet at 10.30 am on Wednesday, 12 January to consider European Community document No. 6625/93 relating to special rehabilitation support programmes in developing countries.

In the spirit of Christmas, not to say Jopling, even though neither has been much in evidence this week, it may assist the House to know that, subject to the progress of Bills, it will be proposed that the House should rise for the Easter Adjournment on Thursday 31 March, until Tuesday 12 April.

[Wednesday 12 January:
European Standing Committee B—Relevant European Community document: 6625/93, Overseas Aid.
Relevant European Legislation Committee Reports: HC 79-xxxiii (1992-93); HC 79-xxxix (1992-93).]

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I thank the Lord President for fulfilling his undertaking to give us an Opposition day in the new year, and the dates of the Easter recess. Will the Lord President warn the Home Secretary that, when it comes to debating the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, Members on both sides of the House, with the exception of the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold), will be anxious to discover whether—contrary to assurances that the Home Secretary seemed to give in the Queen's Speech—the Government intend to use that Bill to make sharp cuts in the compensation paid to victims of criminal violence? It will be of particular concern, at least on this side of the House, if we discover that Ministers have misled the House on such an issue.

Will the Lord President confirm that his announcement about the handling of the Non-Domestic Rating Bill implies that the Bill will be put through all its stages in one day without agreement? The Opposition regard that as a further dangerous precedent, all the more so because it is completely unnecessary.

We recognise that the Bill may not be controversial —although, as it has not yet been published, we must trust the Government on that matter. However, it will affect every British business. Whatever problems hon. Members may have in scrutinising such legislation, people outside suffer most when Bills are not handled properly.

I remind the Lord President that, of the last two Bills on this subject, one was given 13 days in this place and six weeks in all, and the second 15 days and two months in all, from start to finish. There are still three months before this Bill needs to be on the statute book, so, on the basis of experience, the argument that there is some pressure does not stand up.

I am convinced that many people in local authorities and in business will not thank the Government for this speed. The Bill will hardly be here before it is gone again, and they will have had no time to look at it.

May I ask the right hon. Gentleman, finally, to press the Secretary of State for Social Security to come here as soon as possible to respond to the Select Committee report on the Child Support Agency? Does he realise that Christmas is being ruined for thousands of British families because of fear and uncertainty caused by the operations of that agency? It really is not good enough for the Government to drag their feet over this.

Mr. Newton: I assume that the right hon. Lady's thanks for the Opposition day debate were also made in the spirit of Christmas, for which I am grateful.

The White Paper giving details of the new tariff scheme for criminal injuries compensation—to answer the right hon. Lady's point about the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill—was published yesterday, and doubtless she will have studied it. Our scheme is the most generous in the world. I understand that we pay more than all other European Union countries put together.

As for the Non-Domestic Rating Bill, local authorities are under a duty to send out their bills in good time, and it is important that they know in good time what bills they are to send out, so as to avoid uncertainty for businesses and to avoid the risk that authorities might send out bills on one basis and then have to send out another set of bills on another basis. I do not accept the right hon. Lady's presumptions about the leisurely way in which the House can deal with this matter. It is our hope that the House will deal with all stages of the Bill on Wednesday 12 January.

The last such Bill took only two and a half hours on Second Reading and 20 minutes for its remaining stages —that is to say, less than three hours. On the proposal that I have announced this afternoon, there would be about twice that much time. We shall see whether the Labour party wishes to proceed in a way that meets the convenience both of business and of local authorities.

The right hon. Lady will know that the Secretary of State for Social Security is carefully and urgently examining the report of the Select Committee on the agency—and other representations that he has received —but I cannot at this moment give an undertaking about the timing of a statement.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): Is the Leader of the House aware that it is now nine months since we had a debate on agriculture? Did he note that, during the Prime Minister's statement on GATT and subsequent questions, there was no mention of the effect on farms, farmgate prices or farm incomes? Is he aware of the considerable concern among all hon. Members about the likely impact on agriculture of the GATT deal, whatever its other benefits?

Will the right hon. Gentleman assure us of an opportunity to debate early-day motion 134, standing in the names of members of my party and dealing with the hill livestock compensatory allowances?

[That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Hill Livestock (Compensatory Allowances)

[Mr. Paul Tyler]

(Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 2924), dated 29th November, 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th November, be annulled.]

He will know that many Members from the hill areas are anxious about the effect of all these proposals on hill communities.

Mr. Newton: I shall of course bear the hon. Gentleman's request in mind. There may be some opportunity to discuss with his party how to handle the matter, although, at the moment, because of the Labour party's position, it is not open to me to discuss it in the usual way through the usual channels. I understand his point, and I will take it into account.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): May I welcome the announcement that the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill is to have its Second Reading on the first day back? Is my right hon. Friend aware that a number of us hope to table a Back-Bench amendment to the Bill on the age of consent for homosexual acts, as we wish to see that changed? Could my right hon. Friend tell me whether it will be possible, under the long title of the Bill, so to do with an amendment that will be in order? Can he assist us by telling us whether we can have a full day's clear debate on this important issue, with free votes at the end?

Mr. Newton: Madam Speaker, you at least will have registered that my hon. Friend, in her characteristically engaging way, is inviting me in one answer to usurp your prerogatives and those of the Chief Whip. I hesitate to do so, but I am sure that you and he will take account of her request.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Is the Leader of the House aware that yesterday's GATT announcement, on which we have just spent a great deal of time, coincided with the announcement of further appalling job losses in the special steel works of South Yorkshire, which are among the best in the world? Is he aware of any concern among his colleagues on the Treasury Bench about the fact that those job losses have been caused by the subsidy of our German and Spanish competitors? Those competitors, with their Governments, seem determined to take out our superior capacity, despite the existence of the powerful weapons to which the Prime Minister referred.

Do not the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues understand that, as our vital and strategically important industrial base disappears, this country will become little better than a banana republic, and that most people will not be able even to afford tropical fruit?

Mr. Newton: I do not for a moment accept the points which the hon. Gentleman made towards the end of his remarks. He will know that the Government have made clear their views about the issue of subsidies to other steel industries within the European Union. He will also know of the range of measures which the Government have taken, the most recent being their efforts to achieve a successful outcome of the GATT round. That is designed to improve the competitiveness of this country and the opportunities for our production to be exported.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): In the spirit of Christmas, as invoked by my right hon. Friend, will he save me from being pestered by the press and ensure that the Government give some response to the first report of the Procedure Committee on the Select Committee structure for Northern Ireland, which was published in the first week of December? Would it not be helpful if my right hon. Friend could ensure that the Government did something about it as soon as possible?

Mr. Newton: First, I express my gratitude—and, I am sure, that of the House—to my right hon. Friend and the Committee for the work that they did, not just on that report but on the Committee's earlier reports on these matters.

I am happy to inform my right hon. Friend and the House that, having regard to the report's conclusions, the Government have decided to embark on consultations with other parties on the basis that the time for a Northern Ireland Select Committee has now come. The House will be made aware of the outcome of those consultations in due course. In the meantime, I am sure that the House will welcome the intention to increase parliamentary accountability for the affairs of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Since it was the Leader of the House's PPS who prevented the House from debating Ferranti—a tragedy that puts at risk many thousands of jobs—will he arrange for a ministerial statement before we rise? Clearly there would have been a ministerial statement in that debate. Can we have that statement before the close of play tomorrow?

Mr. Newton: I cannot give any such undertaking to the right hon. Gentleman. I would make the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) was also denied an opportunity of debate by the tactics which were pursued by the Opposition earlier in the evening. I understand that the Chair pointed out at the time that what my hon. Friend did—he is as entitled as any other hon. Member to the procedures of the House—was no more than what had been done by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on Friday.

Mr. Peter Atkinson (Hexham): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on the actions of British Coal at Wearmouth colliery in Sunderland? British Coal closed the pit and offered it to be leased to the private sector. However, British Coal is daily making the pit less attractive to private colliery companies by removing vital roof supports and coal-cutting equipment for which British Coal can have no possible use.

Although British Coal does not understand it, the colliery has a bright future in the private sector, which would safeguard jobs in the mining engineering industry in my constituency, and lead to the re-employment of many colliers in Sunderland.

Mr. Newton: That is an operational matter for British Coal, which has given assurances that no equipment will be removed unnecessarily. In view of my hon. Friend's concern, I will draw his point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 284 concerning the life of Manuel Salazar, who is on death row in the United States?

[That this House is appalled that the death penalty has been passed on Manuel Salazar, a Mexican American, following the death of a police officer at Joliet, Illinois, in

September 1984; notes that Salazar was unarmed and had been beaten by the police officer who subsequently died when his own gun went off; notes that after Salazar fled to Mexico he was illegally and forcibly returned to the United States of America where he was sentenced to death in 1985; notes that the Illinois Supreme Court is to hear arguments for a re-trial following the emergence of new evidence but is disturbed that the Attorney General is opposing this and asking for an execution date to be set; is further disturbed that his case is also before the Mexican courts for violation of his rights there by US agents; and therefore requests his release and return to Mexico.]

Does he recognise that many people in Britain are revolted by the prospect of the execution of a man who was illegally brought from Mexico to the United States? Will he convey that concern to his right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, so that the revulsion of millions of people in Britain at the use of the death penalty can be passed on to the United States Government?

Mr. Newton: I will certainly bring those sentiments to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, but so far, in all the circumstances, the British Government have not considered it appropriate to seek to intervene in that particular case.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): My right hon. Friend will be aware that at least two Labour Members have cited GATT as a reason for debate on other subjects. As it is so important to the British industrial sector, will he give us some idea of when we will have a debate on GATT itself?

Mr. Newton: I cannot at present give my hon. Friend such an indication. Obviously, we will have to consider that, in looking at the business after the first week back that I have announced this afternoon. I will bear her request in mind. Meanwhile she may like to note that right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will be answering questions on the first Wednesday back.

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): Will the Leader of the House consider finding time for a debate on water quality and the cost of cleaning up the water supply? Many of my constituents are concerned not only about the cost of water but about the subsidiarity arrangements recently negotiated by the British Government, which they feel will lead to a reduction in the quality of their drinking water. It is an extremely important issue.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady is labouring under some misapprehension if she thinks that the consequence of decisions in the subsidiarity context is expected to reduce the quality of British drinking water, which is very high. The issue is the pace at which further improvement can be assessed in a way that is manageable for the industry, not least for the consumers who have to pay for them.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Bearing in mind that there are more manufacturing jobs in the London borough of Ealing than in any other London borough, may I again press my right hon. Friend for a debate rather than a statement or questions and answers on GATT, as it has central importance to jobs in my constituency and the borough I represent?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend manifestly can press me, and has pressed me, on that issue. I will, of course, take account of his pressure, but I cannot respond more than that this afternoon.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): May I welcome the response of the Leader of the House to the question from the Chairman of the Procedure Committee? In the season of good will when there is great emphasis on the needy, can we have a debate in the very near future on our overall contribution to the Overseas Development Agency, bearing in mind there is still great need in the developing countries despite the hopeful bonus from the GATT?

Mr. Newton: Many people on both sides of the House would welcome an opportunity to debate that subject. Again, I will bear it in mind, but I cannot at this moment give any specific undertakings.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Is it possible to have a debate on the antics of Labour-controlled Lancashire county council, which is currently instigating a judicial review to prevent the local Government inquiry into the structure of local government from proceeding? The action is being driven by the leader of Lancashire county council, who is power-mad and waving the charge payers' cheque book around. It is estimated that the cost may be about £500,000, when that local authority is for ever saying how strapped it is for cash. We should have a debate as soon as possible.

Mr. Newton: I hope that my hon. Friend's remarks will be registered by those in Lancashire who in due course will have further opportunities to vote in local elections. Meanwhile, the Government have successfully resisted the application for an injunction. The review programme is unchanged, the reviews are going ahead and we shall certainly contest Lancashire's arguments for judicial review.

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): May I draw attention to early-day motions 260 and 261?

[That this House notes the SIB inquiry into the mis-selling of personal pensions to members of occupational pension schemes, but also notes with concern that a third of all personal pension schemes are cancelled within two years leading to the loss of investors' savings, that many individuals have been encouraged to opt-out of SERPS for inappropriate personal pensions, and that the churning of investment schemes including endowment mortgages, has been widespread in recent years leading to further losses for savers; and, therefore, urges the Government to establish an inquiry into the regulation and management of the personal financial services industry.]

While today's news that the Treasury Select Committee will investigate the sale of personal pensions to occupational pension scheme members is welcome, does the Leader of the House accept that that is just the tip of the iceberg? Some £200 million a year of savers' money has been lost through the early cancellation of pension funds, and there has been a widespread mis-selling of personal pension schemes to members of the state earnings-related pensions scheme. Will the Leader of the House find an early opportunity for a major debate on the regulation and management of the personal and financial services industry?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman takes a close interest in these matters, and he knows that the extent of non-compliance is being thoroughly investigated by the Securities and Investment Board. A proper time for such a debate would be when we have the results of its inquiries. The board has the full support of the Government in its inquiry, and the Chancellor has made it clear that he expects the review to be conducted quickly, and appropriate remedies put in place.

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): Will my right hon. Friend find time in the near future for a debate about the responsibilities of employers for employees? I am a member of the Employment Committee and I am not bothered if I have to remain in the House until 4 o'clock in the morning, but the staff of the Palace of Westminster were also kept here until 4 o'clock this morning by the machinations of Opposition Members. The business being conducted was so important that at least 30 or 40 Opposition Members bothered to remain until 3 o'clock:

Madam Speaker: Order. I cannot understand what the hon. Gentleman is asking for. Will he make his point clearly to the Leader of the House?

Mr. Robathan: I am asking for a debate on the responsibilities of employers towards employees, to ensure that female recorders and women who work in the Tea Room are not kept in the House until the small hours of the night by the machinations of Opposition Members. We had one hour's nonsense from one hon. Member, and another Opposition Member claimed to see strangers. He should get more glasses. It is hypocritical of the Opposition to say that they care about the rights of employees. They do not consider the rights of the employees of the House, but treat them all in a cavalier fashion.

Mr. Newton: I hope that members of the Opposition Front Bench, and other Opposition Members who contributed to those proceedings, will consider what my hon. Friend has said. I regret the inconvenience caused to the staff of the House—not least because the public outside will regard it as not a very sensible way for the Opposition to behave and for the House to conduct its affairs.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): Returning to the question of GATT, will the Leader of the House give an assurance that that very important treaty will be debated? It is extraordinary that the French Parliament and the United States Congress can debate and vote on it. Surely the House can at least debate it?

Mr. Newton: I have made it clear that I will bear in mind the various requests that have been made for a debate on GATT. I do not dismiss them, and I will take into account what the right hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): Will my right hon. Friend find time for an early debate on the economic and social implications of investment in transport infrastructure? This would enable me to draw attention to the real economic advantages that the widening of the M5 has brought to my constituents in Worcester, and also the disadvantages it has brought to its neighbours in the villages of Whittington and Norton as a result of the noise generated because of inadequate soundproofing on the motorway.

Mr. Newton: I will draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. I know from experience in my own constituency that one of the problems with road schemes is that, when advantages are brought to one part of an area, disadvantages are brought to another. But I cannot promise an early debate on that matter.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will the Leader of the House, over the Christmas recess, look at the arrangements for Question Time? He will have seen today that neither the Chancellor of the Exchequer nor the Prime Minister answered questions directly, particularly the questions about the £9 a week increase in taxes for the average family. Instead, they started asking questions of the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Chancellor. That was quite ridiculous.

I have been in the House for fourteen and a half years, and I have seen Question Time deteriorate. I go to seminars for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and tell the Members of Parliament of newly democratic countries that Question Time is the time when the Executive is accountable to Parliament. That is clearly less and less the case. Will the Leader of the House look into the matter and report to the House when we come back in January?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the Chairman of the Procedure Committee not long ago undertook some consideration of questions. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I am about to. I was here when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was answering questions. I thought his answers were a model of precision and clarity. I have never heard the Leader of the Opposition answer any question at all.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): The House would welcome an early opportunity to debate local government in inner London. Many of my hon. Friends would welcome an opportunity to demonstrate that the worst councils—in terms of empty houses, poor collection of the council tax —[HON. MEMBERS: "Rates."]—and the provision of services—are councils controlled by the Opposition parties. They are a nightmare for the people of London.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point, and the reaction of Opposition Members shows the embarassment they feel when complaints are made. I will look for an early opportunity to debate the matter, but not before Christmas.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): As to criminality, will there be a statement from the Home Secretary about why a person being deported from the United States —who is unfortunately a British citizen—will be allowed to come here? That person is being deported because he was involved in Nazi mass murders and the killing, in April 1942, of two Soviet prisoners, apart from other things.

It is not wrong that Britain should be considered a safe haven for such war criminals? Bearing in mind the fact that the chances of a prosecution under the War Crimes Act 1991 are remote, his United Kingdom citizenship should be cancelled and he should be told that under no circumstances will we allow British soil to be contaminated by his presence.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman knows the answer. That person is a British citizen, and we have no choice but to accept him if he returns here. Any allegations that he has committed criminal acts will be investigated in the same way as allegations against any other British citizen. That is the right way to approach the matter.

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): Will my right hon. Friend find time, early in the new year, for the Secretary of State for Transport to report to the House about the outcome of his Department's review of the crossrail project? I hope that the Crossrail Bill will be able to proceed without delay through the remainder of its Committee stage.

Mr. Newton: I will bring my hon. Friend's request to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Will the Leader of the House give some Christmas cheer to my embittered constituent Kevin James, who, when he was a serving soldier in Northern Ireland, was severely injured in a bomb blast which killed his companion, Bombardier Wells, and two children? He has had a demand from the Child Support Agency for £1,000, and it has doubled his maintenance payments, which he cannot pay because he has no disposable income.

Can we have a debate on the agency so that I can ask the Prime Minister why, in Mr. James's terms, when he has put his life on the line "for people such as John Major", he is now being ruined by the same man? How is he going to help his ex-wife if he can no longer afford to travel to the north of England to see his children or to buy them Christmas presents?

Mr. Newton: As the hon. Gentleman will understand, I am not in a position to comment on a specific case. He will have observed, however, that my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Social Security and the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People are both present; I am sure that they will look into the matter.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): Will my right hon. Friend allow some time early in the new year for a debate on procedures of the House, particularly to discuss the methodology by which the Opposition parties could put down amendments to Treasury motions? Clearly, the whole issue needs to be simplified for those on the Opposition Front Bench.

Mr. Newton: I have already said that it might be appropriate for someone to run a seminar for the Opposition dealing with the tabling of amendments to Budget motions. *[Interruption.]* I am not sure whether it would be appropriate for me to do that; but those who now sit opposite me muttering may care to seek further advice.

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): Does the Leader of the House recall the critical remarks made by his hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), who accused the Prime Minister of political funk for sitting on the report on the privatisation of the Post Office for more than a year? Is it not a tragedy that the chairman of the Post Office has felt it necessary to speak out publicly, and in a highly critical way, against the Prime Minister and the Government, because of the drift and uncertainty surrounding the Government's proposals for the future of the Post Office?

Is this not the clearest possible example of circumstances in which a debate is urgently required—in this instance, a debate on the future of a national institution?

Mr. Newton: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the Government's position in relation to the review of the Post Office, and the consideration that they are devoting to it —which, clearly, must be conducted very carefully—is well known. I do not propose to add anything further this afternoon.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): May I thank my right hon. Friend for providing, in considerable detail, the programme for the first week after our return in January? Would it not have been equally helpful to hon. Members if the subject of Thursday's debate had also been announced by the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett)?

Mr. Newton: Yes, it would. It would also have been quite nice if someone had thanked me for my early warning of the dates of the Easter recess.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): The Leader of the House has announced a three-week Christmas recess. Will he spend at least one day of that break brushing up his knowledge of parliamentary procedure, of which he has shown a worrying lack of grasp in his answers today—especially in his response to my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), who referred to the Prime Minister's poor performance at Prime Minister's Question Time?

The right hon. Gentleman said that, in all his time as Leader of the House, he had never heard the Leader of the Opposition answer a straight question. Will he try to understand that the Prime Minister's function is to answer the questions, whereas the function of the Leader of the Opposition is to ask them? May I make him fully aware that any Opposition Member would be delighted to swap places whenever he likes? We will answer the questions, and we will form the Government of the country, and we will answer those questions incredibly more effectively than the right hon. Gentleman does now.

Mr. Newton: Not for the first time, the hon. Gentleman is all over the place. I did not have in mind the role of the Leader of the Opposition at Prime Minister's Question Time; I am well aware of the position in that regard, and I understand what the hon. Gentleman was saying. I have sat through a good many debates during which the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has been asked how he would pay for his spending programmes, and I have never heard an answer.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Will my right hon. Friend consider making time available for a full debate on the methods by which the House makes the European Community accountable to Parliament, and to the Parliaments of the other member states? Is he aware that, when European Standing Committee B—of which I am a member—meets on 12 January, it will discuss a motion relating to the special rehabilitation support programme, and a document that will already have been agreed in the Council of Ministers? Any opinions that we express to the Minister therefore cannot be taken into account.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is not satisfactory? Do we not need to review the way in which we scrutinise the huge quantity of legislation that flows out of the European Community, so that we can have the Europe of nation states that the Prime Minister wants, rather than being dragged into a federal system?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will be well aware that, in recent years, substantial improvements have been made in the way in which such matters are conducted, in order to improve accountability. Obviously, I would not rule out further improvements if there are clear ways in which they can be made. Meanwhile, my hon. Friend might have welcomed the clear gains represented by the further progress made very recently at the Brussels Council in giving reality to the concept of subsidiarity.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement to be made—either by the Secretary of State for Health, or by the Minister responsible for health in Scotland—regarding a letter that I have received from a junior Minister, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), who is Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland?

According to that letter, incinerators in national health service hospitals—or trust hospitals—can now possibly be used to burn commercial or toxic waste. Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for a ministerial statement to clarify the matter, and to back up what the Minister said? I understand that he has now denied it to certain newspapers. I am concerned about that, because I have a letter in which he says clearly, in black and white, that those hospital incinerators can now burn toxic waste commercially.

Mr. Newton: I will bring that request to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. I am sure that he will seek to reassure the hon. Gentleman in any way he can.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): First, may I thank my right hon. Friend profusely for giving us advance warning of the business that we will debate when we return?

Two weeks ago, when we were given notice of a debate prior to the meeting of the European Council, I told my right hon. Friend that I thought there would be a problem because not all the documentation was available, and that in any case there was a huge amount to study before the debate. As he will recall, last Thursday it turned out that some of the main documentation had not arrived until Wednesday afternoon—which gave us less than a day in which to study a 7 in pile of documentation.

I suspect that, if he looks at *Hansard*, my right hon. Friend will agree that the quality of the debate was very poor—with some exceptions. People had not had enough time to study the documents. Will my right hon. Friend take account of that, and look for some way in which we could have acquired that documentation earlier?

Mr. Newton: I shall not attempt to comment on every document. My hon. Friend will know, however, that when a debate is to take place near the date of a Council meeting, we depend to some extent on the arrival of the necessary documentation from the Commission, or from other appropriate bodies. He will also be well aware—it has been widely reported in the newspapers—that my right hon. Friends have made clear their own view on the late arrival of very important documents from the Commission for the Council itself.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Is the Leader of the House aware that, earlier this week, *The Sun* carried the story that thousands of jobs were available in California for British workers, involving the rebuilding of homes that had been destroyed in the fire? Is he aware that, misled by the story, some British workers actually went to California, only to discover that they were not allowed to work without the necessary permits—and that, in any case, the jobs did not exist?

Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for the Minister to make a statement to the House setting the record straight, before any more British workers suffer as a result of the lies in *The Sun*?

Mr. Newton: I will bring the matter to the attention of, perhaps, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. On the other hand, I hope that the hon. Gentleman's complaint will be heard and noted by those responsible for the original story, who might then consider it appropriate for them to correct it.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): In view of the procedures adopted by the Opposition to disrupt the Government's business, has my right hon. Friend had any talks with the deputy Leader of the Opposition about the Jopling proposals—or are those proposals even less likely to be implemented now?

Mr. Newton: I have had a number of exchanges of various kinds with the right hon. Lady. It has manifestly not been possible so far to make the progress that I would like. It is, perhaps, for the right hon. Lady to say whether she is prepared to engage in any further efforts; but the Opposition's current stance is that they are not talking to us at all.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Some highly disturbing information has been hidden in the Library rather than being published in *Hansard*. It shows that only 95 per cent. of those eligible to be included on the electoral register in England and Wales are currently registered. Moreover, that includes many people who should not be registered, as they died during the process of registration or have moved away.

When we return from the Christmas recess, should we not have a debate about the state of electoral registration in this country, so that we can discuss the development of a proper procedure to secure maximum registration? We are in danger of having not only a partial Parliament that hardly ever meets, but a partial electorate.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will have at least one opportunity in the first week back to raise that point, because the Home Secretary is here for questions on Thursday 13 January.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 281.

[That this House notes that at Prime Minister's Questions on Tuesday 14th December the Prime Minister stated that there were over a thousand grant-maintained schools, Official Report, column 826, whereas the true number is 708; further notes that on the same day at education questions the Secretary of State for Education claimed that month after month including the last three months, the ratio for opting out was 8:2, whereas the correct ratio is 6:4 at a time when ballots have fallen by two-thirds; and calls on the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Education to make a statement to the House correcting these serious errors of fact which might mislead honourable Members into repeating them inside and outside the House.]

I have attempted to put right in a parliamentary publication factual inaccuracies made by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Education during Question Time on Tuesday. The Prime Minister mistook the estimate of grant-maintained schools as 1,000, when in reality it was 708, and the Secretary of State for Education could not tell the difference between a ratio of 8:2 and one of 6:4.

If the Leader of the House cannot bring them to the House to set the record straight, will he at least send the Prime Minister back to school so that he can get a better grasp of number, and send the Secretary of State for Education back to school so that he can learn to speak English in a much clearer fashion?

Mr. Newton: I suspect that the mathematical confusion may be in the hon. Gentleman's mind, since I understand that parents at well over 1,000 schools voted in favour of grant-maintained status, and applications from 840 of them have already been approved. Obviously, the exact proportion for and against varies from month to month, but taking the whole period since balloting began in 1988, the proportion has remained more or less constant at around eight out of 10.

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to the United Nations convention on the rights of the child, especially article 34, which calls on all states to take effective action to protect all children from sexual exploitation. In the light of that, I ask the Leader of the House to read the article in *The Mail on Sunday,* which highlighted the disturbing growth of child prostitution in Nottingham.

On the assumption that this is an all too sad reflection of what is going on in major cities up and down this country, can I ask the Leader of the House to find time for a debate on child prostitution in British cities, the inadequacies of current British law in terms of penalties against men who draw children into prostitution and the over-stretched nature of resources available to work with those children?

Mr. Newton: In one sence, I probably can promise the hon. Gentleman a debate, first, in fairly general terms and, no doubt subsequently if he wishes, in more specific terms. Of course, the first business in the first week back is the Second Reading of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, to which such matters would clearly be relevant.

Points of Order

5.3 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I should be most grateful if you could clarify a point of order which arose during business questions. You will have heard the Lord President asked about the handling of Prime Minister's questions, and you will have heard him say that he had never heard the Leader of the Opposition answer questions, as though that were in the context of Prime Minister's questions.

Will you place it on record and beyond doubt, first, that Question Time—whether for the Prime Minister or any other Minister—is to enable Government policy to be scrutinised by the House; and, secondly, that it would be out of order, and you would take a most serious view, if Labour Members sought to give answers instead of asking questions at that time?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Madam Speaker, certainly with deference to you—I am not quite sure about the right hon. Lady—I made my position on that absolutely clear in response to a question asked from the Back Benches only a few moments ago.

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your guidance about Prime Minister's Questions today. While Prime Minister's Questions are normally noisy, it struck me that there was a concerted attempt by Opposition Members to drown the Prime Minister so that Tory Members could not hear him. I wonder whether you think that that is a breach of privilege.

Madam Speaker: Many hon. Members enjoy themselves during Question Time, and it is my wish that we have less noise during those exchanges.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: No, let me deal with the point of order raised by the right hon. Lady.

The way in which we conduct our parliamentary system is for the Executive to be accountable to Parliament and to answer questions, whether through parliamentary questions, statements or exchanges during debate. That is the whole basis on which our tradition has been built. The Executive are responsible to Parliament and the House for their conduct of policy.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Does it relate?

Dr. Godman: No, it is an entirely different matter, on which I seek your advice.

Yesterday, the statement concerning the joint declaration on Northern Ireland was aided by the placing of copies of the declaration in the Vote Office so that all hon. Members had access to the declaration to which the Prime Minister referred, understandably, in a very liberal way. It seems that a useful precedent was created. This is where I seek your guidance.

When Ministers make statements relating to documents, especially comprehensive ones, it would be useful if those

[Dr. Godman]

documents could be placed in the Vote Office at an early time to enable hon. Members to read through them, as we were able to read the declaration yesterday.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. At present, the Procedure Committee is investigating this matter to see whether it can be dealt with as the hon. Gentleman suggests.

Madam Speaker: As hon. Members are aware, this matter is raised with me at least once a week. For the moment, it is for the discretion of Ministers as to whether documents are available. I am delighted to hear that the right hon. Gentleman the Chairman of the Procedure Committee is looking into the matter.

BILLS PRESENTED

Non-Domestic Rating

Mr. Secretary Gummer, supported by Mr. Michael Portillo, Mr. Secretary Redwood, Mr. David Curry and Mr. Tony Baldry, presented a Bill to make further provision with respect to non-domestic rating for the financial year beginning in 1994 and subsequent financial years; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 8.]

Criminal Justice and Public Order.

Mr. Secretary Howard, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Gummer, Mr. Secretary Lang, Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew, Mrs. Secretary Bottomley, Mr. Secretary Redwood and Mr. David Maclean, presented a Bill to make further provision with respect to the treatment, and certain services connected with the treatment, of offenders; to amend the law relating to bail; to amend the law relating to the proceedings of criminal courts, including the law relating to evidence and the law relating to juries, and the law relating to the collection of fines; to amend the law relating to the publication of reports or pictures relating to proceedings in which children or young persons are concerned; to penalise intimidatory or harmful conduct towards witnesses, jurors and others; to confer new powers on the police to take samples from or search persons and to make further provision in relation to samples and fingerprints; to create new offences and make further provision in relation to persons unlawfully or without authorisation on land or causing a public nuisance by noise on land or otherwise affecting public order, including offences in relation to the recovery of possession of land from squatters and to make related amendments and repeals in certain enactments relating to gipsy caravan sites; to create further powers and offences for the prevention of terrorist activities; to amend the law relating to obscenity and pornography and the enforcement of the Video Recordings Act 1984; to make further provision in relation to prisons, the provision of prison services and employment in the prison service; to amend the law relating to the transfer of detainees; to increase certain penalties; to extend the powers of the Serious Fraud Office; to penalise the sale of tickets for designated football matches by unauthorised persons; to authorise the payment of grants for expenditure on measures for the prevention of crime or reduction of the fear of crime or for security at party conferences; and for purposes connected with those purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 9.]

Bank of England (Amendment)

Mr. Nicholas Budgen, supported by Sir Terence Higgins, Mr. Richard Spearing, Mr. John Watts, Mr. Giles Radice, Mr. A. J. Beith, Sir Thomas Arnold, Mr. Barry Legg, Mr. Brian Sedgemore, Mr. Quentin Davies and Mr. Nigel Forman, presented a Bill to amend the Bank of England Act 1946 so as to remove the general power of the Treasury to give directions to the Governor of the Bank; to establish price stability as the primary objective of the Bank and to provide for policy targets for the carrying out of this objective; to enable the Treasury to override this primary objective in certain circumstances; to make provision as to the annual report of the Bank; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 28 January, and to be printed. [Bill 10.]

Energy Conservation

Mr. A. J. Beith, supported by Mr. Robert B. Jones, Mr. Clive Soley, Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. Cynog Dafis, Mr. Andrew Welsh, Mr. Roy Beggs, Sir John Hannam, Mrs. Barbara Roche, Mr. Gary Waller, Mr. Malcolm Wicks and Mr. Andrew Robathan, presented a Bill to make provision for the conducting of energy audits and the drawing up of energy conservation plans and priorities for residential properties in their areas by local authorities in the United Kingdom; to give the Secretary of State powers to set timetables for such plans and for works arising from them; and for related purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 4 February, and to be printed. [Bill 11.]

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Kevin Barron, supported by Mr. Hugh Bayley, Mrs. Edwina Currie, Mr. Donald Dewar, Sir Peter Emery, Sir John Hannam, Mr. Gerald Kaufman, Mr. Roger Sims, The Reverend Martin Smyth, Sir David Steel, Mrs. Ann Taylor and Mr. Dafydd Wigley, presented a Bill to make illegal the advertisement of tobacco and products containing tobacco other than at the point of sale; to make illegal the promotion by other means of tobacco and products containing tobacco; and for related purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 February, and to be printed. [Bill 12.]

Chiropractors

Mr. David Lidington, supported by Mr. Malcolm Moss, Mr. Alan Simpson, Ms Liz Lynne, Mr. David Tredinnick, Mr. Bill Cash, Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, Mr. Peter Butler, Alice Mahon, Mr. Doug Hoyle, Jean Corston and Mr. David Atkinson, presented a Bill to establish a body to be known as the General Chiropractic Council; to provide for the regulation of the chiropractic profession, including making provision as to the registration of chiropractors and as to their professional education and conduct; to make provision in connection with the development and promotion of the profession; to amend, and make provision in connection with the Osteopaths Act 1993; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 18 February, and to be printed. [Bill 13.]

Antarctic

Mr. Michael Jopling, supported by Dr. John Cunningham, Mr. David Howell, Sir David Steel, Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman and Mrs. Chris Smith, presented a Bill to make new provision, in connection with the Antarctic Treaty signed at Washington on 1 December 1959; to make provision consequential on the Protocol on Environmental Protection to that Treaty done at Madrid on 4 October 1991; to make provision consequential on the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources drawn up at Canberra on 20 May 1980; to provide for the taking of criminal proceedings against, and the punishment of, British citizens and others in respect of certain acts and omissions occurring in that part of Antarctica that lies between 150 degrees West longitude and 90 degrees West longitude; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 25 February, and to be printed. [Bill 14.]

Road Traffic Regulation (Special Events)

Mr. Peter Atkinson, supported by Mr. Sebastian Coe, Sir Paul Beresford, Mr. Peter Bottomley, Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, Mr. John McWilliam, Mr. A. J. Beith, Mr. Raymond S. Robertson, Mr. John Greenway and Mr. David Harris, presented a Bill to make provision, in connection with sporting or social events held on roads or entertainments so held, for the restriction or regulation of traffic on roads; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 4 March, and to be printed. [Bill 15.]

Civil Rights (Disabled Persons)

Dr. Roger Berry, supported by Mr. Alfred Morris, Sir John Hannam, Sir David Steel, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, The Reverend

Martin Smyth, Sir Richard Body, Mr. Gordon McMaster, Mr. Richard Shepherd, Mr. David Hinchliffe, Mrs. Margaret Ewing and Mr. Robert N. Wareing, presented a Bill to prohibit discrimination against disabled people on the ground of their disability; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 March, and to be printed. [Bill. 16.]

Water (Domestic Disconnections)

Mr. Stanley Orme, supported by Mr. Richard Burden., Mrs. Anne Campbell, Mr. John Denham, Mr. Bill Etherington, Mr. Frank Field, Mr. Simon Hughes, Helen Jackson, Mr. Rhodri Morgan, Mr. Edward O'Hara, Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock and Mr. Paul Tyler, presented a Bill to amend the Water Industry Act 1991 so as to remove the powers of water undertakers to disconnect residential premises in cases of non-payment of charges; to constrain the installation of pre-payment devices for the supply of water; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 25 February, and to be printed. [Bill 17.]

Nursery Education (Assessment of Need)

Mr. Nigel Spearing, supported by Ms Diane Abbott, Mr. Don Foster and Mr. Ray Powell, presented a Bill to require local authorities to have regard for the need for securing that provision is made for pupils who have not attained the age of five years by the provision of nursery education as in section 8(2)(b) of the Education Act 1944; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 18 February, and to be printed. [Bill 18.]

Protection of Dogs

Mr. Alan Williams, supported by Sir Teddy Taylor, Mr. Alan Meale, Mr. Terry Lewis, Mr. Andrew Borden, Mr. Simon Hughes and Sir Terence Higgins, presented a Bill to make it an offence to cause or allow a dog to enter a subterranean refuge of any wild animal; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 4 February, and to be printed. [Bill 19.]

Race Relations (Remedies)

Mr. Keith Vaz, supported by Ms Harriet Harman, Mr. Max Madden, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Ms Liz Lynne, Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones, Mr. Sebastian Coe, Mr. Gyles Brandreth, Sir Ivan Lawrence, Ms Diane Abbott, Mr. David Trimble and Mr. Andrew Welsh, presented a Bill to remove the limit imposed by subsection (2) of section 56 of the Race Relations Act 1976 on the amount of compensation which may be awarded under that section and to make provision for interest in connection with sums so awarded; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 18 February, and to be printed. [Bill 20.]

Parliamentary Commissioner

Mr. Gerald Malone, supported by Mr. Hartley Booth, Mr. Peter Butler, Mr. John Denham, Mrs. Angela Knight, Mr. Raymond S. Robertson, Mr. Rod Richards, Mr. Tim Smith, Mr. Peter Atkinson and Mr. James Wallace, presented a Bill to include among the matters subject to investigation by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration actions taken in the exercise of administrative functions by the administrative staff of certain tribunals: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 25 February, and to be printed. [Bill 21.]

Sale and Supply of Goods

Mr. David Clelland, supported by Mr. Anthony Coombs, Mr. Simon Coombs, Mr. Stephen Day, Mr. Jim Dowd, Mrs. Llin Golding, Mr. Nigel Griffiths, Mr. Charles Hendry, Mr. Martin Jones, Mr. Stephen Milligan, Mr. Richard Page and Mr. Alan W. Williams, presented a Bill to amend the law relating to the sale of goods; to make provision as to the terms to be implied in certain agreements for the transfer of property in or the hire of goods, in hire-purchase agreements and on the exchange of goods for trading stamps and as to the remedies for breach of the terms of such agreements; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 February, and to be printed. [Bill 22.]

Racial Hatred and Violence

Mr. Hartley Booth, supported by Mr. Michael Alison, Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva, Mr. John Gorst, Mr. James Clappison, Mr. Anthony Steen, Mr. Keith Vaz, Sir Rhodes Boyson, Mr. Michael Bates, Mr. David Sumberg, Mr. Spencer Batiste and Mr. Greville Janner, presented a Bill to amend the law relating to racial hatred; to strengthen the Public Order Act 1986 and the Malicious Communications Act 1988; to make new provisions to combat group defamation; to enable the courts to inmpose greater penalties in criminal cases involving racial hatred; and to make further provisions to amend the law relating to racial discrimination: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 March, and to be printed. [Bill 23.]

Merchant Shipping (Salvage and Pollution)

Mr. David Harris, supported by Mr. Sebastian Coe, Mr. Eric Clarke, Mrs. Margaret Ewing, Mr. Barry Field, Mr. John Horam, Mr. Richard Page, Mr. David Porter, Sir Keith Speed, Mr. James Wallace and Joan Walley, presented a Bill to make further provision in relation to marine salvage and marine pollution and the discharge of functions of the Secretary of State in connection therewith; and for purposes connected with those purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 28 Januaray, and to be printed. [Bill 24.]

Insolvency

Mr. John Butterfill, supported by Mr. Nicholas Brown, Mr. Ian Malcolm Bruce, Sir Ralph Howell, Mr. Greville Janner, Dr. Ian Twinn, Mr. Richard Caborn and Mr. Philip Oppenheim, presented a Bill to amend the law relating to company insolvency and winding up, and the insolvency and bankruptcy of individuals, so far as it concerns the adjustment of certain transactions; and for connected purposes; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 14 January, and to be printed. [Bill 25.]

Building Conversion and Energy Conservation

Mr. John McAllion, supported by Mr. Clive Soley, Mr. Win Griffiths, Mr. Frank Cook, Mr. Gary Waller, Mr. Andrew Robathan, Sir David Knox, Mr. Cynog Dafis, Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. A. J. Beith, Mr. Ernie Ross and Mr. William McKelvey, presented a Bill to require the insulation against heat loss of dwelling units provided by the conversion of existing dwellings; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 February, and to be printed. [Bill 26.]

Small Business

Sir Michael Grylls, supported by Mr. Nigel Evans, Mr. Richard Spring, Mr. Richard Page, Mr. John Townend, Mr. David Shaw, Mr. William Cash, Mr. Andrew Rowe and Mr. Peter Thurnham, presented a Bill to place upon the Secretary of State a duty to promote the growth of small businesses; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 25 February, and to be printed. [Bill 27.]

Women into Parliament

Mrs. Teresa Gorman presented a Bill to amend the Representation of the People Acts with a view to increasing the number of women elected to Parliament; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 4 March, and to be printed. [Bill 28.]

Safety in Schools

Mr. David Porter presented a Bill to require schools to make certain provisions in case of fire, accident and other emergency; and for related purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 18 February, and to be printed. [Bill 29.]

Orders of the Day

Social Security (Contributions) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Speaker: I must make it clear to the House that I have not selected the amendment.

5.10 pm

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The House will be aware that the Bill concerns the national insurance fund, which provides finance for the range of contributory benefits, the most notable of which is the retirement pension, but which also includes widows' benefits, sickness, maternity and unemployment benefits. Nearly half the total expenditure on social security is met from the national insurance fund—more than 80 per cent. is contributed by employers or employees and less than 20 per cent. is made up by Treasury grant.

The thrust of the Bill is to increase employee contributions by 1 per cent. I recall that the great Irish-born statesman, Edmund Burke, who contribued so much to political thinking in general and particularly to thinking within the Conservative party, once said:

> "To tax and to please . . . is not given to men."

If I cannot bring pleasure to the House, I hope that I will at least be able to persuade hon. Members that what we are proposing is both a rational and a prudent measure for the Government to take at this time.

The other day the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) reminded me of my previous appearance, about a year ago, at the Dispatch Box in connection with a social security contributions Bill, when I referred to the concept of a contributory scheme being firmly embedded in the collective mind of our nation. That leads me to believe that most people will recognise that at a time when benefit expenditure is still expected to rise and contribution income is not keeping pace with cyclical pressures, an adjustment in contribution rates should be made. It is implicit in the contributory principle that contribution rates will fluctuate either up or down.

It is worth reminding the House that the contribution increase proposed in the Bill is the first since 1983. The Government reduced employees' contributions in 1985 and again in 1989. Both changes were particularly targeted at helping lower-paid workers. After the 1 per cent. increase has been set, many people will still pay less from next April than they would have done under the flat 6·5 per cent. which applied under the Labour Government.

The Government, of course, have no money of their own. They simply redistribute money collected through taxes and contributions in the way that Parliament prescribes. It is self-evident that no one would volunteer to pay extra contributions or taxes. Last year, we avoided an increase in national insurance contributions by introducing the facility for a Treasury grant to the fund to help sustain its balance.

The House will be well aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has found it possible to announce the full uprating of all benefits for 1994-95 in line with inflation, as well as extra help with fuel costs for pensioners, widows and people receiving invalidity benefit. For the national insurance fund alone, that help will take expenditure to about £40 billion in 1994-95, an increase of about £1 billion on this year's expenditure.

Income to the fund from national insurance contributions is not, however, keeping pace with expenditure. For instance, if contributions were kept at existing levels we would continue to spend between £4 billion and £5 billion more on benefits than our net contribution receipts. As the House will be aware, the Social Security Act 1993 introduced the facility for a grant from the Treasury to the national insurance fund. The grant will continue to be an intrinsic part of our strategy for balancing that fund, but we nevertheless consider it right that, in the medium term, contributors should be expected to bear a somewhat greater proportion of the cost of benefits rather than taxpayers generally being expected to make up all the deficit.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for displaying his characteristic courtesy in giving way. Is it his Department's intention to publish an explanatory leaflet about the details of the increases which would be available to anyone who is affected by the Bill? If so, will he seek to explain to all employees the obligations of the Government towards them in terms of the payment of such benefits?

Mr. Scott: I will ensure that the usual information on the workings of the national insurance fund and the contributions paid by employees and employers is made available. When we return to the House after the Christmas recess, there will be an opportunity for the House, provided that we complete proceedings on the Bill today, as we must, to consider the regulations that will cover the detail of the Bill. That would be an appropriate time for us to consider the advice that we will give to employers and employees for the arrangements that will exist in the new financial year.

The detail of the Bill deals with a single substantive measure—the 1 per cent. increase in employees' national insurance contributions. I shall mention two subsidiary items later.

The proposed increase in contributions has been public for a considerable time, having been announced in the March Budget by the former Chancellor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont). Earlier this week, when the House discussed the Bill's timetable, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House said that, since then, at least 15 days had been available for discussion of the proposal.

The increase in employees' national insurance contributions requires social security legislation separate from the Finance Bill, because it is not a taxation measure, but a national insurance fund income measure under the care and management of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The other detailed aspects of the annual contributions rerating, which my right hon. Friend announced on the day of the Budget, will be dealt with, as I said a few moments ago, in the usual regulations and the affirmative order at a later date. I can confirm—in response to a point raised yesterday—that that order will, as is statutorily provided for, be accompanied by the customary report of the Government Actuary.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Can the right hon. Gentleman clarify whether there will be an opportunity to discuss the uprating statement, as in the past? Do the new Budget procedures preclude the ability to have a proper debate in the House on the details of the uprating statement?

Mr. Scott: There was ample opportunity for hon. Members to respond when my right hon. Friend made the uprating statement. As we have moved to a unified Budget, immediately followed by an uprating statement and then by legislation giving effect, where necessary, to any of the announcements, including the uprating statement, I do not believe that there is any shortage of opportunity in the House to discuss the impact of measures.

I am aware that, during the debate on the timetable of the Bill, hon. Members wondered whether the general arrangements of the House needed to be looked at in the light of the arrangements for the unified Budget. That is not a matter for me to settle, but I know that those who are responsible for the business of the House are giving some thought to it. That is the greatest comfort that I can give the hon. Gentleman at the moment.

I should emphasise that the increase applies only to the main rate of contributions—earnings over £57 a week—and does not apply to the lower rate of contributions; so lower-paid workers will pay proportionately less at the new, higher rate and the greatest increases will be for those on higher levels of pay at or near the upper limit. The increase across the range of earnings, on which the state-earnings related pension scheme accrues, maintains the contributory principle of the scheme as a whole. The 1 per cent. increase will assist the national insurance fund to the tune of £1·9 billion in the first year.

We are aiming—subject, of course, to parliamentary progress—to achieve Royal Assent by the end of January or early February, to allow time for details in the separate re-rating order to follow on and to ensure that employers can plan on the revised rates being firm when they receive the new contribution rates, which will be mailed out in February.

I shall touch on two subsidiary measures in the Bill. Last night, there was, if I may use the vernacular term, a bit of a son and dance about the national health service provisions in the measures that we are considering. It was built up, no doubt for reasons best known to those in charge of the response to business on the Opposition Benches, with a good performance by the Labour Members who sit below the Gangway. The provision is a minor corrective measure, and I am sure that when it is explained it will be supported on both sides of the House.

We currently allocate about 10 per cent. of all contribution income to the health service under a principle dating back to the inception of the contributory scheme as we know it. However, we have uncovered a minor ambiguity in the legislation that split employees' contributions in 1989 into an initial rate of 2 per cent. and a main rate of 9 per cent. which, as the House will be aware, is to be increased to 10 per cent. I am entirely clear that it was always intended that the NHS allocation should, from 1989 onwards, be paid out of the main rate and not out of the lower 2 per cent. rate, because that would have left only about half the 2 per cent. contribution rate to go into the national insurance fund.

As drafted, the legislation certainly excludes calculating the allocation on the 2 per cent. rate and it could be interpreted as excluding an allocation to the NHS on variants of the main 9 per cent. rate—for example, where employees are contracted out of SERPS and a rebated main contribution rate is paid. That was never the intention and the allocation has been paid all along to the NHS from all contributions from employees above the initial 2 per cent. rate. That simple addition to the Bill is a small amendment to ensure that legislation and time-honoured policy and practice properly coincide.

The third provision of the Bill is a simple clarifying amendment, which involves no change in policy. It will not change in any way the assessment for class 4 contributions and no one will be any worse off. It aims to put beyond doubt the existing policy that payments made to approved personal pension schemes by the self-employed are not allowable as relief in the computation of profits on which class 4 contributions are charged. It is in line with the basic principle that only genuine business expenses, not personal expenses, are allowed.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it clear on a number of occasions that the Government are committed to the welfare state, but to one which will not outstrip the nation's ability to pay for it in the longer term. However, I believe that the levels of expenditure to which we are committed for the immediate future require a readjustment of the balance of expenditure met by the taxpayer and the contributor. The increase in contributions is modest in terms of our past record, which is that we have twice reduced contributions and saved most people about £3 a week. I commend the Bill to the House.

5.24 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I thank the Minister for his courteous explanation of the Bill. I must confess that he reminded me that he is not a man given to raising the temperature. I suspect that that is why he has been put up to speak on this occasion. I especially appreciate the way in which he referred with slight distaste to the uncovering of a minor ambiguity—as if he were the proprietor of a bungalow and had found a worm on his lawn. I assure him that I do not intend to pursue that matter and follow the ingenuity of my colleagues that night.

I am more interested in what the Minister presented as an almost technical adjustment—in the increase in the basic national insurance contributions for employees. It is a short and simple Bill, which is to some extent brutal. Undoubtedly, it will be unpopular and will have unpleasant consequences. It is full of somewhat sinister possibilities for future policy.

I am genuinely a little surprised that the Secretary of State has decided to sit this debate out, although I understand that he is here and available to comment. However, I regard the Bill as an important measure; it is part of the central budgetary strategy of the Government and will raise a great deal of money. I do not want to make a war dance, but it is remarkable that the Secretary of State does not wish to explain the measure to the House himself and put it in the wider context—the Secretary of State is a great man for his wider context.

The Government strategy is built on taxes, which have increased over recent times, are increasing and, if the Chancellor has his way, will go on increasing dramatically. I would never criticise the Chancellor's commitment to the policy that he has chosen—to set about raising taxes with vim, vigour and a fair degree of imagination. We know from his evidence about which there has been a good deal of talk already, that the Chancellor told the Treasury Select

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

Committee yesterday that there was no dispute and that it was common ground that what would be raised in the coming financial year would be the equivalent of 7p on the standard rate of income tax.

That is a pretty staggering figure for Conservative Members of Parliament—especially for those who have unusually long memories and can remember what they said during the general election campaign. The fact that the Chancellor has confirmed that his proposals will add the equivalent of £9 or £10 to the bills of an average family and that in the following year that £9 or £10 will escalate to £16 is, to put it charitably, food for thought among Conservative Members of Parliament and voters.

We are considering £24 billion over three years—a massive hike in taxation and one of the greatest in modern times. In the grand design, which was hidden with remarkable tenacity during debates on the general election, the Social Security (Contributions) Bill has a key and rather dishonourable role.

The Minister was careful to make a technical distinction about the adjustment in the contribution rate and he said that it was not a matter of taxation. I understand why he wants to clutch to that fig leaf—fig leaves were mentioned in the debate last night and I am glad to adopt that metaphor. It is a rise in taxation—a substantial rise—which affects the vast majority of the working population. I quote in evidence of the fact that it is taxation a speech made on 7 October 1993—to which I am sure the Minister listened —at the Conservative party conference by the present Chancellor of the Exchequer. He said:

> "Most of Norman Lamont's tax increases will come from higher National Insurance Contributions, cuts in income tax allowances and a clampdown on tax avoidance".

We know that Ministers now rather belittle the idea of clamping down on tax loopholes and tax avoidance. The point I stress is that the Chancellor straightforwardly said that his predecessor's tax increases would come mainly from three areas, and the one area that led the list was higher national insurance contributions.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): The hon. Gentleman is obviously an expert on increasing taxation. Perhaps during his speech he will refer to Labour's policies and proposals for taxation and national insurance. Does Labour still have the policy of adding 10p to the top rate of tax, whatever that would be, and of removing the ceiling from those on the top level of national insurance? For many workers earning modest sums, the increase in income tax would be 20 per cent.

Mr. Dewar: I am always glad when the hon. Gentleman comes seeking the truth, although I am a little puzzled by his statement. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), the shadow Chancellor, has outlined a specific list of proposals on many occasions, usually with a certain air of embarrassment because he is greeted with shouts of "Boring!" from hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans). It is not a case of the hon. Gentleman not knowing; it is a case of his not wanting to listen or to learn.

The Chancellor spoke at the conference about loopholes and about tax avoidance. A list of specific loopholes, including corporation tax loopholes, executive share options, advance corporation tax and scrip dividends, has been put on the table by my hon. Friend the shadow Chancellor. It would greatly improve the knowledge of the hon. Member for Ribble Valley—I have no doubt that he would enjoy the task—to read some of my hon. Friend's speeches.

There is a great deal of concern about the shadow Budget and about national insurance contributions—*[Interruption.]* I am glad that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) appears to be about to raise the matter. It fills two whole pages of the defensive briefing which was prepared for this debate by Conservative central office. The briefing contains a little calculation of the impact of Labour's proposals on an especially sensitive group of voters—those who earn just over £22,000. We were told that they would be especially victimised and that it was unthinkable that the shadow Chancellor could impose such a burden. We have the figure here. It is said that someone who earns £22,000 would have to pay £2·98 more a week under Labour's proposals. That is terrible, unthinkable and cause for outrage.

I do not know whether, in his deep researches into the matter, the hon. Member for Langbaurgh has taken the trouble to look at the briefing on the Bill prepared by the Library. If he takes that trouble, he will see someone earning £430 a week will pay far higher national insurance contributions than those proposed by the Labour party before the general election. I am very puzzled. I took the Conservatives' outrage and concern about the impact of those proposals as wholly genuine.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not dispute the arithmetic of the House of Commons Library. The figure will not be £2·98, as suggested in the shadow Budget and as quoted by Conservative central office. People in the category I have mentioned will face an increase of £4·56 a week. As there was outrage at the proposition produced before the general election, I confidently look forward to seeing the hon. Gentleman in my Lobby tonight. He must now be experiencing the most appalling difficulties of conscience about how he can support an imposition on those people which is far larger than any previously proposed.

Although the Secretary of State for Social Security is technically in charge of the Bill, it is, of course, part of the central Budget strategy, with its proposal of the equivalent of 7p on the standard rate. It was interesting that the Chancellor told the Treasury Select Committee yesterday that although all that was true, he was not raising money by putting 7p on the standard rate of income tax because there were better ways in which to do it. He said:

> "I think it's been raised in a much more desirable fashion myself."

I suppose that if he did not think that, no one would think that, so we should be grateful for his remark.

In the cheerful and chattering *Sun*, which always has helpful information on these matters, we get further assistance. The article says:

> "Treasury experts"—

fancy that: *The Sun* has been talking to Treasury experts—

> "believe increased income tax discourages hard workers while VAT-style rises make people feel better off."

I confess that as I move round my constituency and talk to people who are worried about increases in VAT, about national insurance contributions and other indirect taxation rises, they express a wide variety of sometimes irritated opinion on the matter. I have not yet come across anyone who has said, "I feel better off as a result of these increases in taxation." If *The Sun* has that odd animal in captivity, Treasury expert or not, it would be helpful for that person to be produced for inspection and analysis.

The Chancellor is reported in the *Daily Mail* as saying, when describing how he went for the better methods of raising the money:

> "I looked for those increases which would be most accepted and supported by the public."

We know now that the Chancellor had a pick-and-mix approach to the matter. What he picked and what he mixed were his proposals on mortgage interest relief at source, VAT on domestic fuel, holiday tax, car insurance tax and home insurance tax. He homologated—I accept that he was not the parent of this—the national insurance increase which had been put on the table by his predecessor, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont).

No one in his right mind believes that the taxes will be popular. I believe that many Conservative Members hoped that they would not be noticed. They hoped that they could be smuggled through without any great public concern. That may be one reason why the Prime Minister used to say —the best known occasion was 28 January 1992—that the Government had no plans to raise the level of national insurance contributions. I confess that when I hear the Prime Minister or any of his senior Ministers saying that he has no plans, I run for cover. That is increasingly the public's attitude to these events.

The chairman of the Conservative party at the time of the election, when ruling out an increase in national insurance contributions, said—it was a nice phrase—that it would be a "stealth tax". "Stealth" is not a word that I associate easily with the knockabout style of the Chancellor. I do not regard him as a stealthy figure; he falls into the category of the cheerful spiv in his general approach to these matters.

The stealth factor was a military metaphor. We all know that the Conservative party is much given to military metaphors. The idea was that the Conservatives would smuggle in the increase at low level and undetected. My message to the Minister is that there is nae chance. The increase will be very much resented, and even when broken promises have been very much devalued by the frequency with which they have occurred, many people will see it as offensive.

I shall explain why, apart from broken promises, we believe that the Chancellor made an unfortunate choice when he decided to lay aside any direct taxation and to go for this form of indirect taxation. The Minister will know that the increase bites further down the income scale than income tax does. There are about 500,000 people who do not pay any form of income tax, but who pay national insurance contributions. Let us consider a shop assistant earning £6,000 a year. That person will pay another 38p a week—not a lot—as a result of the increase in national insurance contributions. If there had been an increase in direct taxation, that person, probably although not necessarily a lady, would have paid nothing because she would have been above the tax threshold.

I made the point about a different situation, where the increase will hit hard those earning just above £22,000, £23,000 or £24,000. I understand from my Conservative aquaintances that they are archetypal election fodder for the Conservative party. That is a strong contender for the most shameless broken promise of this Parliament, but I accept that some of my hon. Friends may disagree, because it is such a formidable field. The one thing on which we can all agree is that this is part of a Budget and it illustrates the principle that we are being asked to pay more and get less.

I have read Conservative material that suggested that national insurance contributions should go up. I pay tribute to the Minister, who did not try to argue that, although it has been argued by some of his colleagues, who say that it should go up because of the increase in benefits. In a sense that is true. Benefit costs have risen because we are funding unemployment and the recovery that has never come. It was a recovery that so excited the Chief Secretary at the time of the election that he failed to notice that we were heading for a £50 billion public sector borrowing requirement, as he rather disingenuously explained in a recent debate.

We must look at the balancing account—what people will get in return for the increase in national insurance contributions. It is particularly relevant, because if—it is a bit of an "if"—the Minister is right that it is not just general taxation, it would not be unreasonable to assume that there would be some sort of balancing improvement in benefit provision. The tragedy is that, over the years, many of the entitlements that arise from national insurance contributions have deteriorated.

Dr. Godman: Surely it is not just a question of deterioration in those benefits. There is a serious case, is there not? The Department is refusing to honour obligations to persons who have legitimate claims for contributory pensions. The Minister is still refusing to accede to a decision taken by a commissioner 18 months ago that women aged between 60 and 65 should be paid invalidity benefit. The Department is still refusing to honour that decision, which was taken in April 1992. Surely that is dishonourable.

Mr. Dewar: I admire—I use the word in no loose sense —the tenacity with which my hon. Friend has pursued that matter. He was temporarily out of the Chamber yesterday when the shadow of Mrs. Rose Graham fell across our proceedings. I agree that the way in which these matters get bogged down in litigation is alarming. As I understand it, there is now a suggestion that the Court of Appeal should remit the case to the European courts. We do not know when we will get a specific result.

Dr. Godman: I am sorry that I was absent yesterday when Mrs. Rose Graham was mentioned. In the case of a constituent of mine, I have made a formal complaint to the parliamentary ombudsman, accusing Ministers and their officials of maladministration in the matter.

Mr. Dewar: I know that my hon. Friend is knocking tirelessly on every door, and I endorse——

Dr. Godman: It is the Court of Session next.

Mr. Dewar: My hon. Friend and I look forward with interest to the unfolding drama.

I endorse my hon. Friend's general point. There are problems about obligations and worries about the way in which they are being eroded and disregarded.

I shall now use as an example the right to unemployment benefit, which is directly linked to national insurance contributions. It is interesting. In 1980—there will be people here with more detailed knowledge than myself—the abatement of unemployment benefit against occupational pension income was introduced. In 1989, that

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abatement was applied at the age of 55 rather than at 60. In 1984, the child dependency additions were abolished. In 1992, the earnings-related supplement was abolished. During those years, benefits were taxed.

A raft of new regulations—I do not think that anyone would quarrel with me about the matter—was specifically designed to disqualify and obstruct those trying to claim the benefit. The Government have a history of removing entitlements, weakening their obligations under the contract that is implicit in the national insurance scheme and trying to ensure that people did not draw unemployment benefit as they once would have done.

In his famous Mais lecture—famous because it is now read by many of my colleagues—the Secretary of State argued that one of the reasons for success in job creation in the United States—I hope that I do not misinterpret or misrepresent him—was that people had far less generous unemployment cover there. Presumably one might say that that physically and metaphorically cracked the whip behind the unemployed and persuaded them back to work. The implication clearly spelt out by the Secretary of State was that, if we could further weaken unemployment cover, we might get the same reaction.

It should not come as a surprise that, when we look at that long list of weakening of the unemployment benefit system, we now see a further move in that direction with the jobseeker's allowance. I find it illogical, ironical and slightly offensive, in view of the Government's record, that one of the reasons given for the job seeker's allowance is that so many unemployed people—I think that 70 per cent. was mentioned—are not getting unemployment benefit that it might as well be virtually abolished.

Of course a large number of people are not getting unemployment benefit when they are not working. In large part, that is because of the rule changes for which the Ministers who advance that argument have been responsible. It is a piece of sophistry to conduct the argument on that basis.

Whoever winds up the debate may wish to deal with this —perhaps the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague), who seems to be the winder-up-in-chief. The job seeker's allowance is a cutting of an automatic entitlement in one's own right, on the basis of the contributions paid, to support when unemployed for between six and 12 months. My understanding from a written answer that came through the House a few weeks ago, is that if that was applied to unemployment benefit now, 240,000 people would no longer be entitled. That seems to be a real example of the "pay more, get less" theme, which is a mark of the Administration, the Bill and the Budget.

When the Minister winds up, I would like him to say a word or two about that. We know that the Chancellor said that the whole point of the job seeker's allowance was to align rates and rules between income support and the job seeker's allowance when it came to replace unemployment benefit. Another point that was made, and I understand it, was that one is a contributory benefit and the other is non-contributory.

Therefore, the contributory benefit would be uprated on the retail prices index, and the other on the Rossi index. If we are to have harmonisation on that point, it would be useful to know at this stage, as we prepare for the debates later, whether the new job seeker's allowance will be uprated on Rossi or on the RPI. It is a little like the problem that Members have when their constituency is halved by the Boundary Commissioners. Which way will they go? When it comes to the uprating, which way will the Secretary of State go?

I shall ask the Minister two specific questions. There will be wide interest in the response. I have heard—the Minister will be listening to me on this—rumours that, under the cover of introducing the job seeker's allowance, additional payments for adult dependants will be abolished. As the Minister knows, that is a feature of the contributory rights built up at the moment and honoured in the unemployment benefit scheme. Can he offer reassurance—or, if it is wrong, can he deny it—that the additional payments for adult dependants, at £27·55 a week at present, are not going to disappear and be quietly dropped overboard, thus representing a significant cut in benefit under the repackaging that the job seeker's allowance represents?

I am anxious, because I missed it—I make no apology for that—about something that the Secretary of State said in his uprating statement. He spoke of a personal rate in the first six months of the job seeker's allowance—the period of benefit as of right. I am beginning to suspect that the word "personal" was carefully chosen and that may give support to those who fear that the additional payment for adult dependants will go.

Secondly, when we align the rates and the structures, what will happen to those aged between 18 and 24? They are dealt with in a different way under income support than they are under unemployment benefit. Under the latter, there is a flat rate throughout the age range. There is no difference between the young person who is unemployed and the older one. However, under income support there is a smaller payment for those under 25. In April 1994, someone who is 24 and on unemployment benefit will get £44·45 a week, but someone who is 24 and on income support will get £36·15—a substantial difference of £9·30.

I fear that talk about aligning the rates means that people who have built up a right and an entitlement to the new job seeker's allowance will get a lower rate because they are under 25, as they would have done under income support, and will therefore be discriminated against and victimised. That is a specific question which the Minister should be able to answer easily. I shall press him to answer it when he replies.

I fear that there will be another substantial reduction in entitlement at the same time as the Government are raising contributions. It will again be pay more and get less, again robbing Peter, or almost anybody else, to pay Kenneth. The House should not nod through a Bill that does that, while assuming that there are no concerns.

I know that it is always irritating—I have always found it irritating when it happens to me—to have something one has said quoted at one. The Minister will remember that, in the social security debate earlier in the year, he said:

> "I do not think that my right hon. Friend has been sufficiently congratulated on the successful outcome that he has achieved—a very full uprating of benefit across the board, and no increase in national insurance contributions. I consider that a remarkable achievement."—[*Official Report*, 10 February 1993; Vol. 218, c. 1082.]

He cannot say that now. I hope—perhaps I give him credit to which he is not due—that he will continue to fight the good fight against the Secretary of State and the Treasury, trying to preserve a decent level of return for entitlement built up through the payment of contributions.

I must draw to a conclusion, but many points need still to be explored.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Before my hon. Friend moves on, will he confirm that the 200,000 people whom he said would lose as a result of the change in unemployment benfit and the reduction in entitlement as a result of the six months' change, will also disappear into a black hole in the unemployment statistics?

Mr. Dewar: My hon. Friend is right. I shall probably have little difficulty in persuading her that that is not an accident. It is not just a chance. I am sure that that factor occurred to Ministers as a useful by-product of the whole exercise.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): The hon. Gentleman has asked some specific questions. I have one for him to answer. If there were to be a future Labour Government, would they restore unemployment benefit to a universal nature and over 12 months?

Mr. Dewar: We shall have to wait and see what is proposed. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] We shall also have to see what our inheritance is. One of the features of the Government is that, every time someone invites us to put right a particular outrage, we discover that there are another six growing alongside it, and it becomes difficult to give pledges.

Let me make it clear to the hon. Gentleman that, unlike Ministers, we are concerned about preserving the proper balance between those who are in difficulty, through unemployment, sickness or disability, and those who are not. We are concerned about the way in which the balance is being tilted, with entitlements being weakened. That will be the basis from which we shall approach the problems.

I know that the hon. Gentleman takes an interest in those matters and I am sure that we shall have his support when the time comes. I do not know enough about his majority to know whether he will be here on the Opposition Benches to support us in Parliament, but I feel confident that, even in the community, he will be explaining the difficulties that we shall have to face and justifying our actions.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Gentleman came into my life for the first time yesterday. He was hyperactive. We had several speeches and a petition from him. I had a letter about him from the Secretary of State at lunchtime. I do not want to encourage him overmuch, but I gather—he tells me so—that he is the bearer of good news about the social fund. I hope that that will prove to be not a minor cosmetic change, but something substantial, dealing with the problems of the social fund.

When I spoke in the Budget debate, I drew attention to what seemed like difficult times in the Treasury. There is always a changing scene and at one point it seemed as though the Chancellor had cracked the whip and exercised his authority. I do not intend to go through it in great detail, but he gave an on-the-record briefing, much reported in the press, in which he made it clear that the back-to-basics move was nonsense, because any attempt to use the social security system to engineer social change, or to restrict or shape it, was not a practical proposition. He went on to make some trenchant comments about those misguided enough to suggest that the middle-income group should be invited to contract out of the basic state pension.

The Secretary of State took his cue—I congratulate him on that—and spoke about it in a "Walden" interview which I particularly enjoyed. I am afraid that I missed it visually, but I read the transcript afterwards. The Secretary of State made it clear that only over his dead body would anybody be contracted out of the basic state pension. As I said the other day, he is now the "never, not ever, man". We should be grateful for that.

I do not want to rehearse all that and perhaps intrude upon private grief, but I am interested—they are relevant to the debate—in certain events since then. Although the Secretary of State for Social Security has fallen into line with the Chancellor, rather interestingly it turns out that the Chief Secretary is made of sterner stuff and has not caved in. In a key part of his briefing, the Chancellor said:

> "I do not see that"—

the basic state pension—

> "as being opted out or left as a vestigal remnant for those who cannot provide for themselves."

Only a few days later, as hon. Members will know, the Chief Secretary appeared on "Westminster Live" and said:

> "My worry about the state pension"—

I thought the word "worry" a little surprising, but perhaps I should welcome small mercies—

> "is that it is going to be worth a nugatory amount in the coming century."

I am not suggesting that pensioners all over the country, as they gather around the yuletide log and over Christmas dinner, are anxiously discussing whether a pension can be "nugatory" without being "vestigial", but that is a matter of considerable importance. My fear is that the resistance that may still exist in the Department of Social Security, and that is clearly alive and all too well in the Treasury, may win the day.

What may happen is that the Chancellor will merely deny what is happening, but national insurance contributions will increase in the way that we are invited to authorise in the Bill. As I have illustrated fairly on unemployment benefit, there will also be a substantial rundown continuum in the worth of the basic state pension as against average earnings, so that it becomes, in that pretentious but significant word, "nugatory" by the time that we reach the next century.

When I was young, the next century seemed aeons of time away. It is now less than a decade away. Perhaps I shall even live to see it and to have that nugatory pension. Therefore, I take a personal interest in the matter. I shall watch for increasing public signs of how the debate progresses. Its significance is that it is again a clear sign of a danger of the wrong balance–tilting against entitlements, which many people imagined that they were building up as they made their contributions. It is further evidence of pay more, get less.

Mr. Heald: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: As I am coming to what I think the Secretary of State rather hopefully calls his "peroration" in his printed speeches, I shall allow the hon. Gentleman to intervene.

Mr. Heald: How would the hon. Gentleman make up the deficit in the national insurance fund?

Mr. Dewar: That is a good and interesting question. The hon. Gentleman will remember that, some time in the late 1980s, it was not the present Secretary of State for Social Security but some other optimist who announced that the national insurance fund was balanced and removed the statutory opportunity of making up a deficit. In 1992, the Government found themselves 20 per cent. short of the sum that they needed to meet their current obligations and had to come to the House.

We were helpful. We did not make much of it. We passed a Bill in one day because we were anxious to repair the damage and get them out of that particular embarrassment—not their embarrassment, which did not matter to me, but the embarrassment of not being able to pay people's benefits. As a result, there will be a shortage of up to 20 per cent.—it is likely to settle at about 17 per cent. Perhaps the Minister could say a word about how the figure may be influenced. Now, there is room for a Treasury subvention. That will have to happen, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would expect it.

It might be helpful if we had a Government with ambitions to see a growth rate rather above the 1·6 to 1·7 per cent. annual rate of the past decade, which has left us struggling behind many other European countries. As the Social Security Advisory Committee said in a report published yesterday, which I am sure the hon. Gentleman will have taken the trouble to read, much of the Government's talk about the inability to fund the present level of social security is unjustified and can be maintained only if one takes an extremely gloomy view of our economic prospects. That is a useful corrective and is perhaps also part of the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): My hon. Friend may recall that the Treasury supplement was 18 per cent. in 1979 and continued at that level for many years. In the late 1980s, the Government decided that they would not pay it, because the national insurance fund was so high. Does my hon. Friend agree that the situation today is the reverse of the days when David Lloyd George said that the national insurance scheme would involve paying in fourpence to get out ninepence? Now, we pay in ninepence and get out fourpence.

Mr. Dewar: That neatly puts the argument. *[Interruption.]* Let me make a sympathetic suggestion to the Minister. To be fair, the problems of the national insurance fund are partly due to economic failure, which has reduced income from national insurance contributions.

I have taken up sufficient time. The Minister of State is an extremely well-intentioned man. He has never been accused of reaching for the glittering prizes. Whether he did or not, I know not, but he certainly did not grasp them. He has had an honourable career in Northern Ireland and at the Department of Social Security. It is rather sad to find him now reduced to the role of a tax collector and general demolisher of entitlements that flow from contributory benefits.

I recognise the Government's difficulty—I would be silly if I did not. If one needs to borrow £1 billion a week merely to balance the books, clearly that cannot be entirely shrugged off. I suspect that if the Chancellor of the Exchequer were in private industry, he would go bust in a big way—with style. That is my worry. I only hope that he does not take quite the same risks in future years.

The PSBR suggests that we have had some profligacy and certainly some incompetence. The one certainty is that people will have to pay dearly: £10 in the coming year or £9—I will not split hairs over that—and £16 the following year. That is an extraordinary contrast to the promises, pledges and, indeed, boasts of early 1992 when right hon. and hon. Gentlemen were on the hustings. Theirs has been a crashing fall. The trouble with politics is that once the election is over, one can lose all dignity and all claim to respect, yet survive. That is one of the ironies of British politics. The worse the Government and the more bedraggled their record, the less likely they are to be forced to go to the country. As unemployment stares Back Benchers in the face, they tend to rally to the colours.

I must content myself by saying that the measure is misconceived. It represents part of a trend to undermine the understanding, and some would say the contract, between Government and the governed which guarantees help in times of need—adequate help, as of right. The Government are embarked on a destructive course and there will be great anxiety and anger in the years ahead.

The Bill is dishonourable, not because it raises revenue —all Governments have to raise revenue and it would be silly to argue against that—but because it is part of a dishonourable package. The Government are asking people to pay more at a time when they are stripping down and undermining what people get in return. We will have none of it—and we will vote accordingly tonight.

6.6 pm

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has had a lot of fun with Conservative party documents stolen from the Conservative research department. He has had fun, too, talking about the Government's taxation record.

The hon. Gentleman was selective in his quotes from the document. For example, he did not mention that, according to page 10, in the past three months alone the Labour party has suggested a tourism tax, a pollution tax, a payroll tax, a health tax, a road pricing tax and, heaven forbid—I cannot believe this, having heard the hon. Gentleman's talk—even an entertainment tax, as well as an education tax and a windfall tax. Yet he dares to suggest that we are the party of taxation.

Mr. Dewar *rose*——

Mr. Fabricant: I am delighted to give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Dewar: I must confess that I read that page with great interest and some amusement. To say that those allegations are on thin ground and have poor foundations would be an understatement. Even if the hon. Gentleman takes them at face value, does he find them entirely ludicrous when he is about to go into the Lobby in favour of a car insurance tax, a home insurance tax, a travel tax, VAT on domestic fuel and an increase in national insurance contributions? Over the next three years we are to see the biggest tax increase that we have ever seen in the history of this country.

Mr. Fabricant *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before the hon. Gentleman continues, I remind the

House that we are considering a narrow Bill on Second Reading and that these exchanges could properly have taken place during the Budget proceedings.

Mr. Fabricant: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for your advice. Obviously, I would have given a devastating reply.

To return to the narrow subject of social security contributions, hon. Members will be aware that the main provision of the Bill is contained in clause 1. Its effect is to increase the rate by 1 per cent., from 9 per cent. to 10 per cent., for national insurance contributions paid by employees on earnings between the lower and the upper earnings limits. The Bill also clarifies existing national insurance contribution policy in two important areas. The first concerns how part of the national insurance fund is allocated to health service funds and the second reaffirms that self-employed people have to pay class 4 national insurance contributions on payments to personal pensions, an important element which has not been taken up so far.

There are two other important measures that do not require primary legislation: first, an increase in contributions for self-employed people on their class 4 contributions and, secondly, reductions in contributions payed by employers. The overall effect of the legislation is to simplify the administration of the fund and to make significant changes to the way in which it operates.

The most contentious aspect of the Bill is the increase in national insurance contributions, and I shall deal with that first as it has clearly not been addressed by Opposition Members. The Government, like those in all other western countries, where the old live longer and all are provided with state health care, face a huge and ever-increasing bill for social security expenditure. It now tops £70 billion. The trends behind that increase have continued unabated for decades and I think that that is accepted by hon. Members on both sides of the House. There has been an enormous increase in the costs of health care. The growth in the number of single parents and the increase in the number of working women, who rightly expect a pension on retirement, have also contributed to the huge and ever-increasing bill.

We are concerned today with trends in expenditure on contributory benefits alone, and here the story is much the same. Expenditure on those benefits rose by almost £10 billion in the four years to 1992-93 and it is expected to rise further still. Even as the world faces a wintry economic climate, and Germany and Japan continue their nose dive into recession, the Government——

Mr. Flynn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fabricant: I am delighted to give way to my honourable sparring partner.

Mr. Flynn: The hon. Gentleman, who is clearly, from his authoritative words tonight, an expert on social security, talked about the increased expenditure on national insurance. Will he give us the percentage figure by which employees' national insurance contributions have increased since 1979?

Mr. Fabricant: Anyone know? *[Interruption.]* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State says 53 per cent.

As Germany and Japan have continued their nose-dive into recession, the Government have not flinched from their commitment to the needy and most vulnerable members of society. Retirement pensions alone rose by £2·5 billion during the past four years, and now social security benefits have been uprated across the board. Our social security budget will rise by some £11 billion during the next couple of years, which I know will interest the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn). This is a Government who recognise their responsibilities and, unlike the Opposition—whose talk is cheap—we will deliver.

Moreover, in 1985 and 1989, Government reform of national insurance saved the vast majority of employees about £3 a week. At the previous election, Labour proposed that the upper earnings limit on national insurance contributions should be abolished. What a disincentive to work. What a disincentive to the most able in our society. That measure would have increased by 9 per cent. the tax paid by everyone earning more than about £20,000. Before Opposition Members laugh, may I say that £20,000 is not that much more than the average working wage now.

With more people than ever before claiming pensions, invalidity benefit and unemployment benefit, the national insurance fund has moved from surplus to deficit. Expenditure is outstripping income. The principle behind the scheme is that of pay-as-you-go, with this year's expenditure being funded by this year's taxes. The insurance contribution of today is not for the pension of tomorrow.

The Treasury grant that was introduced this year was a sensible measure in these difficult economic times when stimulating the economy has been of overriding importance, but it can be only an interim measure. The Treasury grant is payed for by the general body of taxpayers. Some of those, such as pensioners, have already made a full contribution towards the national insurance fund. With expenditure rising and the national insurance fund running into deficit, the fund must be topped up by increased contributions.

At this juncture, I want to give a warm welcome to a Government omission. The Government have resisted any temptation to increase national insurance contributions by employers. That makes sound sense. Alone among those in Europe, our economy is recovering, but the recovery is fragile and any measures that would hit employers could jeopardise the rebirth of our nation's wealth.

Mr. Dewar: What about statutory sick pay?

Mr. Fabricant: I shall come to the subject of statutory sick pay shortly.

Our employers could ill afford the extra costs that raised national insurance contributions would represent. Our wealth creators have been, and must be, protected to such an extent that a reduction in employers' contributions has recently been announced. The standard rate of contribution is to fall from 10·4 to 10·2 per cent. Equally significant is the reduced rate for employers of lower-paid workers—a reduction of 1 per cent.

I acknowledge that, as the hon. Member for Garscadden said, employers will have to bear the extra costs of funding statutory sick pay, but those costs have been more than offset by the cut in employers' national insurance contributions.

It is my experience that businesses that provide a pleasant working environment suffer less from employee absenteeism, whether the sickness if genuine or feigned. Putting the responsibility for sick pay back on to the

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shoulders of employers will give them a major incentive to motivate the loyalty of their work forces. Opposition Members should welcome a move that would improve workers' health and well-being. Moreover, putting the burden of sick pay on employers will significantly save time on the Department of Social Security paper-shuffling that company wages clerks have to endure. That too will be an economic saving to employers.

The Government's approach to the national insurance fund and their way of dealing with the deficit is practical, imaginative and realistic. The Government are clearly aware of the need to create a strong and lively economy in order to finance welfare provision. In reducing employers' contributions recently, and employees' contributions a few years ago, they have realised the importance of keeping taxes as low as possible and are doing everything within their power to protect the motivation and enterprise of the work force.

One of the most attractive features in the approach to tackling the national insurance deficit is the care with which our lowest-paid have been treated. Even after the increase in contributions set out in the Bill, employees who earn less than £130 a week will still pay less national insurance than they did under the Labour Government in 1979. That is an impressive statistic.

The lowest-paid employees will be affected least of all by the rise in contributions. Those under the lower earnings limit will continue to make no contribution to the national insurance fund and, above that limit, those who are paid less will make a smaller contribution to funding the increase, as the hon. Member for Garscadden knows, having read the Conservative research department brief.

An employee earning £60 a week will pay just 3p a week extra, while someone earning £200 a week will have to pay £1·43 a week extra. There is a maximum of £4·56 a week. Labour would have abolished that ceiling.

The lower-paid have always contributed less to the national insurance scheme. That is right and proper. It is admirable that the Government have accentuated that feature of the system. The changes to the national insurance scheme introduced in 1985 and 1989 provided that result. The reduced rate of contributions, which was enacted in 1985, means that the lower the pay, the greater the proportion of earnings that is assessed at the lower rate.

The Government's emphasis on the needy has been demonstrated by the extra help with fuel costs being made available to pensioners. I expected Opposition Members to intervene at this point but, as none is doing so, I shall point out that although the Opposition talk about small sums being given, £120 billion is being made available to just 15 million needy and pensioners. Clearly, that figure has got through to Opposition Members——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There is about to be an intervention from the Chair. How do the hon. Gentleman's comments relate to the Second Reading of the Bill under consideration?

Mr. Fabricant: I bring to the attention of the House the Government's general policy on social security and care of the needy, but I shall endeavour to confine my remarks to the more narrow subject.

Mr. Heald: Does my hon. Friend agree that one possible relevant point is that pensions are paid from the national insurance fund and they are being uprated to help pensioners and the needy? Does he recall the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) saying, before the Budget, that 50p compensation per pensioner would be more than adequate? The hon. Gentleman changed his tune after the Budget. Perhaps he would like to intervene on that subject.

Mr. Fabricant: I await a further intervention, but I see that there is none forthcoming.

The Government have given much encouragement to people taking out pension schemes funded by this contribution. Behind that lies the Government's aim to construct a welfare system that gives incentive to personal responsibility. It has been eminently successful, with some 15 million people—three quarters of those eligible—opting out of the state earnings-related pension scheme. Some 5 million people have private pensions, including 1·4 million self-employed people. I am pleased to note that the present arrangements, confirmed in the Bill, are working so well. They are appreciated by the self-employed, and I am glad that no attempt has been made to change them.

Mr. Bates: Before my hon. Friend leaves the subject of the state earnings-related pension scheme, and national insurance generally, may I ask whether he accepts that one of the principal advantages of private pensions is that the money put into them can be invested, thereby helping the economy to continue to grow?

Mr. Fabricant: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. As he says, money from pension funds has been used in ventures that have created employment for people who might otherwise be unemployed and have to draw from the very fund for which the Bill provides.

Mr. Flynn: Did the hon. Gentleman say that 15 million people have opted out of SERPS and into private personal pension schemes? I do not rise to query the figure, but I believe that it is massively inaccurate. Now that it is becoming apparent that at least 500,000 people who opted out of occupational pension schemes face poverty and old age and 1·5 million people who have opted out of SERPS also face disaster, there will be an enormous scandal because of the inherent waste of personal pension schemes. The money invested is gobbled up by huge commissions, administrative charges and profits for the company concerned. The national insurance scheme is efficient and cost-effective.

Mr. Fabricant: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his speech, which enabled me to have a breather. I confirm that 15 million people have opted out of SERPS and into various schemes. If he would like to check the figures, he can read them in the Conservative party brief which the hon. Member for Garscadden clutches and will no doubt use in his wind-up speech.

The measures in the Bill will naturally be viewed in the wider context of the recently announced changes to national insurance benefits, such as the replacement of unemployment benefit with the new job seeker's allowance and the replacement of invalidity and sickness benefits with incapacity benefit.

In "Social Insurance and Allied Services", Beveridge, the founding father of the welfare state, who acknowledged that state provision should be limited, wrote:

"The State in organising security should not stifle incentive, opportunity, responsibility; in establishing a national minimum for himself and his family."

Provision for the sick and elderly is absolutely necessary and a national minimum is, and always will be, provided.

Even the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) said, in *The Guardian* on 18 January 1993:

"It is the Labour Party that is seen as in favour of molly-coddling people. We have to be tough with ourselves and ask why that has happened. We have to convince people that we are not a tax and spend party."

Clearly, the Labour party continues to fail to get that message across.

Unconditional and long-enduring benefits for the unemployed are superficially attractive——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already warned the hon. Gentleman to relate his remarks to the Bill under consideration. The more general remarks that he is now making could have been made in previous debates in the House in the past fortnight or so.

Mr. Fabricant: The Government's policy has been very different from that of the Opposition and has yielded spectacular results. Britain is the only nation in Europe that is not sliding deeper into recession. The Labour party is wringing its hands with pity for the needy but, whenever it has been in power, it has been unable to deliver the goods.

The provisions that we are considering reflect the Government's emphasis on sound finance and an unwavering commitment to those in need. For that reason, I commend the Bill to the House.

6.27 pm

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): I wish to raise some fundamental questions about the future of national insurance, and shall not therefore follow the speech by the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant), although I am bound to say that I could just about tell where Beveridge ended and the hon. Gentleman carried on.

Despite the giggling on the Conservative Benches, we are dealing with some serious questions. I make a plea that, at some stage in the debate, the Minister should present us with a statement about the Government's view on the future of national insurance. Clearly, many different factors affect national insurance now, on both the contributions side and the benefits side. What is lacking from the Government is an overall statement about how they see the future of national insurance—if they see a future for it at all. It is difficult to understand that because we face, on the one hand, higher contributions—hence today's debate—and, on the other, lower benefits in real terms for many people who draw from the fund.

Mr. Bates: The point has been made several times that the amount spent on social security this year is about £74·5 billion. Over the next three years, it is due to rise to about £92 billion. That is not less out for more in.

Mr. Wicks: Obviously, we are spending more for a range of reasons, some good and some bad. Many people are living longer and are rightly drawing their pensions, although in real terms those pensions are far lower than they would have been if they had not been de-indexed from earnings in 1980. The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire, who described trends affecting social security expenditure over many decades, was having us on, historically speaking.

Unemployment has been the feature of the past decade and a half, coinciding with a particular political epoch. Since the war, wise Governments—both Conservative and Labour—have pursued policies of mass employment. There was lower social security expenditure because of that macro-economic policy. I do not concede, therefore, that high public spending on social security is necessarily an indicator of sound social policy. In part, it is a sign of bad economic policy.

Mr. Fabricant *rose*——

Mr. Wicks: Does the hon. Gentleman have more to say?

Mr. Fabricant: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He blames unemployment, yet Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain—once again, we are grateful to the Conservative party briefing for this information—are all having to introduce measures similar to the one that we are debating.

Mr. Wicks: I do not think that leadership in Britain means following bad practice abroad. As we did in the war and thereafter, we should renew our national determination to move back to full employment. As the hon. Gentleman will see, he is not the only one who can support Beveridge. I, too, have read the Beveridge report and I intend to quote from it.

I renew my plea to the Government to make a strong statement on their vision for the future of national insurance. If we agree today—we may not—to increase contributions by 1 per cent., we should know the context of that decision and the strategy behind it. I want to spend some time outlining the changes that have affected Britain in the post-war period—how the risks have changed and how new risks have materialised as a result of social and demographic change. We need to ask how those risks will be dealt with in future.

In a sense, the modern history of social insurance starts with William Beveridge. It has, of course, a much longer history in the voluntary and state sectors here and in other European countries such as Germany. But we start, conveniently, with Beveridge who, in many respects could be regarded as a dreamer of dreams, a reverist, a man who had a vision for the future.

Equally, in many important respects Beveridge was a superb technician. He was a planner. Many of his wartime speeches are well known and oft recited, even today, because they had more to say about the 1990s, perhaps, than about the 1940s—not least on unemployment. The man's planning and technical abilities were impressive.

One of the strengths of the Beveridge report lay not in the technical detail or the broad policy but in how Beveridge and his colleagues came up in the midst of a war with a view of society, demography and employment, and of the roles of men and women. Some of his assumptions, not least about the role of women, turned out to be wrong —a good thing, we might say. Still, he had a vision, and Parliament and the Government also need a vision when they set national insurance in the context of social and economic change.

What has changed since Beveridge? First and foremost, unemployment has changed. Beveridge assumed, in line

[Mr. Wicks]

with the Keynesian thinking of the time, that we could move towards full employment. He did not underestimate the difficulties, but that was his vision. In the simple, powerful language that he used in many wartime speeches, he spoke of the five giant evils that Britain needed to destroy if we were to construct a decent society for ourselves. He spoke of the evils of want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness. Many modern politicians would do well to copy Beveridge's language and adapt it. Too often these days, our debates get bogged down in detail and jargon. The landmarks are never clear.

William Beveridge had something important to say about the giant evil of idleness, by which he meant unemployment:

> "Idleness is the largest and the fiercest of the five giant evils and the most important to attack."

That is our text for the future of national insurance and for the 1990s. We are learning in many areas, not least those of crime and education, that unless our vision demands a move back to full employment we will always face difficulties with social security expenditure and with meeting needs that must be met through the social security system. If we lack that vision, we shall have to spend billions of pounds keeping people out of work. Macro-economic policy should make it its main business to put people back into work.

What is the Government's vision, or assumption, about full employment and unemployment? I am genuinely pleased that unemployment is falling. I see too many victims of it in my surgeries. Each time we hear of someone getting a job it is a victory for that person and that person's family, and for our community and economy——

Mr. Fabricant: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was reprimanded three times by Madam Deputy Speaker for not confining myself narrowly to the subject of the Bill. Has not the hon. Gentleman allowed himself to stray?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I can assure the hon. Gentleman that, if the hon. Member had deviated by even a quarter of an inch, I would have reprimanded him. I find his speech extremely interesting so far.

Mr. Wicks: And I write my own speeches, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Fabricant: So do I.

Mr. Wicks: Do not admit too much, my friend.

If we cannot grasp the relationship between national insurance and methods of ensuring ourselves against modern risks and against unemployment, we in this House will have a problem. I ask the Government in all sincerity why, if we can set targets and bands for inflation, we cannot set them for full employment, too. The Red Book seems to assume that there will be 2·75 million unemployed for the foreseeable future. Is that a technical assumption? Is it the Government's judgment? If it is the former, what does it mean? Will the Government tell us today what they think unemployment will be like in two years' time, or by the year 2000? My worry is that, welcome as the fall in unemployment is, it may not be enough. Do the Government believe that unemployment will fall to 2 million? What are their assumptions?

A Government's assumptions about these matters were vital to Beveridge's social insurance plan, just as they are vital to social insurance today.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is extraordinarily difficult to make realistic calculations of unemployment? Many economists believed that unemployment probably would not start to fall until next spring, yet since February this year, each month, including this month, unemployment has consistently fallen. That highlights how difficult it would be to make a meaningful or realistic calculation of that sensitive economic indicator.

Mr. Wicks: The hon. Gentleman is right, of course, but it seems to me that we have a Parliament and a Government because things are difficult. The more fundamental point is whether the attack on idleness and the achievement of full employment is a real objective—not a wish, because we all wish it—of economic policy. Wise people in the past from all parties—Keynes, Beveridge, Attlee and Macmillan—felt that full employment was vital. Do the Government feel that it is vital? What policy tools do they have to achieve that in the coming months and years?

The second change which has affected the landscape of national insurance, and which is therefore crucial to consideration of the Bill, is in employment patterns. We have seen the rise of the two-worker family and a massive increase in female employment, which is so important to social security. Indeed, the increase in female employment is one of the most important social security factors in this country. Mothers are able to work, although not enough can find work. There would have been far more family poverty if it were not for the employment of mothers. That is more important than child benefit and family credit combined.

I will highlight another change which affects any national insurance scheme. Although we live longer nowadays, we are employed for a smaller proportion of our lives, because we enter the labour market later. Many working-class boys and girls will not get jobs when they are 16, some perhaps never, although I hope that most will. They may get jobs when they are 17, 18 or 19. Who knows when the children of middle-class, professional people—I have two children at university now—will get jobs? They may be in their early or mid-20s. That must have implications for the contributions and benefits that we are discussing today.

I should like to relate another interesting feature of the Government's proposal that women should be able to get pensions at the age of 65. We are leaving the labour market earlier. One of the great myths about society, social security and pensions is that men work until they are 65. Many do not, and the data show that the changes have been dramatic.

In 1951, in the first census after the war, 88 per cent. of men aged between 60 and 65—the pre-retirement group—were economically engaged or active. The Beveridge assumption that men worked from when they were boys until they retired at 65 was then more or less true. The 1991 figures for that age group showed that just 57 per cent. were economically active, to use the economists' unhelpful jargon. I say unhelpful because the "economically active", according to economists, include some of the unemployed. In practice, just 49 per cent. of men in that age group were employed in 1991, and the percentage may be less now.

Should we now build contributions and benefits for men and women based on their eventual entitlement at 65, when the trends are going the other way? Why have the Government hit on 65 suddenly when so many have retired for good reasons or ill, be it voluntary retirement or redundancy, long before that age? That is an important question which I should like put to the Government.

The third change affects the caring role of the family. Any national insurance scheme which relates to social security must have a grasp and a concept of the caring role of the family, which is its most important function. Today, families have fewer children. The average is about 2, or 1·8 per woman. However, children are dependent on their parents for longer than in the immediate post-war period. As has been said, gone are the days when most young people would leave school at 16 to get things called "jobs". Most do not do so now, for good, bad and ugly reasons.

How does the social security system deal with that? How does it deal with the emerging role of the family in caring for its elders and betters? The figures show that 6·3 million people are family carers who look after elderly parents or another relative. Given that many of those carers are women, some of whom, although not all, must leave employment, what are the implications for social security?

I know that the Government have some answers—for example, that national insurance contributions have been allowed for. However, any future strategy for national insurance must pay more attention to the role of people, many of whom are in their 50s or early 60s, who are carers or workers, or both. National insurance must reflect those trends. Were he alive today, William Beveridge would have looked at that issue when framing a social policy. We should do the same.

The fourth change is in the risks which people face in their lives, and the implications for national insurance and other parts of the social security system of family change and family breakdown. Looking again at the Beveridge report—as one does most evenings—one sees that Beveridge said little about one-parent families. He talked mainly about widowhood and the need to have a national insurance system to look after widows and the few widowers. The phenomenon of the large proportion of single unmarried mothers—probably 18 per cent. or almost one in five of our children live in one-parent families—is a key challenge for social security, as the Government recognise. What are the implications for national insurance? Are there any implications?

It is fascinating that Beveridge with his sexist view, as we would say now, of the role of men and of national insurance, nevertheless recognised that, when a marriage ended, a new risk of poverty was presented. He toyed with the idea in his report that perhaps a national insurance scheme should recognise the risks that many women faced when a marriage ended through no fault of their own, as he put it.

Beveridge could not frame detailed policies and, of course, the national insurance system, as opposed to other parts of social security, never recognised the risks of divorce. If the Beveridge questions about changes in family life and the risks that we face were asked today, a latter-day Beveridge would accept that almost four in 10 of recent marriages would end in divorce. More and more men and women, but particularly children, become victims of the social revolution and of family change. That revolution has not been bloodless. How are we to socially secure people? Is it through social insurance, or through other aspects of social security?

Mr. Burns: Has the hon. Gentleman read Philip Ziegler's biography of Harold Wilson, in which the author goes into great detail on putting together the Beveridge report and Harold Wilson's work on it? I suspect that the hon. Gentleman may not like the answer that Beveridge would have come up with to the question that he is posing.

Given that Beveridge was very much a figure of the 1940s, would he not find the situation in Britain in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s with regard to single-parent families somewhat incomprehensible?

Mr. Wicks: I understand the point that the hon. Gentleman is making, but Beveridge understood rather more than the hon. Gentleman implies. In the report, he said that a housewife's loss of home maintenance without her consent and not through her fault was one of the risks of marriage against which she should be insured, and that she should not depend on assistance. However, that did not lead to legislation.

The hon. Gentleman suggests that Beveridge would be disturbed by some of the family changes which affect us. I am sure that he would be disturbed. We should be disturbed that seven out of 10 one-parent families depend on income support. Eighty-five per cent. of one-parent families depend on income support at some stage. I am disturbed about that, because it leads to massive public spending which, in a better world, we would spend elsewhere. It also means that too many of our children and our citizens live in desperate poverty. With Christmas coming, I do not relish that fact. It is a challenge to us all. We not not be so far apart on that one.

In addition to the social changes that I have outlined, there have been changes in social security benefits such as the rise of non-contributory, non-means-tested benefits which challenge the concept of national insurance.

I end by repeating my plea. We could have a relatively narrow debate today on whether the 1 per cent. increase is too much or too little. We could argue about the benefits to be cut. However, unless we place the measure in a wider context, as my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden has done, and unless we talk about the Government's vision and strategy for the future of national insurance when we face new risks in the light of social change, we shall not be able to debate and make the decisions on what many regard as a grey and boring area of public policy, but one that may have more impact on the life of our nation and the welfare of our people than even the GATT round.

We are discussing vital matters which affect millions of people, many of whom face enormous risks. I encourage the Minister to make a strong statement about the future of national insurance and its strategy today.

6.50 pm

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to speak in tonight's important debate. We have heard from hon. Members on both sides how important the welfare state is to Britain. It is the cornerstone for people who need benefits and require help from those who can afford to pay.

Mr. Flynn: The hon. Gentleman has illustrated a fundamental division between the two sides of the House. Beveridge wanted a system of national insurance in which

[Mr. Flynn]

people paid contributions and claimed them back as a right. The hon. Member refers to a poor law scheme under which people had payments as a charity.

Mr. Evans: Obviously I disagree with the hon. Gentleman. The measures are a safety net for those in need; however, other Government policies provide a trampoline for people who want to spring up and help themselves. They represent a self-help philosophy, as well as supporting those who cannot help themselves.

Mr. Bates: My hon. Friend has touched on a key point. Is it not the case that the Labour party Social Justice Commission was instructed to consider whether we ought to means-test all benefits? Is that not at odds with the Beveridge principle about which we have heard so much?

Mr. Evans: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. I am not sure where the Labour party thinks it is going or whether it knows where it is going on social security. I asked the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) some questions and I did not receive sensible replies. When we ask what policies we could expect from the Labour party, we receive blank stares. One of my hon. Friends asked the hon. Member for Garscadden a specific question, but he was unable to respond.

The Government have increased massively the money being provided through the social security system. In 1979, it was just over £40 billion. We are now talking about £74·5 billion and rising, as the Government are absolutely certain to ensure that the increases will stay ahead of inflation to ensure that those on benefits will not suffer.

Mr. Heald: One of the criticisms by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), the Leader of the Opposition, was that the Conservative party is committing a fraud on the nation by abandoning the contributory principle. Yet David Blunkett said recently:

> "The Inland Revenue and Benefits Agencies should be amalgamated"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must do a little more homework and refer to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett).

Mr. Heald: I was carried away with the exuberance of my own verbosity, and I apologise.

The hon. Member for Brightside said that we should abandon the contributory principle in favour of automatic eligibility. What does my hon. Friend consider to be Labour party policy on this?

Mr. Evans: My hon. Friend has put his finger on it. I am at a loss to establish what Labour party policy is. Labour Members are behaving like Liberal Democrats, in that they say one thing to one group of people and something else to another. Perhaps, before the end of the debate, the hon. Member for Garscadden, or another Labour Member, will explain to us in detail the Labour party policy on social security.

The social security system is the cornerstone of the welfare state, but the most important principle of the national insurance fund is that we pay out what we put into that fund.

One of the greatest commitments that the Government have made to national insurance and social security is to the elderly. We have heard all sorts of things this evening from the Labour party about why the Government are spending more money on social security. Under the Conservative Government, people are living longer than ever before. That is another great achievement of the Conservatives.

The 14 years of Conservative government have witnessed a real increase in expenditure on benefits to pensioners of 33 per cent. Labour Members talk sincerely about caring for elderly people, but during their last period of office the increase was about 3 per cent. That shows the difference between the words of the Labour party and the action of a Conservative Government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) reminded me that, on two occasions when the Labour party was in government, it stopped the Christmas bonus. It is useful to remind ourselves of that.

An increasing problem with national insurance is that, because people are living longer, there are far more people of pensionable age. When people reach retirement, they are living longer in retirement, so the bill is forever increasing.

The deficit which characterises the national insurance fund is made up by the Treasury grant which was mentioned as £7·5 billion for the current year. That has to come from the hard-earned money of taxpayers, and we are talking about hard-pressed budgets. That money could be used in other Departments, or even to help relieve the stress on the budget deficit.

The contributory benefits are available to all who contribute, so if the levels of benefit are uprated, surely it is reasonable to ask that the rise be reflected by a comparable rise in the contributions.

Benefits have been rising dramatically, while national insurance contributions have been frozen as a percentage for more than a decade. The readjustment of the level of contribution is inevitable, and must be keenly anticipated by anyone who favours sound economic policy as a foundation for our country. If we are to maintain benefits at their current satisfactory rates, more funding must be found.

Mr. Flynn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Evans: I was talking about sound economics, and I would be rather surprised if anyone on the Opposition Benches knew anything about that.

Mr. Flynn: I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman. It is clear that the Government are fielding people who are reading their briefs and have no knowledge of social security. It is a great shame that we have not heard from the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts), who does know something about it.

Has the hon. Gentleman read the report published yesterday by the Social Service Advisory Committee—the Government's own advisers? After looking at several models of what is likely to happen in future, it stated that only by using the most pessimistic assumption will the percentage of GDP spent on social security rise to the year 2000.

The hon. Member for Havant also said that the demographic time bomb has been vastly exaggerated. Instead of listening to Conservative Members speaking from prepared briefs that they barely understand, why can we not hear from those who understand social security?

Mr. Evans: I gave way in the hope that I would hear something useful from the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn). I should have known better. It is a shame that the hon. Member still comes out with that sort of slur.

We feel strongly about the system of social security payments. We are here to ensure that the amount of money paid out of the national insurance fund will be met from the contributions of those people who pay into it. It is only in the Walt Disney world of designer socialism, in which the hon. Member for Newport, West lives, that other people pick up the tab.

There will come a time when the hon. Member will understand that the bill will have to be paid. He talks about more money for this sector and more money for that sector, but somebody [illegible] to pick up the tab. The Government have that responsibility, and that is why we are here this evening.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy (Liverpool, Broadgreen): The hon. Member has spoken about the need to ensure that those contributing to the fund contribute enough to pay benefits. Why is it that the Government's proposals retain the ceiling on national insurance contributions, which throws the greatest burden on people on lower earnings?

Mr. Evans: I am grateful to my hon. Friend—to the hon. Lady. I almost said "my hon. Friend"—[HON. MEMBERS: "You did".] I would not like to put an end to her career within her party.

Are we getting closer to what the Opposition believe? Do they still have a policy to abolish the ceiling on upper earnings? That would mean, effectively, an increase in taxation for a lot of people earning more than £20,000 or £22,000 per annum. I was under the impression that the Labour party decided it would no longer go along with that policy. I will gladly give way to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy) if she will tell me what the Labour party's policy is in regard to the upper earnings limit, over and above a contribution of £430.

Mrs. Kennedy: It is a question of fairness and the importance of ensuring that people contribute fairly to the national insurance fund.

Mr. Evans: We will not get an answer to our question. The hon. Lady talks about fairness, but with these national insurance contributions, the Government have ensured that those on the lowest level of earnings pay nothing towards national insurance. People start to pay only above the £57 level. There is a £430 ceiling on national insurance contributions, and we are more than happy to stay with that.

A contributory factor in the Labour party's defeat at the last election is that its members paraded around the country and told people on modest incomes that they wished to put up their income tax by 10 per cent. and their national insurance contributions by 9 per cent. People would not tolerate that.

Mr. Bates: I may be able to help my hon. Friend about the information that he tried to get from Opposition Members. I asked the same question of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) during the debate on the Address. I asked him if he still stood by his policy of abolishing the upper earnings limit. His reply was:

> "Our policies are going before the Commission on Social Justice".—[*Official Report*, 25 November 1993; Vol. 233, c. 597.]

Mr. Evans: That comes as no surprise to me. We will not get any answers to any of the questions that we ask the Labour party.

The Labour party was so embarrassed by the message that it paraded throughout the country during the last general election, that it decided to get rid of its shadow Chancellor and promote him to leader of the party. If that is what he said when he was shadow Chancellor, I cannot wait for the next election to find out what he will say as leader. He will get into all sorts of problems.

People on lower earnings will be protected. Only those earning more than £57 will pay national insurance contributions. Before Opposition Members uncharacteristically intervene yet again to say how hard done by people are because of the increase in national insurance contributions, they should know that, even with the increase, people earning approximately £130 a week will be paying lower national insurance contributions under the Government than they were under the last Labour Government, and will receive far more in benefits.

The Labour party's offerings on national insurance at the last election provided no surprises. If we ask people in the street what the Labour party means to them in taxation policies, we will be told that it stands for higher taxes.

The Labour party stands for economic stagnation and general colourless misery. It has no ideas about the economy, and that is one reason why Labour has been out of power for the past 14 years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not mind how wide the debate is on social security, but we really ought to be debating social security and not general taxation.

Mr. Evans: I was trying to demonstrate that the problem with the message that the Labour party is trying to sell—whether it is about taxation or national insurance —is that, if the ceiling on the top rate of national insurance were removed, the two might as well be merged and called a general taxation, which would simply be increased by 20 per cent. for people earning over those modest levels.

Dr. Godman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Evans: Let me make a little more progress.

The hon. Member for Broadgreen talked about removing the ceiling on national insurance contributions. Once a Government went above a certain level, they would have the problem of disincentives, which would encourage a brain drain, or a fame drain. People who earned a certain amount of money would want to look at the opportunities before them, particularly within the single European market. During the 1970s, under the last Labour Government, people were leaving the country in droves because of the high rates of tax and national insurance.

Mr. Fabricant: My hon. Friend is far too young to recall this, but in 1979 the top rate of tax was about 98p in the pound.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have just ruled that general taxation matters are out of order.

Mr. Heald: The great rip-off in the Labour party's scheme to abolish the upper earnings limit was that it was prepared to agree that the people paying the highest contributions should get the highest earnings-related additions and long-term benefits. That was a complete abolition of the contributory principle. If it was not, there was no point in it.

Mr. Evans: I thank my hon. Friend for making that important point. It is clear that the contributory principle means nothing to the Labour party. It is interested only in grabbing as much money as possible from as many people as possible. It is not just the top earners who would be hit by increases in national insurance contributions: other earners would be hit by it or by other taxes.

As well as ensuring that as many people as possible contribute to the national insurance fund, we must ensure that those who ought to be contributing to it are doing so. A certain group of people tend to exploit loopholes in the system to avoid payment—whether of income tax or national insurance on eligible income. That includes the giving and receiving of non-pecuniary bonuses, in the full and certain knowledge that the purpose of such schemes is the avoidance of national insurance payments. That cannot be permitted; such loopholes must be blocked as much as possible.

We must deal with those who try to claim exotic goods as payment in kind instead of bonuses. Not only are such people avoiding national insurance payments; others who need the benefits are not receiving them.

In his Budget speech, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor spoke of ensuring that such loopholes are filled; it is estimated that, by filling them, the Government will reclaim £15 million per week. Nor do I believe that it stops there. I believe that the cheats and fraudsters have had their day. This unwelcome industry is not new, but it has become increasingly conspicuous as the level of abuse has risen.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made his position absolutely clear on both the loopholes and the fraud. If we can tackle both, there will be far more money for those in need.

Dr. Godman: The hon. Gentleman has spoken of abuses of the system. Does he support the decision of Social Security Ministers not to pay invalidity benefit to women aged between 60 and 65, many of whom are suffering severe hardship? That decision contravenes a decision by a European Commissioner, who has said that the Government are in breach of EC directive 79/7, dealing with equality of payment of pensions to men and women.

Mr. Evans: I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will mention that in winding up.

Dr. Godman: What does the hon. Gentleman think?

Mr. Evans: I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying; but given the kind of benefits that the Government are paying out, it is amazing that he should try to pick holes in certain cases. The Government are paying out a vast sum of taxpayers' and national insurance payers' money, and they are keen to ensure that it is targeted on those who desperately need it. I believe in that principle, and I am sure that the Government will continue to operate it.

Dr. Godman: What about all those women?

Mr. Evans: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman is really interested in hearing what I have to say about cracking down on national insurance fraud. If not, perhaps I should proceed to my next point.

The Government have embarked on an anti-fraud strategy to ensure that the money in the national insurance system goes only to those who need and deserve it. That strategy is absolutely right.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): The exchange that we have just heard illustrates the width of definition that sometimes applies to loopholes and fraud. However, many of our constituents—including both small business men and employees—will understand full well what my hon. Friend means. As people who play by the rules and pay their tax and national insurance contributions, they are caused great anxiety by such activities.

Mr. Evans: I thank my hon. Friend for making that point. It does not really matter whether we are talking about business men and others with money who try to avoid paying their dues, or about those who defraud the system; the net outcome is that the money is not going into the system to be paid to those who need the benefits.

We need to take fraud seriously, and the Government are doing so. They want to ensure that money lost through fraud is recovered: their current target is over £1 billion. It is very ambitious, but I believe that they can achieve it. They are considering the introduction of identity cards, and have already introduced bar coding.

I believe that the Bill is all about ensuring that those who need benefits receive them, and that those who are able to pay are made to do so. That is why I support it.

7.14 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak briefly in this important debate. If ever there was an argument against guillotine motions, it is provided by the requirement for Opposition Members to come in and make 25-minute speeches—all of them repeating the arguments of the last general election—during debate of a serious social security Bill. That has increased my distaste for the guillotine. I hope that the Minister will relay my view to the Government's business managers.

I believe that one of the most important principles enshrined in the contributory system set up by Beveridge is the principle of redistribution. What he was trying to achieve was not necessarily vertical redistribution, but redistribution throughout life: he sought to establish a system that would allow people to put away amounts to provide for untoward events such as sickness, invalidity, childbirth and old age during the economically active periods of their lives.

For the reasons stated so eloquently by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and amplified by the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks), I feel that the Bill takes a serious step towards eroding that important element in our present social security system. If the 1 per cent. that it introduces had been raised and redeployed to improve the organisation of the system of redistribution throughout the lifetime, I for one would have been very much in favour of it; but it does not.

As far as I can see, that 1 per cent. is an instrument of economic management, intended to deal with the public sector borrowing requirement. Of course I accept that there is a problem——

Mr. Fabricant: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kirkwood: No. I want to allow as many other hon. Members as possible to speak, and I hope to make a short but relevant speech.

My objection to the Bill, then, is that it is intended to raise money for economic and financial purposes. The public sector borrowing requirement certainly needs to be addressed, but it should be addressed in other ways. It is disingenuous, to say the least, to start tinkering with the national insurance contributory system in this way.

The Bill contains some tidying-up provisions—I think that that is the best way in which I can paraphrase the Minister's introductory remarks—in the form of changes in the formula for the element that goes from the national insurance fund to the national health service.

In parenthesis, I object strongly to clause 2(3), which makes those changes—not because I object to an important and beneficial clarification of the position, but because it is retrospective. If we look at the provision in detail, we see that it goes back to the Social Security Act 1989. It deals with amendments that

> "shall be deemed to have had effect as from the commencement of the 1992 Act"——

that is, the Social Security Administration Act 1992.

The Minister is relatively new to his job. Let me say to him what I have said to Social Security Ministers before him, and will no doubt say to his successors. The way in which we are scrutinising this legislation does not give us a proper opportunity to deal with the matters that I have raised.

It is black marks for the parliamentary draftsmen and departmental lawyers if they make mistakes allowing legislation to be capable of misinterpretation or misconstruction. If the Minister wishes to earn his pay as an Under-Secretary of State, he should go back to the Department and tear strips off those who produced this ambiguity. He should remind them of their duty to ensure that such things do not happen again.

Of course, our legislature has a duty to ensure that legislation is scrutinised properly; but guillotine motions do not help us to ensure that legislation is dealt with by the House in a proper and orderly fashion.

While welcoming the change, I think that it should not have happened in the first place. I consider that to be a serious point to which attention should be given.

The context of the debate is better informed as a result of the ninth report produced by the Social Security Advisory Committee. I quote from a press release dated 15 December:

> "In a final chapter"

of the report,

> "the Report questions the view that social security spending"—

which comes from the national insurance fund—

> "is out of control, but suggests that a fair, adequate and affordable social security system for those in need is essentially the preservation of the social fabric of the nation."

I strongly believe that that is true.

If we are getting into some of the cruder and more ideological comments made by Tory Members behind the Minister about the need to curtail expenditure and so on, that is a proper matter for political debate. However, I would prefer to focus carefully, as the SSAC report does, on examining how we plan the future growth of social security expenditure. There is a debate to be had about the growth of social security spending in the past because I want to ensure that every penny is used properly.

To give an example, at my party's last conference it was decided that if there is to be an increase in the pension provision, that increase should be targeted at and linked to the earnings of those who are on income support and means-tested benefits. We are struggling to see how we can constrain the growth of social security spending from the national insurance fund.

There are some worrying implications in what Tory Members said about not believing in growth. I am prepared to argue about how we spend the growth in social security expenditure. However, if we are starting to talk about real cuts in social security provision, the SSAC report is right: we start looking at the "social fabric of the nation" and how it will be eroded.

If the Government do not pay through the benefit system, they will need to pick it up through criminality, drug abuse and all the other downstream effects that will result from taking money out of the pockets of those who need it most. I recommend the Social Security Advisory Committee report. I know that the hon. Members for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) and for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) are experts on social security. I hope that they will examine the report.

Mr. Bates *rose*——

Mr. Kirkwood: I will not give way.

There are some unfair, hidden tax increases in the Bill. The hon. Member for Garscadden deployed the case eloquently. I shall reinforce what he said, but I will not repeat his comments. The vast majority of people do not think all that far ahead. Low-income families have a week-to-week view of life, because that is the way in which their finances stretch. I do not think that they are properly apprised of the sort of difficulties they will face when the tax increases bite in the new financial year. To start thinking about increases of the level of £9 per week in 1994-95 and £16 per week in the 1995-96 fiscal year will not provide difficulties only for low-income families. It will bite into the disposable income that is available for middle-income families.

We tend properly to concentrate on financially disadvantaged households in social security debates, and it is right that we do so. But looking at the changes that will flow after 6 April 1994, I think that many middle-income families will have real difficulties. Although they may have reasonably big incomes in terms of their net take-home pay, they also have a corresponding level of commitments.

I do not know whether the Government have done any research on this. When they make changes of this magnitude, I certainly hope that they do research so that they can measure the exact impact of such changes on the balance of disposable income for middle-income families.

I am nervous about how the changes will play out for middle-income groups. I hope that the Minister will say something about that later. Low-income and middle-income families will find it difficult to cope with the totality of the tax increases—something like £15,000 million in 1995-96, and the national insurance increases provided in the Bill are about one sixth of that tax take.

Earlier, I said that, if the national insurance fund is increased, it should be increased in order that benefit expenditure can be correspondingly increased. In the Bill, we see changes in the benefits that are available. Those changes are an important element of it. The job seeker's allowance will be means-tested after six months.

Mr. Bates: The hon. Gentleman has made some prize comments about the speeches of my hon. Friends. I draw his attention to something that he said:

> "The national insurance contribution system is now so shot through with anomalies and piecemeal reforms that we should start again from scratch."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1992; Vol. 215, c. 73.]

Is that still the hon. Gentleman's view?

Mr. Kirkwood: I know I should not have given way, because the hon. Gentleman has anticipated the final part of my speech.

I said that the Bill provides for cuts in benefit. The job seeker's allowance will be means-tested after six months. Sickness benefits and invalidity benefit will be translated into incapacity benefit. That benefit will be liable to tax, and there will be tighter medical tests.

Another matter that must be taken into account is that the age of eligibility for the state pension for women is being changed to 65 years. As hon. Members know, that is being phased in between the years 2010 and 2020. Savings are being made simultaneously with an increase in national insurance contributions of about £2·5 billion by 1996-97 for the job seeker's allowance and the sickness benefit and invalidity benefit changes, and about £5,000 million by the year 2025 for the change in the pension age. Increasing national insurance contributions at the same time as making those swingeing reductions in benefits is adding insult to injury.

Anyone who studies objectively the imbalance that has occurred in the national insurance fund can see clearly that it has been occasioned by a combination of lower earnings and increased unemployment. The obvious answer to that strays outside the scope of this debate. Urgent attention is needed to promote growth and generate more employment.

I ask the Minister to consider that one of the consequences of the increases will be that people will start to examine ways of getting round them. There are many benefits in kind which do not apply to national insurance contributions. I shall list a few of them for the Minister's consideration. For example, company cars, beneficial loans, private medical and dental attention, general expenses allowances, travel and subsistence allowances, entertainment, home telephone expenses which are paid or reimbursed and mobile telephone expenses escape national insurance contributions.

If the Government are going down the road of not increasing general taxation—I think that would be a much more honest and straightforward way of raising public expenditure—they will need seriously to examine some of the benefits in kind which people will start to use or misuse in the future. We should pay attention to that matter.

I should like to conclude by considering the future of the contributory principle of the national insurance fund, as I promised the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates). I agreed with what the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) said in his interesting speech. He knows a great deal about the subject, and we have had many discussions about it over the years.

I believe that we need to reform the national insurance contributory fund fundamentally. My opinion is reinforced by the Bill, because it is quite unforgivable for the Government to raid the national insurance fund in this way.

I know that any reform would take time and would be difficult to introduce. It would take some explanation for people to understand that they no longer had entitlement to benefits. We must, however, consider how we plan to finance social security expenditure. There is a case for doing away with the contributory principle.

We should be more honest and say that the future system should be based on a pay-as-you-go principle. The necessary money should be taken out of general taxation. That would make it easier for Governments of whatever political stripe to make better future provision, which is intelligible to ordinary people.

The Bill is important. It deserves serious scrutiny, and I am sorry that it has been guillotined. The Government, however, have not made their case properly, although I believe that it is difficult for them to make a legitimate case for increasing the costs of employees through their national insurance contributions while using other mechanisms to reduce the benefits available through that very same fund.

7.31 pm

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): I do not pretend to be an expert in social security, but it would be a poor day if hon. Members could not consider legislation that is important to their constituents unless they were experts in it. I found the comments of certain Opposition Members extremely patronising.

It particularly ill behoves the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) to make such comments when his party cannot come up with a consistent policy if it tries. In the Budget debate, the Liberals' Treasury spokesman, the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) emphasised the importance of the contributory principle, but the hon. Gentleman has just suggested that it should be abolished. That inconsistency demonstrates that we are back on the old Liberal game of a thousand blooms on every branch.

What has been startlingly absent from the debate is an appreciation of the difficulties of funding the type of system that we want for the future. I asked the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) how he would fund the deficit in the national insurance fund. He did not offer a proper answer but gave a bit of fudge here and a bit of mudge there. It is all very well to speak in lofty tones about Beveridge, full employment and other vital issues, but if one cannot say where the money for all that will come from, one is dead.

In the 1992-93 report, the Government Actuary said that the fund required extra money and that one way of providing that would be to increase national insurance contributions. There may be alternative means of raising that money, but the Opposition cannot criticise the Government's proposals in the Bill unless they have such an alternative.

It is not right to argue that full employment will be provided by increasing benefits. When Beveridge looked at the system he said that the starting point was full employment. These days, those countries with full employment are not those with the most over-weighty social and welfare provisions; they include Japan and Taiwan, not France and Germany. Today in Europe, 20 million people are unemployed. We must consider the future. If we want to return to full employment, we must ask ourselves how to achieve that. One way of doing so is to keep the social burden off employers' backs.

Ms Ann Coffey (Stockport): Such as sick pay.

Mr. Heald: I did not catch that sedentary intervention. We are trying to remove the burdens on business so that it can be more competitive. Every major employers' group argues that that is necessary. Opposition Members argue that employees' national insurance contributions should remain at their low level, but that is not possible to achieve unless we increase taxation. If we did that, it would be extremely damaging to British industry.

It is typical that the overlap between national insurance payments for unemployment benefit and income support hardly rates a mention in Opposition Members' speeches. Of those who are unemployed and receiving benefit, 70 per cent. are on income support. The rules governing income support and unemployment benefit are inconsistent, cumbersome and dealt with by different offices. Surely it is right that that system should be reformed. I cannot believe that Opposition Members would disagree.

The Government have grasped the nettle to make that change and, at the same time, they have targeted the new job seeker's allowance in order to help people to get back to work. It is not as though anyone will lose as a result of that; rather they will gain, because the job seekers agreement will set them clear targets. The hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingham) may smile, but the success of the job club scheme shows that such measures work. Under the job seeker's grant, people will be given the help they need to go out to look for work.

Mr. Wicks: Is there not an inconsistency in the hon. Gentleman's argument? He seemed to argue that mass unemployment is now a fact of life and that, as testimony to that, it exists in foreign parts. He also supports the idea of the job seeker's allowance. Surely the notion behind it is that there are enough jobs out there to be sought, if only we got the benefits and the help right. The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways. Does he see a future of mass unemployment or does he genuinely believe that we can provide a system under which people can not only seek jobs but find them?

Mr. Heald: I am optimistic about the future, so long as we take the right measures. We must remove the burdens from business and train young people and those in work. We should give them the help that they need to find the jobs for which they are suited. The Government are taking such measures, but too often without the support of the Opposition. Their support should be forthcoming because those measures are in the interests of everyone.

When the Labour party was in office, its record on national insurance was appalling. Under the Labour Government, employers' national insurance contributions stood at 13·5 per cent. and those of employees stood at 6·5 per cent. According to today's national insurance figures, someone earning £70 a week would, under Labour, have total costs of £14, whereas under the Conservatives that person costs £4·96. Under Labour, someone earning £130 would have total national insurance costs of £26, whereas under the Conservatives he costs £15. That shows that the Conservatives have removed the burden from businesses.

The Labour party has not changed its spots. One need only study the shadow Budget, produced before the general election, to see that, because it proposed to remove the upper earnings limit. That would have meant that people who would have to pay higher contributions would be ripped off because they would not get the earnings-related addition to which they were entitled. That proposal was also fundamentally unpopular because people do not want to pay higher taxes. They want a liberated economy in which taxes are lower so that they can reap the benefits of their enterprise.

Mr. Wicks: The comparisons with the previous Labour Government are helpful. Can the hon. Gentleman inform the House of the cost of public spending on unemployment under that Labour Government compared with the costs under the Conservative Government? Would he care to speculate about how high expenditure on unemployment now impacts on taxes? What is the overall burden of taxes on the average family now compared to what it was under the Labour Government?

Mr. Heald: I do not think that I shall have time to do that. I shall be happy to discuss that afterwards with the hon. Gentleman. If we had a socialist Government in the country now, we would have the same sort of system as in socialist countries abroad. If one considers what is happening in France—high unemployment and rising youth unemployment—it is not difficult to see that we do not want that in Britain, and that we must continue with the vigorous policies of this Conservative Government.

7.39 pm

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): The Second Reading speeches have been somewhat uneven and they have been worsened by a guillotine on this important Bill. In the time that we have available, we cannot go down the route of further criticism of that Government decision, but it has rather curtailed an important debate that I hope that we can continue in Committee.

The speeches by some hon. Members have been extremely eloquent and thoughtful. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) especially, as well as to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) who opened the debate.

In the short time available I would like to reinforce some of the points that have been made and to demand answers to some of the questions that have been asked, which I would like the Minister to answer in winding up. It is important to note that most people in the country believe that the national insurance scheme is a partnership between the individual and state. Most individuals who contribute to [illegible] scheme do so on the understanding that it establishes, in principle, their entitlement to benefits if earnings are interrupted. The average man or woman, who has contributed to the fund during their working life, is being conned by the Government. The view of national insurance as a tax equivalent means that, contrary to the theory, the Government are able to increase contributions without introducing corresponding increases in benefits and, at the same time, erode the value of those benefits.

As we have heard, this one-clause Bill is about the 1 per cent. increase in national insurance contributions from 9 to 10 per cent. and is on top of the previous increase in the standard rate of national insurance contributions from 6·5 per cent. to 9 per cent. and the abolition of the ceiling on employers' contributions. Overall, the amount raised in contributions has increased relative to other forms of tax and in terms of the percentage charged on most earnings. Much of this year's tax revenue will come from higher national insurance contributions and, as we know, the 1 per cent. increase in rates for employees and the self-employed will raise a staggering £2·26 billion in revenue in a full year. Significantly, that is £360 million more than a penny rise in the basic rate of income tax.

National insurance is a regressive tax and will hit those much lower down the income scale than income tax, so that half a million people who are too poor to pay income tax will nevertheless pay national insurance. As we have already heard, a good example of that is the nursing auxiliary who earns around £6,000 a year and will pay an extra 38p a week in national insurance. However, if there were a penny rise in the basic rate of tax, that person would pay absolutely nothing more.

[Mr. Keith Bradley]

The Government explain the increase in terms of the cost of contributory benefits. They put forward the view that it is right, in principle, that existing contributions should pay for contributory benefits. I do not dissent from that view. However, it is interesting to note that, in an interview on "Newsnight" in July, the Secretary of State for Social Security admitted that he had great sympathy with people's gut feeling of having paid for something through their national insurance contributions. Yet that has not prevented the Government from reducing the real value of national insurance benefits time and again since 1979.

For example, the flat rate pension has been degraded by indexing its growth to prices rather than wages.

Mr. Heald: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bradley: I shall give way once.

Mr. Heald: The hon. Gentleman will obviously remember the point that I made—how would the fund be paid for in future? Is the hon. Gentleman saying that Labour would reintroduce the link with earnings and, if so, how would it pay for it?

Mr. Bradley: We have heard the Back-Bench Conservative Members attacking the Labour party time and again. We are debating a Government measure. The Government have time and again broken their manifesto commitments—on VAT on fuel, on mortgage tax relief and on home insurance. We are here to debate Government policies and I intend to do so.

The House of Commons Library has estimated that the process of degrading pensions has knocked £19 off the value of a single pension. Had the same process been practised since 1948—we have heard much of Beveridge —today's single pension of £56·10 would be worth only £23 a week. Imagine an elderly person trying to live on that; yet, that is now the Government's chosen course.

The build-up of earnings-related supplements has also been virtually eliminated. The earnings-related supplement paid with unemployment benefit was abolished in 1992, while child dependency additions were abolished in 1984.

While SERPS entitlements remain, the adequacy of them is far from assured. Research shows that under the current rules, a person with a lifetime average earnings equal to the national average for males and retiring after 2009, would retire on a combined flat rate and a SERPS pension equal to 33 per cent. of gross earnings. That compares favourably with gross replacement rates of around 56 per cent. in Germany and between 59 per cent. and 71 per cent. in France. If the national insurance pension follows the declining course that is projected by Government's own figures, it is estimated that the gross replacement value for a state retirement pension will fall to between 33 per cent. and 27 per cent.

On top of all that, eligibility for benefits has become harder for individuals to establish. Partial benefits in return for a partial contribution have been virtually abolished. Payment of reduced rates of unemployment benefit for those with less than a full contribution record was abolished in 1986 and qualification for short-term benefits has been made more difficult by a recent contribution record via paid employment now being absolutely essential.

Numerous new regulations have been imposed to disqualify the jobless from receiving benefit. Unlike income tax, national insurance contributions which are overpaid—in that they are not sufficient to meet the declining eligibility for benefit—are not refunded and therefore a person wastes their individual contributions.

We have also heard questions about the new job seeker's allowance, which is the latest change that the Government are making to break the link between contributions paid and the rights to a contributory benefit. The allowance reduces the entitlement to benefit from 12 months to six months, which will remove 90,000 people from entitlement to any benefit after six months—50,000 men and 40,000 women. The means test involving six months rather than one year means that people will also lose entitlement to benefit as a result of spouses' earnings.

We must ask serious questions on that. Will the Secretary of State confirm whether there will be additional payments for adult dependants with the contributory job seeker's allowance? Will he clarify the plans to base the rate of the job seeker's allowance on income support rates for those under 25 years? Does not that mean that there will be a reduced rate of benefit for all unemployed people under the age of 25 years, as pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden? We need clear answers to those questions.

The new incapacity benefit will be taxable and subject to more stringent medical tests than is the case for invalidity benefit. It will be harder to get than invalidity benefit and it will be paid at a lower level. Will the Minister explain the principle that lies behind this contributory benefit? Two people living in the same street, in the same financial and social circumstances, and in the same physical state, could receive two different benefits. One could receive invalidity benefit and the other could receive a substantially reduced incapacity benefit. One benefit is taxed whereas the other is not. That will not only make a farce of the contributory principle, but will be a slap in the face of social justice.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden, I raise the point about the future of the basic pension, which we have mentioned already. I refer to the recent comments by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury which may confirm our worst fears about the future of the pension. If his comments are anything to go by, no one under the age of 40 should expect to have a state pension on which to rely in old age. I know that that view differs from the Chancellor's view. Will the Minister make clear tonight on which side of the debate the Social Security team sits? Do the Secretary of State and his team support the undying principle of basic pension or do they support the Treasury team's view that it will ultimately wither and die, and that everyone will make alternative provision? Where do the Secretary of State and his team stand on that matter?

All the cuts have been made in spite of the increase in national insurance contributions, which the Government claim has occurred to pay for contributory benefits. People are effectively told to keep on paying higher national insurance contributions, but not to expect anything in return. Understandably, such a policy is a cause for concern for those anxious about their future security. People must wonder where their years of contributions are rapidly disappearing. At the least, people should be informed of the reality of national insurance contributions, which is that they provide the Government with a means of raising taxation by the back door. They have little to do with the national insurance scheme as people understand it.

People can no longer have confidence in the Government's claim to be the party of low taxation. Over and over again, the promises made in the election about the Conservatives the party of low taxation have been broken. The Tory manifesto says:

> "We will maintain mortgage tax relief."

What have we had? The value of mortgage tax relief has been reduced in this Budget since the election. The manifesto says:

> "We are the only party that understands the need for low taxation."

What has happened? We have had the biggest hike in taxation in history. We have had the biggest hike of 7p in the pound, to which the Chancellor himself has admitted. People will be paying on average an extra £9 a week in taxation next year and an extra £16 a week the year after. They need an explanation.

We will oppose the Bill tonight because the changes in national insurance contributions are part of the way in which the Government are getting out of the hole caused by their economic mismanagement. The changes are a way in which to try to dupe the public into believing that national insurance is making a contribution to real benefits in the future rather than an effort to plug a hole in the Government's finances.

7.52 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. William Hague): For the second day running, we have had an interesting debate, with many varied contributions. I shall try to answer many of the detailed points put throughout the debate, including the questions asked by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar).

The hon. Gentleman began his speech with a number of clear truths. He said that it was a short, simple Bill; indeed it is. He said that it could be argued that the Bill was needed simply to pay for increased expenditure out of the national insurance fund. He said that, in a sense, that was true. It is true in every sense.

The Bill's purpose is to bring the national insurance fund nearer to balance. The expenditure of the national insurance fund is much higher than its income—£5 billion higher. Its expenditure next year will be higher than it has been in the current year. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) said that national insurance contributions should be increased only so that expenditure on benefits out of the fund could be increased. That is the purpose of the increase. Expenditure out of the fund will be higher in 1994-95 than in 1993-94. That is why we seek to put more money into the fund for the financial year 1994-95.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire raised a point about the retrospective provisions in clause 2. Interestingly, he was the only hon. Member to raise that point—a point that we shall remember when we deal with some of the amendments in Committee. Like him, I am not enthusiastic about retrospective legislation. The provisions arise from the Social Security Act 1989, in which a drafting error was clearly made. There was an error by the Government and then an error by Parliament in passing the Act.

I welcome the hon. Gentleman's recognition that a change needs to be made. It needs to be made to give proper legal cover for the money that passes out of the national insurance fund to go towards the costs of the national health service. Ministers decided, as soon as we were aware of the mistake, that we should take the first opportunity to correct it. That is what we are doing in the Bill and that aim should be supported by the whole House.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire also raised the important questions of benefits in kind and differences between the income tax system and the national insurance contributions system. He may have seen the recent report of the tax and national insurance contributions working group which was established by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Kirkwood *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hague: The hon. Gentleman obviously has not seen it; I strongly commend it to him because it makes extremely good reading. My right hon. Friend published the report in October. One of the working groups's main suggestions was that the definition of earnings should be aligned on the tax base, which would make subject to national insurance contributions all taxable benefits in kind and any vouchers regarded as earnings for tax purposes. We intend to consult the business community far more widely about the proposals next year and to discuss how they might be implemented. The working group outlined several different ways in which one might approach the alignment of the two systems. We recognise the importance of what the hon. Gentleman has said; he made an entirely valid point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) made an entertaining and well-informed speech, drawing in much detail from the briefing used to a much greater extent by Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen. Yesterday, they used CBI briefings; today, they employed briefings from the Conservative research department. I do not know what has gone wrong with the services of Labour party headquarters. Clearly, they are not supplying much material to Labour Members at the moment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire pointed out that, after the increase, the lowest-paid would still pay lower national insurance contributions than the contributions that they paid in 1979. That is an extremely important point. He also reminded the House that the Bill reflected the Government's commitment to sound finance, a commitment that was also clear in the Budget.

The hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) made a thoughtful speech, as the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) said. I did not agree with all of it. He said, for example, that the basis of indexation of pensions increases should not have been changed. We all have to consider that the implication of not changing the basis of indexation would be that expenditure from the national insurance fund would be £8·5 billion more than it is today. The hon. Gentleman and the Labour party in general must consider how they would have financed that increase through the 1980s. That is the problem that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire had at his party conference. He was overruled by the Liberal Democrats of the nation, despite his insistence on a particular pensions policy.

The hon. Member for Croydon, North-West referred to the future state pension age. There are powerful reasons for

[Mr. Hague]

equalisation at 65, including the position of occupational pension schemes, international trends and the need to ensure that the system is affordable in the future. That issue runs through many of our deliberations about the national insurance fund and the social security system. It is our responsibility to ensure that the system is affordable in the future. Although some hon. Members argued that there should be no difficulty with that, the simple projection is that, although expenditure on pensions is just under £30 billion a year now, it is likely to be more than £60 billion in the 2020s and 2030s. That is only on the basis of indexation with prices. Those issues must be borne in mind.

The hon. Member for Croydon, North-West made two important points. One was about the level of unemployment in the future. He asked how much we could predict the future level of unemployment. My hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) pointed out the difficulties faced by economists in forecasting future levels of employment. All that we do in the Government forecast is make stylised assumptions about the needs for next year. The assumption for next year is 2·75 million. Today, unemployment fell to lower than the stylised assumption in the Government's forecast. That is the limit of what we can forecast in calculating what we need next year, and for the national insurance fund, which is what the debate is about.

My hon. Friend's most important point was to show how the social security system needs to change over time. There is a fair amount of common ground in some parts of the House on the idea that the system needs to change and evolve, and sometimes to be reformed. Sometimes it has to be refocused. We have to check that it is meeting the needs of society in the right way. That has important implications for the national insurance fund.

The national insurance fund cannot be compared to a single-risk commercial insurance system. It cannot operate like a funded insurance system in which a specific contribution buys an absolute right for ever to a specific return. The national insurance fund is a pay-as-you-go system which relies on the ability of current contributors to pay in a sufficient amount to provide for expenditure on benefits which are currently payable. Social security schemes must be able to evolve, and as such, any Government must be able to make adjustments to the structure of the system to meet changing circumstances.

That is the point with which many people agree, including the hon. Members for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and for Croydon, North-West and the Government. The only people who do not recognise that the social security system sometimes needs to be reformed are Opposition Front-Bench Members who, in these debates, often remind me of the Duke of Wellington in 1832 telling the other place that the British constitution had been created so perfectly in the first place that no improvement on it could possibly be devised.

Yesterday, Opposition Front-Bench Members came to the House to defend the statutory sick pay system, the establishment of which they opposed 10 years ago. They have opposed every change to it. There they sit, glumly, a range of exhausted volcanoes, unable to come up with any ideas for the future, having privatised that activity and farmed it out to the Commission for Social Justice.

Dr. Godman: When will the English Court of Appeal hear the appeal lodged by the Secretary of State and the chief adjudication officer against the decision taken by Commissioner Skinner on 1 April 1992 about the payment of invalidity benefit to women aged between 60 and 65? Is it likely that the Secretary of State will seek a referral to the European Court of Justice?

Mr. Hague: On 26 July, the Court of Appeal adjourned the hearing of the appeal, which will now take place on either 14 of 15 February 1994. The listing of the hearing date is a judicial matter for the Court of Appeal. Obviously, we shall have to await the outcome before we decide how to proceed.

Dr. Godman: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hague: I must press on with the rest of my speech. I was referring to the need for change——

Dr. Godman: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I point out that I suspect that the Minister, adventitiously, is misleading the House, because the Secretary of State and the chief adjudication officer asked for the postponement?

Mr. Hague: If I am misleading the House, I am certainly not doing so deliberately, but I am happy to talk about the matter. I gave the hon. Gentleman a straight answer and I shall be happy to discuss it with him on all other occasions.

Let us return to the Bill and to its purpose. It recognises that any responsible Administration must take action to ensure that they meet commitments and obligations, such as to pay pensions and to pay the benefits that come out of the national insurance fund. It is critical to ensure that enough money goes into that fund to pay those benefits.

It is important to recognise, when we make the change that we are debating tonight, that we have greatly improved the national insurance system since 1979. We have introduced a 2 per cent. rate that applies under the lower earnings limit for the lower paid. We have made huge reductions in the national insurance contributions paid by employers, which were a tax on jobs in 1979 of 13·5 per cent. The contributions are now 3·6 to 10·2 per cent. and are lowest for the lowest paid.

Opposition Members are often content to mouth concern about the low-paid, but tax them out of work when they get into power. Has it ever occurred to them that one reason why unemployment is falling, to the utter astonishment of economists and Opposition Members, is that we do not have a tax on jobs to the extent that we had in the 1970s under Labour Governments?

Let us compare the total level of employees' and employers' national insurance contributions in 1979 and now. Next year, the employers' and employees' contibution for someone earning £250 a week will be £46. What was it in 1979? Opposition Members should know. It was £50. What about the low-paid? For someone on £130 a week, the contribution next year will be £16. The contribution in 1979 was £26. Let us look at the really low-paid. For someone on £70 a week, the contribution next year is £5. In 1979, it was £14. That is how the level of national insurance contributions has changed over that time.

Opposition Members have failed to face up to the fact that if one does not pay for national insurance benefits by increasing the income of the national insurance fund directly, one must pay it in some other way. That is a truth that they shy away from and do not like to discuss.

We waited to hear in the speeches of Opposition Front-Bench Members what their proposals were. The hon. Member for Garscadden referred to a larger Treasury grant, as though it were a huge pot of money into which hon. Members or Governments could dip their sticky fingers whenever they wanted. The Treasury grant can be increased only if the extra money comes out of other forms of taxation.

The Opposition have said that they are opposed to an increase in national insurance contributions, but they have set no alternative before the House. They have come here with a sense of grievance and outrage at the measure. The sense of outrage is so strong that when the hon. Member for Garscadden launched his speech, fully 14 of his hon. Friends made the long journey to the Chamber to hear his attack. It was an attack so impressive and dramatic in its content that 10 of his hon. Friends were still here at the end of his remarks. That shows the intensity of the outrage felt by Opposition Members.

How would the hon. Gentleman fill the gap? Would he raise the money in a different way? Would he abolish the upper earnings limit, as the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy) suggested? Evidently, she did not clear her lines with Opposition Front Benchers, who say that that is no longer appropriate, that they have modernised their policy. They will have to modernise one or two of their Back Benchers if they are to make their argument stick together.

Would the Opposition pay for it from general taxation? Perhaps they would, but they forget that a large percentage of pensioners pay general taxation. Why should pensioners have to pay for the contributory benefits for which they have paid throughout their working lives? There is a powerful case for having contributory benefits funded by people who pay national insurance contributions.

Would the Opposition fund the system by closing a loophole? The hon. Member for Garscadden referred to a loophole—the idea put about by the shadow Chancellor that everything, including the funding of the national insurance fund, the general burden of taxation and every crackpot project thought up by Labour Members, can be funded by closing some vast and previously unsuspected loophole that has escaped the attention of everyone else in the nation, and of every Chancellor in recent decades.

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question already proposed from the Chair, pursuant to the Order [14 December].*

The House divided: Ayes 310, Noes 259.

Division No. 54] **[8.10 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David

Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger

Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and
Mr. Andrew McKay.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John

Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland

Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike

Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*

O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. John Spellar.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed to a Committee of the whole House, pursuant to the Order [14 December].

[Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse *in the Chair.*]

Clause 1

INCREASE IN PRIMARY CLASS 1 CONTRIBUTIONS

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

8.25 pm

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): It is most unusual to commence the Committee stage of such an important Bill just 15 minutes after it has received its Second Reading. Usually hon. Members are allowed a reasonable number of days to examine and reflect on what the Minister said on Second Reading and to consider the other speeches, although, given some of the contributions from the Government Benches during today's debate, little reflection would be necessary. That opportunity has been denied us tonight, as it was last night in the same way during our proceedings on the Statutory Sick Pay Bill.

Usually, having considered the debate, there is an opportunity to consider the clauses in great detail and to submit suitable amendments. Sadly, that is not to be because the Government are forcing the Bill through for reasons which were dealt with in detail during the debate on the guillotine motion. I am sure that if I started to go through all those arguments again, Mr. Lofthouse, you would rule me out of order, so I have no intention so to do.

Because of the procedure imposed by the Government, and to ensure that we continue the debate constructively and build on the many important points raised by the Opposition, we have chosen to have a clause stand part debate immediately. Many crucial matters at the heart of Government taxation policy were raised on Second Reading. As they were not adequately dealt with in the Government responses—certain specific questions were asked, but not answered—this debate gives us a further opportunity to probe those issues and concerns.

On the surface, clause 1 appears to be fairly innocuous. Anyone who is not versed in the obscure terminology used in drafting Bills could be led to think that the clause does not amount to much. To put the matter in context and so that we can better grasp its content, it is worth reading the clause. Subsection (1) states:

> "In section 8 of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 (calculation of primary Class 1 contributions), in subsection (2)(b) (by virtue of which the main primary percentage is 9 per cent.) for '9 per cent.' substitute '10 per cent.'."

Subsection (2) is easier to understand:

> "The above amendment comes into effect on 6 April 1994."

I thought long and hard about how the clause had come about. I knew what it meant after I had worked my way through the verbiage, but I could not quite work out how a Government who go on and on about being a tax-cutting Government could introduce a Bill, the main clause of which imposes a massive tax increase on the British people. I found that difficult to comprehend. I pondered the matter and I anticipated the possible reason. Then, suddenly, it came to me like a flash of divine inspiration.

I visualised the Cabinet meeting when all that took place. There they were, sitting round the Cabinet table, each and every one of them a senior Minister of State. The Chancellor was telling them that the Government—not exactly this Government and not exactly under this Chancellor—had made a terrible mess of the economy during the past 14 years, so something drastic needed to be done. He called for them to speak up if they had any ideas about how to get the Government out of the hole in which they found themselves.

Up popped the Secretary of State for Social Security —he might even pop up tonight. He said, "Please, Sir, please, Sir. I have an idea. I know what we should do. I have a little list. We should punish the sick, the disabled and the poor and impose new taxes on the working people of Britain. They should pay for the Government's mistakes. Why don't we increase national insurance contributions?"

That is exactly what the Government did and that is why we have the Bill. The clause, stripped of its legal verbiage, increases employees' national insurance contributions from 9 per cent. to 10 per cent.—coupled with the national insurance contribution increases on the self-employed—and will take an extra £2·26 billion out of the pockets of those workers. That is £360 million more in taxes than if the Government had put 1p on the basic rate of income tax.

As we would expect from the Government, that increase is designed to hit those on low wages harder than those on top salaries. National insurance contributions apply more to those lower down the pay scale than income tax does. That means that half a million workers too poor to pay income tax will nevertheless pay national insurance contributions. [illegible] my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) pointed out on Second Reading, the poor pay more with national insurance increases.

[Mr. Adam Ingram]

Examples of the effect of the increase have already been given, but it is worth doing so again during this clause stand part debate. The 1 per cent. rise in national insurance contributions will mean that a shop assistant earning £6,000 a year will pay an extra 38p a week in contributions, whereas a 1p rise in the basic rate of tax would cost nothing.

The rise in national insurance contributions will also hit those on middle incomes more than the very rich. A company secretary earning £430 a week—just over £22,000 a year—will pay £3·75 extra in national insurance contributions, which is nearly 1 per cent. of his wage. However, a senior executive earning £220,000 a year will pay exactly the same—£3·75 a week—in extra national insurance contributions, which is less than 0·1 per cent. of his salary. All that is against the assurances given by the Prime Minister when he told the House on 28 January 1992 that he had

"no plans to raise . . . the level of national insurance contributions."—*[Official Report,* 28 January 1992; Vol. 202, c. 808.]

I wonder why the Prime Minister was not prepared to be more honest with the House and the country on that issue.

While the Prime Minister was trying to conceal the truth, his Chancellor has been much more honest. A headline in the *Daily Mail* today says, "Clarke Comes Clean". That, as my hon. Friends have pointed out, is an admission by the Chancellor that the 1 per cent. increase in national insurance contributions is part of the biggest tax hike in our history. It is an admission that what is laid down in clause 1 is part of the—there is a debate about whether it is £9 or £10 so, for argument's sake, I shall say £9—increase in taxes that the average family will have to pay next year and part of the £16 a week increase in taxes the year after.

The Chancellor may have come clean with the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee yesterday, but we now know that he is playing dirty with the British people. As my hon. Friends have pointed out during the debate, higher national insurance contributions are characteristic of this pay-more-get-less Tory Government.

This is not the first increase in contributions that the Government have introduced. The standard rate was increased from 6·5 per cent. to 9 per cent. in the 1980s. What is most striking and most cynical is that those rises were never accompanied by an improvement in the level of national insurance benefits. The recently announced reductions in unemployment benefit are only the latest and most blatant example of that more-for-less policy. Merging unemployment benefit with income support to produce the job seeker's benefit is a cynical ploy wrapped up in a semantic change.

Cutting the contributory element from 12 to six months will remove 90,000 people from entitlement to any benefit after six months—50,000 men and 40,000 women. Cutting benefits to raise money is the traditional approach of a Tory Government who have created their own fiscal crisis. Beyond that obvious short-termism is a more damaging policy—the destruction of the contributory principle to the national insurance fund. All that is relevant to clause 1.

My hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden earlier demanded that the Secretary of State should tell us whether there is to be a new reduced rate of benefit for unemployed people under 25. I am sure that those young people would like to know. That question was repeated by my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley), but no answer was given.

Unemployment benefit is paid on a non-means-tested basis because that is how people expect the system to work. They pay into the national insurance fund on the understanding that doing so entitles them to benefits, irrespective of other factors such as age. What matters, or used to matter, is the number of contributions made. That is the basis of a contractual relationship, and it is the basis on which the fund was established.

In the past, people could expect that paying national insurance contributions would provide for their security in their old age. We know exactly what the Secretary of State and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury now think of that principle. What an insulting message has gone out to the British people. On the other hand, they have been told that they must contribute more to the national insurance fund, but on the other, they have been told that they must make their own pension provision because what they will get from the fund will be nugatory. That is what the Chief Secretary has said about future pension provision, following his famous put-down of the "No, not now, not ever" Secretary of State for Social Security.

The Government have a clear agenda of increasing taxes and reducing benefit. That means reducing unemployment benefit, invalidity benefit and pension entitlement. Research estimates have shown that, if the current approach to pensions uprating had been in place since 1948, today's £56·10 single pension would be worth only £23 a week. I am sure that everyone will agree that no one could live on that. We have heard such a payment described as not worth a bag of nuts. Perhaps that should be rephrased and the payment described as being worth only a bag of nugatories.

The long march through benefit levels has been accompanied by a systematic programme of making them harder to obtain and the link between contributions and entitlement has been consistently eroded. Receiving partial benefits for partial contributions is almost a thing of the past. The qualification for short-term benefits has been made more difficult while at the same time regulations have increased to cut off the jobless from benefit.

The Government's approach to the management and financing of the national insurance fund shows a clear contempt for the contributory principle and for the needs of the British people for security against illness, poverty and unemployment and in old age. The national insurance system operates on the basis of the trust and consent of contributors. Clause 1 and the benefit changes that accompany it in the two Budgets this year are an affront to that trust and consent.

The previous Chancellor of the Exchequer spoke of the urgent need to address the deficit in the fund. He said:

"when a deficit of this size emerges in the fund, it is natural to look to all contributors to make up the balance."—*[Official Report,* 16 March 1993; Vol. 221, c. 179.]

Last night, we debated the scandalous proposals to cut statutory sick pay. During that debate it became clear that reductions in employers' national insurance contributions were used as a bribe to persuade companies to take their new sick pay obligations lying down.

In their zeal to cut benefit expenditure, the Secretary of State for Social Security and the Chancellor have made it impossible to ask all contributors to make up the deficit.

Consequently, the burden of propping up the depleted national insurance fund is being placed on employees on middle and low incomes.

This debate will allow the Minister to deal with the many issues raised on Second Reading. I am sure that my hon. Friends who contribute to it will pose further questions for him to answer. In the light of the debate that surrounded the Budget, does the Minister think that such a massive tax rise as the one prescribed by the increase in national insurance contributions is justified? Will he let us into a little secret and tell us what alternatives to the national insurance scheme were considered and then rejected by the Cabinet, or must we wait until the next unified Budget before we learn of the next increase in contributions and cuts in benefit?

On Second Reading, reference was also made to the half a million people who are too poor to pay income tax, but will be expected to pay national insurance contributions. I have said the same during consideration of this clause. Will the Minister confirm that figure, or does he have a different figure to give the House?

Other questions were raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Garscadden and for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley). Will the Secretary of State confirm whether additional payments for adult dependants will remain, once the contributory job seeker's allowance has been introduced? Will he clarify that the basic rate of job seeker's allowance for those under 25 years of age on income support will not mean a reduced rate of benefit for all unemployed people aged 25? Those questions were asked twice on Second Reading. I appreciate that we are only 15 minutes away from that debate, but I should have thought that the Minister had had time to reflect on them. If his colleague could not answer in his summing up on Second Reading, perhaps we can have the answers in relation to this clause.

Ms Ann Coffey (Stockport): I wish to discuss the proposed cuts in invalidity benefit, which is funded out of national insurance contributions. Since early this year, rumours of cuts in that benefit have created fear and uncertainty. I am worried that that fear and uncertainty for people currently receiving invalidity benefit will continue because they will be subject to stricter reviews if they are to continue receiving benefit. Many people who receive that benefit face having it removed.

The Government's rationale for that is the growth in the number of people receiving invalidity benefit. Indeed, that is their rationale for cutting all benefits—apparently, too many people receiving benefit cost too much. The Budget debate touched on some of the economic reasons why the Government seem unable to discharge their responsibilities as guardians of the welfare state. However, that is not the responsibility of the sick, who seem to have become the Government's new scapegoats, adding to a long list that includes trendy teachers, politically correct social workers, spendthrift councils, soft doctors, and women, particularly single mothers.

The Independent Policy Studies report shows that 29 per cent. of the growth in invalidity benefit has occurred because people are staying on invalidity benefit rather than taking retirement pension; 16 per cent. has occurred because more women are paying national insurance contributions, which makes them eligible for invalidity benefit; 13 per cent. is due to demographic reasons, in that there are more disabled people; and 42 per cent. is because of a genuine growth in the number of people claiming invalidity benefit among a stable population of disabled people. That is to do partly with new claimants and partly with the fact that people are staying on invalidity benefit longer.

The Government have deduced that, because of the increase in invalidity claimants at a time when the nation's health is supposed to have improved, the increase must relate to the fact that people are not really sick. Health statistics clearly show that ill health and disability are increasing in areas of poor income. I am worried that those people will be penalised by the new rules for eligibility.

The Government say that the problem is that GPs are too soft and take undue account of their patients' needs. They will not act effectively to control access to invalidity benefit. I suspect that that is a gross generalisation, as some doctors do assist claimants by providing ample information, and some do not. The Government also say that the benefit is used as an early retirement benefit and point to the number of men over the age of 50 receiving invalidity benefit, which was a deliberate Government policy to encourage people to take invalidity benefit to remove them from the unemployment register.

That is where the Government are acting extremely immorally. Some people who have taken early retirement receive invalidity benefit and face the possibility of the benefit being removed following a review. They considered that they had entered a contract, part of which was that they were retiring through ill health. Having retired early, they will now find that that benefit will not continue.

To establish an objective criteria, there is a clear cut-off point. It is difficult to be objective about people's illness because it depends on people's skills and the availability of jobs. It is worrying that certain categories of people who clearly cannot work—for instance, people with mental illness or ME——

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): My hon. Friend rightly spoke of the Government's contract with people who have retired in terms of what benefits they will receive. Does she agree that part of their contract is national insurance contributions? People believe that they will be eligible for benefit after retirement, in whatever circumstances. Is not that an important part of that argument?

Ms Coffey: I totally agree with my hon. Friend, who makes a valid point. Many people will be angry that the Government have reneged on their contracts and put them in difficult personal circumstances. We shall probably see a rerun of the complaints from the public, similar to those about the implementation of the Child Support Act 1991, the effect of which is a consequence of the criteria that were not transparent at the time——

8.45 pm

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I hesitate to intervene, but the hon. Lady is going rather wide of the clause. The debate is about contributions, not benefits.

Ms Coffey: I apologise, Mr. Lofthouse. I got carried away by a sudden insight into the comparison with the implementation of the Child Support Act.

Will the same hard criteria apply to the review of those currently receiving invalidity benefit as to new claimants?

[Ms Coffey]

The Minister is creating a new class of people that will consist of those who are not fit enough to work, and their position will be exacerbated by employers' obligations to fund sick pay. Yet those people will be unable to receive invalidity benefit. They will be rejected by employers and by the benefit system at a time when employers have choice because of the level of unemployment. Employers are not happy to employ people with any kind of sickness record. That is a serious problem.

The problem with such a cut in benefit is that it affects dramatically individual families' financial arrangements, about which it is difficult to make gross generalisations. As a reaction to that, we shall see a lot of anger and frustration and many people will feel let down because they have paid national insurance contributions all their lives and regard it as an insurance to protect them against the consequences of illness. Clearly, the Government are reneging on their contract with those people and people will feel betrayed.

Mr. Nicholas Scott: As the Committee will be aware, clause 1 is the principal clause in the Bill. As the Opposition spokesman acknowledged towards the end of Second Reading, this is essentially a one-clause Bill. Inevitably, therefore, the debate has added several questions to those raised, and in the main answered by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, on Second Reading.

The effect of the clause is to increase by 1 per cent. the rate of contributions made by employees who pay the main rate for the benefit.

The hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) made several points about those who will be affected by the proposals. He asked for confirmation of the number of people whom he described as too poor to pay income tax but still liable to pay higher national insurance contributions.

Any employee whose earnings are below the tax threshold but who is still liable to pay NI contributions will earn entitlement to a whole range of contributory benefits in return for a relatively small contribution. It thus remains an extremely good deal for people affected in this way. Someone earning £65 a week will be entitled to a range of NI contributory benefits for between £1 and £2 a week. That represents good value for the people concerned.

My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) has asked me to apologise to hon. Members for not answering all their points in detail, because the guillotine came down. I understand the concern of those who have discussed the job seeker's allowance. Detailed questions of our policy for this benefit will be open to full debate at the time, but it would be only right to give hon. Members some idea of the answers that are likely to be delivered then.

We are concerned to ensure by means of the Bill that the national insurance fund can, for the immediate future, meet its expenditure commitments. None of the announced changes for the future will affect the fund for 1994-95, the year with which we are concerned today.

We were asked whether the job seeker's allowance would be uprated by reference to the retail prices index or to Rossi. The answer is Rossi. We were also asked whether the income support pattern—a lower rate of personal allowance for those under the age of 25—would be reflected in provision for the job seeker's allowance. I can confirm that on present plans it will be reflected in the new allowance. That is only right, since it reflects the lower earnings expectations of people under 25 and the fact that the vast majority of them do not live independently.

Mr. Dewar: I wish to challenge the Minister, although I recognise that he does not want to be involved in a full-scale debate on this—there will be time for that later. He really should face up to the problem, however. He knows that the income support differential which is apparently to be imported to the new job seeker's allowance is in itself controversial and has given rise to a good deal of bitterness. The Minister and I have personal experience of talking to people under 25 who have said that in some ways their living expenses are higher. There is no reason to suppose that a 24-year-old can live more cheaply than a 26-year-old. There is an arbitrary divide, which is reflected in a substantial differential in benefit. It will cause many people anger and distress to discover that the concept is being imported to the new job seeker's allowance—allegedly as an improvement.

Mr. Scott: I have certainly taken part in some vigorous debates, inside and outside the House, about the under-25 rate. Wherever one draws the line, it is bound to attract an element of controversy. The underlying principle—that younger people have lower earnings expectations than older people, and are generally less likely to be living independently—is correctly reflected in the provision that we make through the social security system to meet their need. It is therefore right that the principle used in income support should be reflected in the arrangements that we make for the job seeker's allowance.

Mr. Dewar: It is fundamentally misconceived to defend the idea in terms of lower expectations of earnings. The real test is living expenses. There is no reason to suppose that they are lower at 24 than at 25. That is the wrong starting point. Understandably, having started from the wrong place, the right hon. Gentleman has ended in the wrong place.

Mr. Scott: Within the social security system there is always a need to look at patterns of expenditure, and we take them into account as we make our judgments about levels of benefit.

There is another important aspect to the system as well —providing, to the greatest extent possible, incentives for people to get back into employment. If expectations of earnings are lower for one group than for an older group, yet the benefits paid tend to close the gap and thus reduce the incentive to get back into work, that is a negative aspect of the pattern of provision.

Mr. Terry Rooney (Bradford, North): Will the Minister cast his mind back to the time when the contributions rate was much lower and when there was an earnings-related element in unemployment benefit? Surely it is much fairer to have a standard flat rate entitlement, and different earnings expectations can be reflected in the additional premium incorporated as an earnings-related element.

Mr. Scott: We could argue this matter at great length and no doubt will do so when the new allowance is introduced. There will be ample opportunity then to conduct the discussion in the House. Whether I will still be a Social Security Minister then is a matter for debate, but if experience is anything to go by, I look forward to taking part in the discussions.

It is worth drawing attention to another aspect of the job seeker's allowance—what is known as the hours-allowed-for-partners rule. At the moment, the partner of someone in receipt of benefit may work for 16 hours a week without that being taken into account for purposes of entitlement to benefit. As the House knows, we plan to increase that, from 16 to 24 hours, for the job seeker's allowance.

Mr. Dewar: Our other query was about the dependant's allowance. The Minister is being very helpful so far.

Mr. Scott: A couple's allowance is planned, but not a dependent's allowance, in the sense to which the hon. Gentleman refers.

I should like to answer the points made by the hon. Member for Stockport (Ms Coffey). These matters will be subject to acute parliamentary scrutiny, I have no doubt, when we introduce the incapacity benefit, and the House will turn its mind to the subject when we return from our well-earned Christmas break. I do not want to go into that in detail, except to say that it is right that we should seek to return to a provision for incapacity for work due to disablement or sickness to the principle for which that was first established: that one must be incapable of work if one is to receive compensation. There are other benefits, through unemployment benefit and eventually through the job seeker's allowance, for those who are capable of work but who are unable to get work. Where incapacity manifestly is due to a medical condition, a separate benefit should be available.

It is common ground that entry to the benefit has been too slackly controlled in recent years and that that has led to a considerable increase in the case load for the present benefit at a time when the nation has never been healthier. There has been too little control also over the length of time which people have been able to stay on the benefit without a regular check that they are still entitled to it. As we design the new benefit, we will be at pains to see that those two factors, as well as several others, are taken into account to restore the underlying principle. That principle was the original intention of invalidity benefit and it will apply to the new incapacity benefit.

9. pm

Mr. Dewar: As people who read these debates usually do so with a malicious intent, I had better challenge the statement that there is "common ground" about the entry to invalidity benefit. The Minister will be familiar with the statistic that 53 per cent. of those who are refused invalidity benefit and who go to appeal succeed. That suggests that the benefit is nothing like the soft touch which Ministers seem to think. I would not want the Minister to get the idea that we concede that ground to him.

Mr. Scott: I may have overstated the degree, but I believe that there is a considerable common ground. In the first place, entry to the benefit is by general practitioners. They do not find the task of being a gatekeeper to invalidity benefit attractive. They are under all sorts of social and other pressures to sign people on, rather than applying a purely objective medical test.

We have looked at the appeals procedures and the rules which have applied and developed for invalidity benefit in recent years. We have seen a range of decisions from commissioners and others. Those have had the effect that many aspects of the benefit and the entitlement to benefit, other than those of a strictly medical kind, have been increasingly taken into account.

Ms Coffey: Does the Minister accept that it is difficult to establish objective medical criteria unless one is determining unfitness to work in terms of a specific disease? That is clearly illogical and absurd and may produce opinions which are less than objective, because, although someone may be suffering from a serious incapacity, it does not make them unfit for work.

Intermediate factors, such as tiredness, stress and mental health problems, also may create unfitness. People are concerned because invalidity benefit will in effect have a capping level. Will not the objective test, which does not exist, have little to do with the people who get the benefit, and will it not be determined more by the fact that only so much incapacity benefit can be given each year?

Mr. Scott: I look forward to discussing those matters in greater detail in the new year, no doubt with the hon. Lady and with others. We do not want to get into Committee stage on this Bill or even to the detail of Second Reading at the moment, but it is our intention to acknowledge that certain conditions would indeed class people on their entitlement to the new benefit. A certain number of conditions will be applied which manifestly render someone incapable of work. In addition, a number of functional tests will be applied and we are consulting widely the medical profession and organisations of and for disabled people on those tests.

Some private consultations have taken place and we will soon be taking part in more open consultations. The results of those consultations will be evaluated against a pilot number of real cases to see whether the evaluation and testing process is correct. That will take place in good time for the introduction of the new benefit. At that time, we will have arrived at a system of objective medical criteria which will be acceptable to the medical profession and which will be clearly understood to be fair and reasonable by those applying for the benefit and by the public. If I go on much further on incapacity benefit, I am in danger of anticipating a number of discussions which we will have when we return from our holidays.

Mr. Dewar: This will be my last intervention on this point, although not necessarily my last on other matters. I am curious about the methodology and the hint given by the Minister about tests which will be carried out on a group. That group would be processed under the new regulations to see whether the Department had got it right. I recognise that it is often difficult to pin down the criteria. To use a parallel, there is an endless argument about the failure rate in examinations where there is a preconceived notion of the number of people who should or should not qualify. I recognise that many hon. Members are shaking their heads, but it is important to establish the facts.

Mr. Scott: I agree that it is an important point. When we were asked to provide an estimate of the numbers who would become entitled to benefit against those who would not qualify for the new benefit, certain figures were given because we were asked to give some assessment, but it was only the best guess that we could make.

I assure the House that we have no intention of setting a target or setting the criteria to achieve that target. We

[Mr. Scott]

shall set out a clear, objective test which will be acceptable to the medical profession and others and will be perceived as fair throughout the country. Those who pass will get the benefit and those who do not pass will not. If more or fewer people fail, we will have to adapt our expectations.

Mr. Rooney: I am grateful to the Minister for his honesty and openness, although I do not like all the answers that he has given. Can he confirm that the same fiscal effect of a 1 per cent. increase in national insurance contribution rates could have been achieved by raising the upper earnings limit to £30,000 a year?

Mr. Scott: I do not have the answer in front of me. If the hon. Gentleman says that is the case, it may be true. I cannot vouch for his research and I am not sure what validity it has for the argument we are making.

I am still very puzzled about Labour party policy. Labour Members make a great deal about the effect of the upper earnings limit as it exists at the moment, but my understanding was that the shadow Chancellor has resiled from the Opposition's position at the last election regarding moving the upper earnings limit, let alone its abolition, which would be totally inappropriate in the light of current circumstances. I do not need to take that point especially seriously.

I do not want to try the patience of the Committee too much, so I shall draw my remarks to a close. In essence, in clause 1 we are making the major provisions for the Bill itself.

I remind the Committee that this is the first increase in the major national insurance contribution rates in 11 years. the two-tier structure for employees which we introduced in 1989 has been more progressive than the system that existed under the previous Government.

The lowest-paid pay a low percentage of their earnings and get considerable benefits in return. Many people will still pay less than they would have had to do under Labour's single percentage scheme. It is an improvement and I commend the clause to the House.

Mr. Ingram: The Minister has been helpful and our exchanges have elaborated many points. We drifted on to many different issues. Additional queries that were raised as a consequence of that will be dealt with in subsequent regulations and, possibly, new Bills.

However, in the light of tonight's debate, I have to ask my hon. Friends to join me in voting against the clause.

Question put, That the clause stand part of the Bill:

The Committee divided: Ayes 286, Noes 211.

Division No. 55] **[9.10 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm

Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'k'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jim Dowd and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE ALLOCATION

Mr. Dewar: I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 1, line 22, leave out subsection (3).

This matter has been discussed at various times during the past few days. I almost said "a few weeks", because it seemed like that at times. It is worth having another quick look at the matter if only to settle fears and establish fact. After all, that is one of the classic purposes and aims of the Committee.

Perhaps this is a plea in irritation rather than mitigation but I was one of the gallant band of brothers which was here at 3 o'clock this morning, together with the Government Whip. He is wearing an exciting tie but I suspect that he will be feeling slightly jaded if, like me, he survived through the long passage of arms over the Ways and Means resolution.

I appear in a somewhat unlikely but not uncharacteristic guise because I suspect that I am on the Government's side in this matter. *[Interruption.]* It is a matter of some interest because during my time here—it will be 20 years in about two months—I have been engaged in debate, argument and sometimes a spasm panic over retrospective legislation. There are occasions when those who are debating such subjects do not entirely understand the nature of the beast. I include myself because I have no false modesty about these matters.

Earlier, the Minister referred to the retrospective principle and the impact of clause 2. Of course, subsection (3) concentrates on that aspect. My amendment, which I unashamedly say is a probing amendment, also relates to it.

I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is here, because if he read in cold blood what I am about to say, he might imagine that it amounted to a criticism of his performance last night. That is not my intention. I think that my hon. Friend's display was spirited. As I moved through the Lobby just before 3 am I heard it described by a senior Conservative as a bravura performance. I have some sympathy with that view.

I am not sure that my hon. Friend's contribution was entirely in touch with the realities of the situation. We were greatly entertained—I hope that my hon. Friend does not object to that term—by the speculations about where that £4·6 billion had disappeared from. It certainly appeared as though a great disappearing act had been performed, because that £4·6 billion had disappeared from the books and was about to be recovered by some form of additional taxation heaped upon today's generation to pay for the mistakes of the past.

At other times in the debate we were led to believe that it was treasure trove, which might still be buried at the back of a filing cabinet at Richmond house. We listened to some splendid arcane arguments about how that money could be distributed for the greater good of humanity, in particular the people of Bradford, South.

I look forward to the rational, tidy explanation from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, because he always displays such characteristics on such small, unimportant matters. If I were to take a barrack-room lawyer's view of the matter—on occasions I have been unfairly accused of such behaviour——

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): No, never.

Mr. Dewar: Right on cue. Thank you.

It is possible to argue for the purpose of the debate that retrospective legislation concerns a rather more serious issue than that suggested last night. It is not designed just to put right a slip of the draftsman, which provided an unlikely legal basis for the proper conduct of affairs and which was not challenged. Retrospective legislation, of its nature, introduces a legal provision that is intended to relieve someone for acts which were clearly not proper and which might even have been outwith the law or ultra vires the capacity of the person concerned. Perhaps even more worryingly, retrospective legislation may replace money that has been misappropriated, misspent or otherwise wasted.

That did not happen in this case and that is why I think that the amazing and cheerful chase that took place in the small hours of this morning, in which some effective points were raised about the general conduct of the Government's business and their policy on the health service, may have been marginally wide of the mark.

I say that with considerable hesitation and I am aware of the fact that I may give unintentional offence. That should not be so because the debate was a useful exercise. It achieved almost all the aims that my hon. Friends for Bradford, South and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), as well as that small group of frondeurs and skirmishers who joined them, had in mind when they set out on the exercise.

My impression—I am sure that the Minister will rise to confirm, deny or explain it—is that there was a unanimity of view about how the formula governing the money which is collected in the national insurance contributions kitty should have operated. That formula resulted in an annual allocation to the national health service.

I know that I should have the relevant figures in the back of my mind. I feel guilty about setting out on the debate without having done the necessary in-depth research. If I remember rightly, only about 14 per cent. of NHS expenditure comes from the national insurance fund, the rest comes from general taxation. It is rather like the poll tax, if you will allow me one sentence on it, Mr. Lofthouse, and the figures that expressed it as a percentage of total local government expenditure. It was always a remarkably small percentage, at between 11 and 12 per cent., because the rest of the money, certainly in England, was provided through, I believe, the standard spending assessment. We have a different system north of the border and my hesitation about that term is due to the fact that I am a little rusty on the exact terminology.

9.30 pm

As I understand it, the 14 per cent. over the years has been properly allocated. I use the words in a lay sense, as everyone thought that it should have been allocated and no one would have thought that anything untoward would have happened if it had not been found out in some recess of Richmond house by some fiendishly ingenious draftsman. Perhaps it was the personal work of the Minister. Perhaps he will tell us? Perhaps, as the new broom at Richmond house, who has his own form of careful craftsmanship, he came across the fault. The Minister can explain that.

Anyway, someone found that ambiguity, as the Minister of State referred to it, which may at some future date have allowed someone of a malevolent disposition to challenge the propriety of the legal basis on which the acceptably proper allocation took place. The Minister was only making clear that that ambiguity cannot be traded on at some future date and cannot cause upset or disorder in the affairs of the national health service. That is not retrospective in the full sense of the word or retrospective in the sense in which we would normally want to look, to use a fine Scottish word, sidyways at the provision.

Therefore, tentatively at this stage, I am not mindful to force the matter to a Division or to unnecessarily prolong the debate, but I am prepared to listen to other hon. Members speak on the matter. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South may want to argue the toss.

Mr. Cryer: I am looking forward to what the Minister will say, because, although he was subjected to a number of extensive questions last night, the Government Whip intervened and prevented the Minister from replying.

Mr. Dewar: I am sorry to hear that. My hon. Friend is absolutely right. At that stage, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was just warming up nicely and in his 56th minute and, in my untutored view—I do not want to challenge the Chair—he was in order for at least 90 seconds of that time. Under those circumstances, someone was thoughtless and unkind enough to move a closure motion and we heard no more. However, that deprived us of the scholarly and textual analysis of the clause that I am sure that the Minister would have provided.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South is, on occasions, a much misunderstood man. He is showing typical common sense in saying that he should not rush in to pick a fight or to argue the toss on that matter until he has heard the official explanation. I am sure that I have interpreted it correctly and that my hon. Friend's stance implies that if he is not satisfied with the Minister's reply, he can return to the issue with renewed force and authority, having inspected the wares that the Minister is about to lay before the Committee. It is common sense and my hon. Friend's attitude is admirable. It would ill become me to stand between the Committee and what the Minister has to say because, if the Minister's comments are useful to my hon. Friend, almost certainly, they will be useful to me.

On that basis of friendliness and the kind of constructive spirit in which Committees of the whole House ought to be conducted, I look forward to hearing what the Minister has to say.

Mr. Hague: I am delighted to have an opportunity to respond to the points made by the hon. Members for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), and by their colleagues during the unfinished debate on the Ways and Means motion last night. Much alarm was expressed about the matter in our earlier debate. The hypothesis advanced by the hon. Member for Garscadden about what has happened was much nearer to the truth than was some of the alarm expressed last night.

I stress at the outset that no money has been borrowed and that nobody has been ripped off, as was suggested last night. No money has been lost, and no money has been spent that has not been accounted for properly. No money has been spent in any way other than the way in which Parliament intended it to be spent. No money has been misplaced. There is no scandal of the kind about which some hon. Members wondered.

In answer to one of the first questions asked by the hon. Member for Bradford, South last night, there is no retrospective charge on anyone who pays into the national insurance fund. The provision has no implications for the payments that people have made or will make. It makes no difference to any individual; it is simply a matter of ensuring that the legal cover for payments made out of the national insurance fund to the national health service is correct and in order for the future and for the past few years.

Clause 2 deals with the ambiguity, as my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People accurately described it, that has been uncovered in the amending provisions of the Social Security Act 1989 concerning the allocation paid out of national insurance contributions to the national health service. As the Committee knows, the allocation to the national health service is a long-standing provision. The hon. Member for Garscadden was approximately correct in his thoughts about the percentage of national health service funding that is paid for through this route.

Many people traditionally associate treatment under the health service with having paid contributions, even though treatment is in no way dependent on a contribution condition. The 1989 Act altered the structure of national insurance contributions for employees, which is what led to the mistake in the first place. The Act introduced for the first time the concept of an initial percentage and a main percentage. The former would apply to earnings up to the lower earnings limit, and the latter to earnings above that level. I think that I am carrying the Committee with me so far.

Before the 1989 Act, there was a single percentage of 5 per cent., 7 per cent. or 9 per cent. applicable to each level of earnings, and the NHS allocation was a set proportion of that percentage. However, with the 1989 Act, the initial percentage became just 2 per cent.

It was generally agreed in the House and elsewhere that, because the figure was so low, the national health service allocation should apply only to the higher range of earnings on which contributions were paid—that is, between the lower earnings limit and the upper earnings limit—*[Interruption.]* There is a bit of disruption by my colleagues from the Whips Office. Typically, that rate was 9 per cent.

I am sure that we can all see what the logic was at the time, and I am sure that we continue to agree with it. Given that the allocation to the national health service was 1·05 per cent.—more than half the value of the 2 per cent. initial rate—there was little point in dividing the 2 per cent. in that way. It was believed that contributions to the national health service would instead come out of the payments between the lower earnings limit and the upper earnings limit.

The amendment to the previous legislation by the 1989 Act sought to achieve that intention, but it did so by distinguishing the contributions on which the allocation was payable by referring to them as contributions paid at the main primary percentage rate.

I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Member for Garscadden. It was a diligent official, rather than the new ministerial broom at Richmond house, who first recognised that, because the statutory definition of the main primary

[Mr. Hague]

percentage rate was in terms of contributions payable at 9 per cent.—10 per cent. from next April as a consequence of the Bill—it was possible to construe the legislation so that an allocation to the health service was not payable where the main contributions were at a rate that was a variation of the 9 per cent. rate. For example, people in their firm's occupational pension scheme pay the lower contracted-out rate of contributions, which is currently 7·2 per cent., or will be 8·2 per cent.

There is ambiguity about whether those contributions, which, of course, are quite a large part of the total, were properly covered by the 1989 Act. Clearly, that would be quite contrary to the long-standing tradition of the health service allocation, and contrary to what the Government and Parliament intended. It could not possibly have been intended at the time. That is why the simple amendment before the Committee aims to place the matter beyond doubt with retrospective effect.

As I mentioned on Second Reading, I share the scepticism and reluctance to which hon. Members have referred about retrospective legislation, but here we have an instance of not trying to change the policy's intention. We are not trying to change anything that has been done over the intervening years. We are removing any ambiguity about the legal cover, so that payments can be —and have been—properly made out of the national insurance fund to the NHS.

I hope that that is a relatively clear explanation, and that it answers the points that hon. Members have raised. In the light of that, I hope that the hon. Member for Garscadden will feel free not to press his amendment.

Mr. Cryer: It is worth commenting that the explanation from the Minister is perfectly understandable, but it demonstrates the dangers that face the House when we hand over to Ministers the powers to make delegated legislation. By a quirk, the requirement for this change is by primary legislation. There are some parts of delegated legislation that are not subject to any further parliamentary procedure. Over the years, this quite significant error was not detected when the legislation went through its Committee stage, or at Second or Third reading. Now that the Government have come to amend it, the faulty interpretation has been discovered.

It behoves us all to ensure that legislation is examined as scrupulously and tightly as possible. It is a reflection on the Government that they are putting this Bill through the House rapidly, and other bits of legislation from time to time under a guillotine. It has not happened on this occasion, but there is always the danger that, if legislation is examined under pressure and in haste, that sort of dangerous fault can develop.

Although in this case there has been no question, one of the difficulties——

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Gentleman is making a point about Second Reading. He should be speaking directly to the specific amendment.

Mr. Cryer: I am just coming to that, Mr. Morris.

There is a danger that, if we do not table amendments that are sympathetically treated by the Government, such as the amendment before us, they will push legislation through and incorporate the sort of errors that have been discovered on this occasion. It is a lesson for us all that we must be as zealous as we can in ensuring that legislation is as clear and free from interpretation, particularly where, unlike this, challenge can be made through the courts, because, if legislation goes from this place that is open to challenge in the courts, it means that we have all failed.

Mr. Dewar: I take seriously your strictures about wandering, Mr. Morris. It might help you if I said—I can speak only for myself—that I do not intend to delay the Committee on clause stand part. The debate on the proposed removal of subsection 3 will allow me to say all I want to say on the matter.

I am disappointed that the Minister did not find the error himself. I have watched him for only a short period, but he always strikes me as keen. When I was a boy, I was a great enthusiast of the novels of P. G. Wodehouse, in which there was a character called "the Efficient Baxter". He was an extraordinarily diligent secretarial figure, who went around making a perfect pest of himself by discovering things and pointing out the errors of other people's ways. The Efficient Baxter had rimless spectacles that gleamed even when the sun was not shining.

The Under-Secretary has not got that way yet, although his forehead is not a bad substitute. I hoped that he would have performed an Efficient Baxter-like task and discovered a lacuna in the legislative cover for the activities of his Department that had gone undetected for a long time. We must live with that disappointment, and I am prepared to do so, but I hope that the Minister does better next time.

9.45 pm

I followed most of what the Minister said, and I am prepared to accept his explanation. This is a highly technical subject. In my early days in the job, I used to sit and listen to people talking about LELs and UELs, using all the jargon and shorthand of the national insurance contribution world. It took me a long time to understand what all that meant. For a while, I thought that they were referring to American colleges or football teams. It was only after a while that the truth dawned.

The Minister has allayed my reasonable fears, and perhaps even my unreasonable fears, and it may be only that the de minimis rule has gone slightly wrong. I am happy that is should be put right in this way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer has done us a service. I hope that he will not be hurt when I say that there are occasions, coming late through the corridors when I have heard Members, usually Conservative Members, saying uncharitable things about my hon. Friend. [HON. MEMBERS: "Never!"] I am afraid that it is true. It is usually because he has had the courage and tenacity to stand up to speak in a debate on a Ways and Means resolution or a money resolution, to ventilate something that has caught his fancy and his attention. He is not normally closely associated with me in Labour party terms.

The Chairman: Order. I have great difficulty in relating what the hon. Gentleman is saying to amendment No. 4, but perhaps it will become clear.

Mr. Dewar: I am happy to say that it may not become clearer, because it is about to stop. I was, in passing, making the point that an outsider would say that my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South and I illustrate the rich diversity of opinion that co-exists happily within the Labour party. I admire his work as Chairman of the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, and he is right—even comparatively technical matters such as this should be properly challenged and scrutinised. I know that, in dark and secret places, he spends hours carrying out that task, and we are grateful for that.

Although we have discovered nothing of great moment in this exercise, it is right that the Minister should be forced to explain matters and, where we see the appearance of a retrospective provision, due explanation should be given. In this case, due explanation has been given. I rest content and beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 4

CORRESPONDING PROVISION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Dewar: Will the Minister say something about the clause? The week has been dominated by Irish affairs of one sort or another, and we have here the corresponding provision for Northern Ireland. I should like to know how the machinery will work. I say that rather apologetically, because I understand that there is a different system over there—one that reflects the tensions, difficulties, frustrations and worries of the political and physical situation there.

I recognise, for example, that many statutory foundations must be laid here which do not have to be laid for Northern Ireland affairs. Obviously, the Order in Council is the instrument that governs in this matter. It would be interesting for the Committee if the Minister could explain just for a minute—I do not invite a learned paper on this—how this will operate in Northern Ireland, what the safeguards are and what the legislative foundation is on which the officials will work in gathering and administering this particular increase in national insurance contributions.

You may remember, Mr. Morris, because you may have been in the Chamber for at least part of these proceedings, that there was no need for a money resolution for Northern Ireland. I asked what happened in Northern Ireland and was told, slightly dismissively, that such a resolution was not necessary. Now is the chance to discover why and how the difference exists and operates.

Mr. Hague: I can give a brief explanation which will set the hon. Gentleman's mind at rest and clarify the matter.

Clause 4 provides that a corresponding Order in Council under the Northern Ireland Act 1974 will be subject to the negative rather than the positive resolution procedure. Hon. Members who take an interest in Northern Ireland legislation will be familiar with this provision. It simply gives advance warning in the Bill that corresponding provisions will be anacted in Northern Ireland.

It is designed to ensure immediate parity for people there with the arrangements that will apply in the rest of the United Kingdom. The purpose of the clause is to make it clear to Northern Ireland Members that they can take part in the debate on the Bill's substantive provisions in the knowledge that any change made to its substance will be made later in parallel Northern Ireland legislation.

It is worth noting that clause 4 does not apply to clause 3, as clause 3 deals specifically with amendments to the corresponding legislation for the Province. Clause 4 applies to the rest of the Bill, which does not deal specifically with Northern Ireland. I hope that that has clarified the matter for the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Dewar: We are privileged. Not only has the junior Minister mastered his brief on this, but we have present the Minister of State who is long conversant with Irish affairs and no doubt can help us out.

As I understand the Minister's explanation, he is saying that this is a trigger. It flags up to any Irish Member that he can wholeheartedly take part in our debates, knowing that there will be some form of legislation put in place by Order in Council. I presume that that procedure does not involve the elected representatives directly or any form of debate or discussion, at least in the public forum. Therefore, Northern Ireland Members can come along and share in the excitement of our deliberations in the certain knowledge that what is decided will then be reflected.

I do not know what the Council of the Order in Council is. I presume that it is the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—one Privy Councillor, rather than Privy Councillors, which is one what usually thinks of. I presume that it is not a body with a set membership that meets round a great table like the great Council of the North in the 15th century, sending riders out in all directions with the glad tidings of what the great men had decided. In any event, I think that I understand the point.

One subsidiary question is of interest. At one point I set out to draft a series of amendments—they may be on the amendment paper—which were intended to turn this from a negative to an affirmative procedure. It was pointed out to me by various people who are much more expert than I that that was not necessary, because I was merely returning the law to the state in which it was. Therefore, the whole matter was redundant. But is there some sort of change in the procedure in Northern Ireland that reflects short-term problems and which means that certain matters do not apply? Is the negative procedure a result of that? I did not quite follow that point. I know that the Minister will have followed my halting attempts at an explanation and will be able to come up with a clear exposition of the situation, to which I look forward.

Mr. Hague: The hon. Gentleman is correct and we are now at one in our interpretation of the clause. It is a good description to say that the clause is a flagging-up for Northern Ireland Members. It means that they can participate in deliberations on the matter knowing that it will be reflected in Northern Ireland legislation, despite the fact that most of the rest of the Bill does not specificially refer to Northern Ireland. I am not aware of any special circumstances that have led to any change in procedure, but if there are any I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and make that clear.

Mr. Dewar: I do not want to turn this into a dialogue. That seems inappropriate in the Chamber. One would feel more at home in Standing Committee in such an exchange.

Clause 4 says:

> "An Order in Council . . . which states that it is made only for purposes corresponding to those of section 1 or 2 of this Act—

[Mr. Dewar]

> (a) shall not be subject to paragraph 1(4) and (5) of that Schedule . . . but
>
> (b) shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution by either House of Parliament.

I presume that that means that if we were not specifically excluding paragraph 1(4) and (5) of the schedule, which the rubric in brackets helpfully tells us is an affirmative resolution of both Houses of Parliament, the Order in Council would be subject to an affirmative resolution. Therefore, the fact that we are taking that out must be for some special purpose and reason. In other words, in making the Order in Council subject to a negative resolution, we are upsetting the norm. We are rebutting the presumption of what would normally happen in terms of paragraph 1(4) and (5) of schedule 1 to the Northern Ireland Act 1974. What I am trying to get at is why we are upsetting the norm here.

It is as clear as the nose on my face that the Order in Council would usually be subject to an affirmative resolution. We are rebutting that and making it subject to a negative resolution, and the simple question is why.

Mr. Hague: The best way to explain this to the hon. Gentleman is to say that there is no benefit in making the Order in Council subject to affirmative resolution. Doing so would provide a separate opportunity for Members of Parliament to debate the application of the changes to Northern Ireland, but all those changes can be debated during the passage of the Bill.

Therefore, although it would provide an opportunity for an additional debate as it specifically relates to Northern Ireland, using the negative resolution procedure is perfectly in order on this occasion because Northern Ireland Members have had the opportunity to participate in this debate. As it happens, they are not here and have not participated, but had they wished to do so, they could have used this opportunity rather than the opportunity that would have been given by the passage of an affirmative resolution through the House.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Listeners to the exchanges might have been foxed. Does the Minister agree that, in effect, he is denying Northern Ireland Members the opportunity to debate the matter on an affirmative resolution? If I am wrong, please tell me. In respect of legislation for Yorkshire, it would be perfectly possible, would it not, for the hon. Gentleman or any other Member from Yorkshire to participate on the Bill, but if there was no opportunity to participate on an affirmative resolution when it applied to Yorkshire, they would be denied the opportunity?

Mr. Hague: They would be denied the opportunity of participating in a debate on an affirmative resolution, but not denied the opportunity of participating in debates during the passage of the Bill. Therefore, Northern Ireland Members will have had the same opportunity as all hon. Members to participate in the debate. As it happens, they have chosen not to do so but the same legislation applies to them. The effect of the Bill is the same for them as for the rest of the United Kingdom and the effect of this part of the clause is merely that the debate is concentrated on the passage of the Bill, rather than requiring further affirmative resolutions, confirming what we would have dealt with already during the Bill's passage.

Mr. Dewar: I think that I should bale out of this discussion while the going is good. I may be tempted to tell the Minister that there is an obvious follow-up question, to which he will already have turned his mind. If he is saying that there is no point in having an affirmative resolution procedure because, ultimately, the debate is in the Chamber and Northern Ireland Members have a right to participate in it, I cannot understand why the normal powers under schedule 1 to the 1974 Act envisage that there should be an affirmative resolution. We are now upsetting and removing that provision and substituting an unusual set of circumstances—a negative resolution.

May I put the matter simply? I promise that this is my last effort. In what circumstances would schedule 1 and the affirmative resolution apply and not be withdrawn by the legislative drafting that we are now considering?

Mr. Hague: The circumstances in which that would not be done would be if there were no risk of the affirmative resolution and passage of the Bill being so separate in time that there was no parity between the different parts of the United Kingdom. Because the measure is designed to take effect in April 1994, the time in which an affirmative resolution could be considered, which would introduce the changes in Northern Ireland at the same time as in the rest of the United Kingdom, would be very limited. To avoid the risk of the measure being implemented at different times in different parts of the same country, the procedure is adopted in this case.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 5 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New clause 1

ANNUAL REPORT TO PARLIAMENT

> "The Secretary of State shall publish on an annual basis a report to Parliament setting out the yield from the increase in primary Class 1 contributions payable as a consequence of the provisions of section 1 of this Act."—*[Mr. Dewar.]*

Brought up and read the First time.

Mr. Dewar: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

We have had a passage of arms over some minor textual matters and the constitutional machinery of another part of the United Kingdom. In sharp contrast, we now move to new clause 1, which is general in its impact and raises some fairly broad issues. I therefore intend to deal with it in a broad way but hope that I shall not stray or test your patience, Mr. Morris.

I do not intend to rehearse my objections to the main thrust of the Bill or to clause 1. I shall not talk in such detail about our reservations and fears about the substantial increase in taxation represented by the hike from 9 per cent. to 10 per cent. However, what has undoubtedly arisen during these exchanges is evidence that there is a good deal of confusion and no meeting of minds either between the Labour party and the Conservative party or between those parties and the Liberal Democrats. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) takes an individual view, as does his party. In some cases it is an impractical view, but it is always interesting.

On no part of the Bill will there be a more important debate in the period that lies ahead. We need not go into the merits of the new clause, but we can all agree on one matter —that many question marks exist over the traditional way in which we deliver our services and over the proper weight that should be given to the contractual principle between the Government and governed and the extent to which people are buying entitlement when they make national insurance contributions.

There are people—I am not one of them—who have put big question marks over the whole idea of the contributory principle, suggesting that national insurance should just be a form of taxation, perhaps hypothecated, but still taxation. Others go further and suggest that we get rid——

Dame Elaine Kellet-Bowman (Lancaster): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Labour party under the late Lord Attlee made a grave error by not funding the scheme when it was brought in? All our problems have stemmed from that. It is an in-and-out scheme, whereas it should have been funded, as others are.

Mr. Dewar: I understand what the hon. Lady says. I was at a conference recently where a very elderly person told me what Jim Griffiths had told her. About 20 minutes later I lost the thread of the story, but it was some sort of explanation of why the scheme was not funded at that time. Perhaps in a few years' time the hon. Lady herself will be telling people similar stories.

In any event, whether or not the scheme should have been funded, it [illegible] not funded. I believe that there is some virtue in dealing with the realities of the world in which we live, and I commend that approach to the hon. Lady.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is it not rather odd that the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) has withheld this crucial piece of information for so long? Perhaps she should have revealed it long ago so that we could have laid the blame at the door of poor old Clem Attlee.

Mr. Dewar: Well——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: My remarks arose precisely out of the observation that the hon. Member for Garscadden was making.

Mr. Dewar: I must get on. The tragedy is that, although I know Jim Griffiths said something, I do not know what it was. It must therefore remain a mystery.

My point is that important arguments are developing, some of them so fundamental as to question the whole principle of the contributory system. Perhaps it is apt to point that out in the week in which Sir Peter Barclay retires from his post as chairman of the Social Security Advisory Committee. He made a speech not long ago in which he directly suggested scrapping the whole system—the Contributions Agency and the recording of contributions—and treating national insurance as a form of taxation, whereupon we could get on with life.

There are fundamental difficulties with this approach. I do not endorse it for one second; I just make the point that these major arguments are beginning to develop. Perhaps in a strange way I should pay tribute to some of the more unpleasant theories emerging from the Department of Social Security. They have certainly widened the argument and drawn new people into an area that used to preoccupy specialists alone.

My impression is that more and more people who are not experts or professionals, and who are not involved directly, are becoming uncomfortably aware of the importance of these arguments and want to know more about them.

There is a real difficulty with what one might term the dissemination of information. There is also some difficulty about a debate that is often conducted under the guise of calm and rational discussion but which is actually highly polemical. We have to rely a great deal on the Government for much of the information. The word "Government" is reassuring in one way. It suggests impartiality—information provided by pure distillation from theory and from fact. The truth, as we know, is the very opposite. Government information is often highly tendentious; and the Government's approach is often merely presentational.

At the moment the Government are attempting—wrongly in my view, but I am parti pris in the argument—to suggest that the financial difficulties of the social security and contributory systems are much worse than they are. There are long-term trends which are of concern, and I do not deny that they must be dealt with and catered for in any future plans.

I will draw the Social Security Advisory Committee into the argument again, because that point was made in its ninth annual report which was published this week. It does not take the view, and nor do I, that we are in such a crisis that we are teetering on the edge of an abyss and that we have to send in the demolition men and the broker's men, or the system will implode or explode.

Mr. Corbyn: Has my hon. Friend had time to read the pamphlet from the No Turning Back group on the future of the pension system and the welfare state? That pamphlet seems to give the true version of the Government's intentions, which are to reduce consistently the value of the state old-age pension and to boost the private pension industry at the expense of the state scheme. The state scheme inevitably can provide for everybody, whereas private schemes can provide only for those who can afford to pay into them during their working lives.

Mr. Dewar: I was talking about the Government's information and expressing doubts about some of their presentational factors. To take me then to the No Turning Back group is a little unfair—that is a rather different kettle of fish.

I agree with my hon. Friend that is a pernicious pamphlet and, if he wants to collect such things, he should read the recent pamphlet from Dr. Madson Pirie. My hon. Friend may consider Dr. Pirie's remarks on private pension schemes and their virtues in the light of recent news from the Securities and Investment Board, the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation and the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Organisation. However, that is a different issue.

Mr. Hague *indicated assent.*

Mr. Dewar: I see that the Minister agrees with me on that. We want to try to get impartiality into the debate, and a basis of information on which we can conduct the argument. I will not trespass on it at the moment, but new clause 4 tackles the same problem. We are asking the Government to enters lists in a more public sense and to provide information and assistance.

I will give a brief example which has occurred to me, concerning an issue on which I have written to the Minister. He may have the letter on the desk at moment.

[Mr. Dewar]

There is a complex and difficult argument, as the House knows, about retirement ages and the state retirement scheme. One of the factors which influence that deeply is the demographic factor and the projection of the number of people above the retirement age.

All hon. Members have their little conglomerations of facts which they can trip out in an argument and which become user-friendly. One of my facts is that, in the year 2030, there will be 14·1 million people over pensionable age in this country. I got that figure from a Government publication and it was an authoritative figure, which was used both in the text and in the graphs. The figure was used for a long time in the consultative document for discussion on the equalisation of the pension age. The Leader of the House will be familiar with the figure.

Two months ago, I was at a conference that was organised by Legal and General at which the Secretary of State spoke. Rather to my surprise, the right hon. Gentleman suddenly said during his speech that we would have great problems with demographic trends because in the year 2030—the very year to which I have referred—there will be 15·5 million people over retirement age in this country. The statistic appears to be the same, but—I do not want to use a pejorative term and say that it was invented—suddenly almost 1·5 million people were introduced into the argument.

Clearly that is a major change, and a factor which must be taken into account. I am not being funny about this, and I genuinely do not know why that happened. I can tell the House that I have watched carefully, and 15·5 million is now established in the Government's little group of statistics. The Prime Minister uses that figure constantly, for example, as does the Secretary of State.

I have written to the Minister and I wait with interest to ask how that had happened, and on what basis the Government suddenly found another 1·5 million pensioners. The hon. Member for Lancaster will appreciate this because she takes a great interest in these matters, and I acknowledge that she is a frequent attender of debates such as these. In 2030, the harmonisation of the pension age at 65 will have taken place, if the Government's plans come to fruition. We would have expected that, because they want to cut the number of people over pensionable age.

Not only have we an increase of 1·5 million people, but in circumstances which have changed since the original estimate and which one would have expected to have lowered the estimate and not increased it. It is mysterious and interesting; that is why I am interested in impartial reports and bringing some objectivity into the debate and the facts on which it is based.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Is it not the case that, in crude terms, the Government are trying to soften up opinion to justify cuts in pension provision and other welfare benefits? They are grossly exaggerating the problems that Britain and other countries face. That is why we see such a slapdash and casual acquaintance with the facts.

Mr. Dewar: I have a great deal of sympathy with that view. It will be widely shared among Opposition Members, but I have no doubt that it will be strongly repudiated by the Government.

10.15 pm

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: In a moment.

It may depend on whether the Chief Secretary or the Chancellor wins the battle of the Treasury, whether it is a real battle or a presentational exercise. Perhaps it is another aspect of the matter into which I shall not delve.

The new clauses address the need to establish a proper basis for the discussion.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: If there are mysteries here, there must be mysteries in all the other countries in Europe. As the hon. Gentleman no doubt knows, the German Government said exactly the same thing in their submission to Mr. Delors—that the pension burden in Germany will be enormous. It is the same in France, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. We are not the only ones who are discovering a demographic time bomb.

Mr. Dewar: I understand that entirely. The hon. Lady has heard Ministers saying it on many occasions. The term demographic time bomb is, in a sense, hyperbole. If she looks at the facts and figures, she will see that we are infinitely better placed that most western European countries.

The country in the greatest mess in demographic terms, for historic reasons, is Germany. The position there is extremely serious and Chancellor Kohl has been taking energetic steps to get to grips with it. It is a problem on a different scale from the one that we face in Britain.

The hon. Lady may be a victim of the hype that I am trying to get over. I suspect she has been listening to Ministers. I do not blame her; it is how Back Benchers operate, but she is over-simplifying the idea that we cannot survive because we have a problem on the same scale as that of Germany.

I can recommend to the hon. Lady—if she wishes, I shall arrange for a copy to be sent to her—an excellent and substantial piece of research from John Hill of the London School of Economics, which deals with social security expenditure which she will find genuinely interesting. She could then measure it against some of the statements from Government. But I must not argue the case.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, as we are spending an increasing amount of money on our national health service and cures are being found which would have been unthinkable even two or three years ago, not only will the number of people living increase, but their quality of life will improve? It means people are not only living on to a much greater age, but they actually enjoy living on to a much greater age.

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Lady is happy. I agree with her entirely.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I shall live to be 100.

Mr. Dewar: Do not depress me.

The hon. Lady makes an important point and I agree with her. it is a complicated equation. It is true that we are closing acute beds, sometimes over-enthusiastically, but in some cases for good reasons, as surgery can be carried out in an out-patient department which once would have required extensive in-patient treatment.

I remember being in hospital for five weeks for something that my doctors now tell me would be done on an out-patient basis. It is a complicated equation.

Let me make one more point to the hon. Lady. The interesting document produced by the Government, "The growth in social security: International comparisons", with which some of my hon. Friends will be familiar, contains evidence of the expense and burden that we will have to carry and, as a civilised community, ought to carry. It is also important to remember that, if we take social protection expenditure—that is, the health service and the benefit system put crudely altogether—as a percentage of gross domestic product, in Europe the burden is 26 per cent. and in Britain it is 23 per cent. We are well below the European Union average.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: We must be more efficient.

Mr. Dewar: We may be more efficient, but Ministers often lead us to believe that we are uniquely at risk because of ever-escalating costs, which cannot be controlled and are now running away in a disastrous fashion.

The contributory principle—the inter-relationship between the national insurance fund, the national health service, the benefits and pensions systems—is a key area. There is a genuine case for an annual report on the kind of increase which has been included in the Bill. If we can receive that kind of impartial information, we will have a better chance—perhaps not a great chance—of a well-informed debate and of reaching the right conclusions at the end of the day, even if we start from a different political point of view.

There was a time when at least we had common aims and objectives—even though we argued about the way in which they could be achieved. One of the sadnesses of recent years is that we can no longer agree on the aims and objectives and the proper community approach. If we are to have an argument of such far-reaching importance, we deserve to be better served by the Government's statistics.

Mr. Wicks: I rise with great enthusiasm to support the proposal that we should have an annual report on these very complex matters. The debates on Second Reading and in Committee have shown that we are at something of a crossroads; there are different scenarios about the future of social insurance or some alternative to it.

I was intrigued by the intervention of the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) when she sought to blame Lord Attlee for not supporting a funding scheme. Tha allows me to say, with something of an exaggerated flourish, that I knew Clement Attlee. I refer to a short conversation that I had with him when I was a schoolboy. The conversation with the then Lord Attlee, in county hall, London—in the good old days when we had a London county council, a council that my father had the honour of chairing in its final year—went something like this: I said, "Hello, sir." He said, "How are you, young man?" "Fine, sir," I replied. I regret that I did not seize the opportunity, in the middle of this historic dialogue, to say, "What about funding, Lord Attlee?"—but next time I will.

The serious point is that there are different scenarios about the future of national insurance, or social insurance or some alternative. An annual report would enable us to monitor performance against objectives. It could become as important as the annual reports from the Supplementary Benefits Commission, as it was, and more recently the Social Security Advisory Committee. Many Opposition Members will pay tribute to the work of Sir Peter Barclay, whose tenure as chairman of that committee comes to an end at the end of the month. I have great respect for his work; his reports have helped enormously and have added strength to the proposal made by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). I believe that annual reports could become important state documents.

One scenario is that we will increasingly see a reduction in the principle of national insurance and a move towards a kind of residual social welfare system. That would come about through a reduction in the value of national insurance benefits, a move from state provision to occupational welfare—we have seen an example of that recently. It would come about also through the privatisation of what were formerly national insurance benefits—we have seen that with private pensions.

I would have major worries about that. To "residualise" welfare and guard it carefully with a means test is to increase the inequalities in our society—albeit at a time when new language is used to describe state benefits and state provision. Unemployment benefit, for example, has become a "job seeker's allowance". I wonder where it will all end. Perhaps the Government should consider calling the homeless "home owner aspirants", which would be less negative and less politically embarrassing.

Let me give another example of the linguistics of social policy. I offer this purely as an illustration, not as a prediction. If one day a Government anxious about public expenditure were to propose the introduction of euthanasia for the poor, no such crude and vulgar language would be employed. The measure would be introduced under the acronym EHOP—"early heaven opportunity programme". The language of social policy is certainly becoming more intriguing.

The Chairman: Order. I am listening attentively to what the hon. Gentleman is saying——

Mr. Wicks *rose*——

The Chairman: Will the hon. Gentleman sit down for a second? The new clause is entitled "Annual report to Parliament". Whether the language to which the hon. Gentleman refers will form part of that report is not immediately evident from what he has said so far; perhaps clarity will soon prevail.

Mr. Wicks: Certainly the annual report will be full of language—and, most important, it will help us to enable both public and Parliament to determine the direction in which the national insurance system is going. That is why I support the idea.

An alternative to the idea of a residual welfare system, in which means-testing increasingly replaces national insurance, is the idea of enabling the annual report to identify other possibilities. Some people say, for instance, that the concept of national insurance is no longer relevant in a modern society. They claim that it is not actuarially sound. It is not funded, they say, so why not come clean and make it part of income tax? The annual report would determine whether the system was moving away from national insurance and towards taxation.

Mr. Corbyn: How would the report deal with the position of people who were denied invalidity benefit that they could otherwise have received because of the new rules introduced by the Secretary of State? Would it examine the question of the refusal of benefits under a means-testing system?

Mr. Wicks: I certainly hope that it would. It needs to be independent and objective when assessing the overall impact of such measures.

Among other things, the report would enable us to establish whether national insurance has a future. I believe that it has, but that we need to reinvent or reconstruct the concept of social or national insurance. The issue was discussed on Second Reading. I think that any new social insurance system would have to establish whether, 50 years after Beveridge, the risks faced by modern society were being addressed. If Beveridge were alive today, although he would recognise many of those risks—for instance, the risk of unemployment, job seeking or whatever the language is—he would also recognise that new risks had developed. The annual report would help us to assess them.

Many of the growing number of frail elderly people will need not only an income—a pension—but care. That is one of the major forms of social insecurity nowadays. It is a major risk that insurance should help us to tackle. It may be that in a reconstructed national insurance scheme people could be insured against the risk that one day they may need care costing hundreds of pounds a week, perhaps £20,000 or £30,000 a year, in residential accommodation. A modern national insurance scheme would help us to tackle such risks.

The idea of an annual report to help us to shine a light on the practice and policy of social insurance is a vital part of the Bill. I hope that it will become part of the Bill and that the Committee will accept the proposal of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar).

10.30 pm

Mr. Flynn: It is a pleasure to speak on this vital new clause. We must look to the report to Parliament as a sort of gatekeeper—to use the word used by the Minister. It should be seen as a moderating influence, someone to guard the gate. My misgiving about the use of that word is that the Spanish word for gatekeeper is portillo. That may be some sort of sign.

I have attended almost every minute of the debate and I have been slightly distressed to see that the Secretary of State has had trouble keeping his eyes open. Earlier today, I had a conversation with a Treasury Minister who was purchasing mints downstairs. *[Interruption.]* This is relevant; it will become clear later. I pointed out to the Minister that there was a notice warning customers about an outbreak of some sort of Asiatic plague at the mint factory and that they should not take mints. I worry that he might be sending them to other members of the Government and it may be that the Secretary of State's apparent indisposition——

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. We have gone far enough with that. We must return to the debate on the new clause.

Mr. Flynn: There is clearly a deep division between the policies of the Treasury and those of Ministers in the Department of Social Security. It strikes at the heart of the new clause. The report to Parliament should be seen to be at least an attempt to retain parliamentary scrutiny of the Government's destruction of the welfare state.

The welfare state is not something trivial. It did not happen by accident and was not introduced by just one Parliament. It is the result of the life work of generations of our parents and grandparents. They saw it as a great ideal that society should be organised so as to distribute society's wealth in a way that was fair to everybody. They wanted to ensure that when people reached retirement age they would have about 40 per cent. of their previous salary on which to live out their final days in dignity and relative prosperity. That was the inspiration of Lloyd George and Beveridge and it has had support from all parties until the present day.

There is one question that the Government must answer. Why is it that between 1944 and 1951, when we still had rationing and great troubles and were a poorer nation than we are today—the same applies to the years 1950 to 1955 when we were in a similar position—the value of the pension was greater in real terms than it is now? Also, why are the Government planning for the real value of the pension to be far less in 40 years—when, by all predictions, we will be richer than we are now—than it is now?

I intervened earlier because, as an old lag of these debates—I have sat in on every Social Security Bill since 1987—I was distressed by the fact that none of the many knowledgeable Conservative Members with an insight into social security had spoken. We heard at least one speech from a parliamentary private secretary, who was reading from a brief, but we have not heard from the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts), for whom I think we all have great respect and whose works I have quoted in the Chamber. The hon. Gentleman understands the situation and has blown the gaff on the Government's great con. They have successfully convinced the media and the nation that we cannot afford a welfare state any more, that somehow a terrible disaster has taken place and that we cannot afford a national insurance scheme. I make the distinction between a national insurance scheme and a poor law scheme because one hon. Member referred——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is going very wide of the subject. The debate is about contributions, so he should get back to the clause under discussion.

Mr. Flynn: Each year the annual report must contain a critical appraisal of whether we have a welfare state or return to a poor law scheme. I suggest that the authors of that report should become the social——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I must insist that the hon. Gentleman return to the clause.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: He has never been on it.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The subject of the clause is contributions, so the hon. Gentleman should confine his remarks to that subject.

Mr. Flynn: Contributions are a vital part of the Bill. Earlier, I challenged the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) to tell me how they have changed since 1979. He sought assistance from heaven. Perhaps it is not well known that he is fluent in Icelandic. For all its value, his contribution could well have been delivered in that language. The difference is significant. In 1989, the level of contribution—the precise subject of the clause—was 6·5 per cent. The change to 10 per cent. represents an enormous increase of more than 50 per cent. since then.

Let us puncture the myth that we cannot afford a welfare state. We do not need to increase contributions by 53 per cent. over 14 years, or even by 40 per cent. or 20 per cent. If we increase them by 15 per cent., in the next century we will be able to afford pensions that are more generous than they are today.

Who says so? The hon. Member for Havant. Who else? The Social Security Advisory Committee, the organisation that advises the Government, has produced its ninth report and it should be the organisation that produces future reports. The Government have disregarded every other report by that Committee. Throughout my time in Parliament since 1987, I have read all those reports. They are a great guide to parliamentarians on what has happened to the social security system. The advice of the committee that was set up to be objective and independent has been disregarded time after time.

Judging by their contributions and the policies that they have adopted, the Government are driven not by any considerations of welfare or fairness but by blind ideology. They have used the excuse of demographic change—as the hon. Member for Havant says in his splendid document, "The Age of Entitlement"—not because it is true, because it is not. They have vastly exaggerated.

We will have problems in the next century because of the baby boomers which will last for about 13 years. After that, the problem will lessen and we will have a society in which we can provide decent pensions. The reasoning behind the Government's policy—the whole nonsense behind this legislation—is the ideology that everything private is wonderful and everything public is nonsense.

[Mr. Flynn]

What are our contributions to the national insurance scheme? We will soon be paying 10 per cent.—the highest this century and in history. What will happen to them? If the contributions go into the national insurance scheme, 95 per cent. will end up as benefits. The alternative is to put the contributions into private insurance schemes. When that is done, 50 per cent. will end up being paid as benefits. The other 50 per cent. will be lost in administration charges, profits for the insurance company and commission. That is the time bomb under the Government. That is what contributions are all about.

We have a system of national insurance. Beveridge's inspiration was a scheme based on contributions. What he saw, Mr. Lofthouse, was the insurance schemes that your father and mother and my father and mother had—industrial insurance policies. They paid someone to come to the door every week. Beveridge studied those policies. He said that 50 per cent. of the contributions were lost in the scheme's administration charges. He said that the private insurance companies were more interested in selling the schemes and in their profits than in providing value.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman is misquoting Beveridge. Beveridge wanted the scheme to be run in gradually. He did not want it to come in immediately. I see that the hon. Gentleman has only a silly bit of paper; I have the Beveridge report. The point is that Beveridge wanted the scheme to be run in gradually. I observed earlier that if the scheme had been funded, all the problems that we have inherited and that we shall pass on to our grandchildren would not have occurred.

Mr. Flynn: The hon. Lady has quoted Beveridge, which, like my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks), I regard as night-time reading. Beveridge said that he wanted

> "to ensure that every person fulfilling during his"—

pardon the sexism—

> "working life the obligation of service according to his powers, can claim as of right when he is past work an income adequate enough to maintain him."

Let me tell the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) what Beveridge also concluded. He published his report in 1942. He thoroughly investigated the life assurance schemes. His conclusion was that the cost of administration consumed half the money paid in by members. He said that the door-to-door insurance—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Lancaster wishes to know about Beveridge, she should listen. I am quoting his report. He said that door-to-door insurance served the interests of companies and the sellers of policies to the detriment of those insured. His preferred solution was a state-run scheme for everyone.

We have a state-run scheme that has been neglected. We are not giving people choice. The Government have very unwisely told people to opt out of the state scheme and go into personal pension schemes. All Conservative Members who have a vested interest and a direct pecuniary interest in personal pensions should not vote on the issue. The Government would lose their majority. The result of this——

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to impugn the integrity of Conservative Members during the debate?

The First Deputy Chairman: It is not the tradition of the House, but it is not uncommon that hon. Members on both sides of the House do it.

Mr. Flynn: I have noticed in the Register of Members' Interests that 14 per cent. of Opposition Members have pecuniary interests in various bodies. I have none, I assure you, Mr. Lofthouse. Eighty-five per cent. of Conservative Members have pecuniary interests. I do not impugn the honour of Conservative Members, but I suggest that we should adopt the practice in local government whereby someone who declares an interest in a subject does not vote on it. That is an important reform that we should introduce in the House of Commons, especially [illegible] 85 per cent. of Conservative Members have pecuniary interests.

We want a proper annual report to be made by an objective body such as the Social Security Advisory Committee. The Government are not giving choice to the country by offering them personal pensions. They are throwing people to the wolves.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): For the past hour, I have listened to the debate on this new clause and I have yet to hear one argument in favour of it. The hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) talked about a record level of national insurance contributions, which will be the consequence of this Bill. We do not need an annual report to tell us that we are spending a record amount on the national health service and social security. If we examine the Bill and the new clauses, it must be blindingly obvious that if we will the end, we must will the means.

I do not see why we need to spend more money on administration and creating more reports and statistics when we all know the truth. Under this Government, we have spent a record amount on the NHS, and we are spending a record amount on the social security budget. All hon. Members have received letters from constituents saying that people are prepared to pay more to fund the national health service. This Bill will enable people to pay more for a better national health service. We do not need this new clause to ensure that that is carried out.

10.45 pm

Mr. Corbyn: I shall be brief because the Minister should have an opportunity to speak about this excellent new clause. My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) explained why the Government will not support the new clause. It is obvious. If there is an objective annual analysis of what happened to the contributions—what was paid out from them, who did not get them and who was denied them by means testing; and the almost 1 million people who received no benefit whatever despite having paid into the fund during their working lives—the Government will be exposed.

The Government are perpetrating an enormous con on the people of this country. They are increasing contributions in order to pay less and reduce benefits. All pensioners have been robbed of £18 a week because of the break of the link with earnings in 1980 and the substitution of a cockeyed retail prices index. The Government are being cruel and hypocritical by cutting unemployment benefit, despite the scheme being a contributory one. It is benefit fraud of the highest order. That is what benefit fraud is about. It is not the sort of xenophobic nonsense that the Secretary of State was talking about when he addressed the annual rally of the Conservative party. Of course, to call it a conference would be to suggest that there was a serious discussion going on, which there certainly was not.

An annual report must show the real cost of the state pension scheme and the contributory system. My hon. Friend explained what happened under the old private insurance schemes which predated the welfare state. We are rapidly moving back to a society in which any spiv can set up a pension company, make a great deal of money from it and possibly go bust. The robbery of Maxwell pensioners has exposed the lack of regulations for pension funds. People who are withdrawing from the state earnings-related pension scheme are a £6 billion drain on the national insurance fund. I believe that such matters must be exposed.

The Government rely on secrecy. They rely on the Murdoch press to perpetrate the enormous lie and myth that this country cannot afford a universal benefit scheme or a proper welfare state. We can afford it if the political will is there to do it. The Government's changes to the taxation system over the past 15 years have rewarded the rich with £31 billion per year. That is what it is about. The Bill is simply a minor, introductory skirmish into the great row and debate that will take place about the Government's attempt to smash the welfare state in which we believe so strongly and passionately.

Mr. Hague: This has been a varied debate. You would be angry with me, Mr. Lofthouse, however, if I failed to confine my remarks to the new clause and followed hon. Members down the various alleyways and byways that they have travelled.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) proposed the new clause in the spirit of providing impartial information to the country and Parliament and in the spirit of openness in policy making. I agree with that spirit. It is not a bad idea to have an annual report to Parliament about the national insurance fund. In fact, it is such a good idea that we already do it every February when we lay the re-rating or uprating orders for national insurance contributions. That provides a great deal of information.

The new clause would require the Secretary of State to publish every year an additional report, which would set out the expected income from the contributions paid by employees, in a form that showed separately the income attributable to the proposed increase in the rates of the contributions from 9 to 10 per cent. I see little point in producing such an additional report, which would be confined to one financial impact on the national insurance fund, when the Government Actuary already produces a report, which must be laid with the annual orders that set the rates of contributions and benefits for the coming year. Each year those reports give details of expected contribution income and expected contributory benefit expenditure. They also take into account the effect of any changes that have taken place in the rates or accounts of contributions.

I do not think that there would be much merit in having an additional report. Hon. Members who have argued for more information should be aware that a quinquennial review of the national insurance fund is——

Sir Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): Every five years.

Mr. Hague: My hon. Friend has immediately worked out that it is conducted every five years.

That review contains the Government Actuary's long-term financial estimates, which consider the viability of the contributory scheme up to 60 years hence. Opposition Members have rightly said that they want to take a long-term view of the scheme and that review offers that opportunity.

It would be wrong to initiate an additional report. I do not believe in creating unnecessary work for civil servants, who would be called on to provide information that is already ascertainable and available from the reports provided by the Government Actuary. I hope that the new clause is either withdrawn, or defeated in a Division.

Mr. Dewar: I listened with interest, but without much hope, to the Minister. The new clause is a good one and there are powerful arguments for it, despite his best efforts. I am unrepentant about tabling it.

Mr. Hague: What does the hon. Gentleman think about my point about the quinquennial review?

Mr. Dewar: I always find that the hon. Gentleman's presentation is excellent. Quinquennial reviews are obviously admirable institutions, but on this occasion it is clear that the quinquennial review about which he is talking in no way meets the eloquent points that have been raised not only by me, but by my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) and others.

In the circumstances, I do not see any point in delaying the Committee with a vote.

Mr. John Greenway: Shame.

Mr. Dewar: I would have thought that that was a cause for celebration and cheer on the hon. Gentleman's part. Conservative Members should recognise a Christmas present when they are offered one. It seems very uncharitable and unseasonable for Conservative Members to mock in this way.

On this occasion I will beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Order for Third Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read a Third time.

10.54 pm

Mr. Bradley: We have had an extremely interesting Committee stage. If any merit has come out of the fact that the Bill has been guillotined—there is only one merit—it is that my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has been able to participate so effectively in the Committee. He has brought great knowledge and a particular humour to our proceedings. We should welcome that as we run up to the end of this part of the Session.

On Second Reading, we concentrated very much on the consequences of increasing the national insurance contribution by 1 per cent. from 9 per cent. to 10 per cent. It is worth repeating yet again what the real consequences of that are. Through the back door, the Government are giving the biggest hike to taxation. The increase will bring

[Mr. Bradley]

in a staggering £2·26 billion in revenue in a full year. If the Government had been honest in the Budget and had raised taxation, they would not have received as much money. They would have received £360 million less than they are getting from this massive imposition of national insurance.

What has come clearly out of our debates today and yesterday is what the Government failed to tell the British people during the general election campaign. The Conservatives claimed that they were the party of low taxation. All that myth has now been exploded. I do not believe that the British people who, from next April, will on average have to pay £9 or £10 a week extra in total taxation and £16 on average the following year will ever again believe this Government.

This is the biggest hike in taxation. It is very pleasing that the former Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), is in the Chamber to listen to the description of the effects of his policies. The new Chancellor—I quote from the *Daily Mail*—admitted the truth to the Treasury Select Committee yesterday:

> "Clarke comes clean. Kenneth Clarke admitted last night that this year's Budget has raised the equivalent of 7p on the basic rate of income tax."

We know that, in conjunction with the national insurance contribution, people throughout the country will suffer, and suffer and suffer from the consequences of the Government's policies.

Through our debates, we have also been able to winkle out from the Government some important facts not only about the consequences of the increase in national insurance contribution, but about the effect on people of not being able to draw certain benefits in future. Two issues are worth reinforcing on Third Reading. I welcome our future opportunity to debate in greater detail the new job seeker's allowance. We have found out not only what was clear from the start—that it was about reducing the amount of benefit and about reducing eligibility from 12 months to six months—but, most importantly, that anyone under 25 who receives the new job seeker's allowance will get it at a reduced rate. That is a lower rate of income support. It is also clear that the dependants' addition will be significantly reduced under the new scheme.

It is a disgrace and scandal that the 3 million officially unemployed people will pay the price, not only through a reduction in the eligibility to benefit to six months, when many of them, through the contributory system, have paid into the fund and believed that they had a right to proper levels of unemployment benefit as a result, but young people up to the age of 25 will have their benefit reduced to income support level. That is a disgrace, and when it is properly understood, there will be a furore and campaigns against what the Government are proposing. The Minister may laugh, but the 3 million unemployed are not laughing. They are suffering from the consequences of the economic mismanagement of the Government.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the Opposition spokesman to mislead the House? There are not 3 million unemployed, and he ought to know——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) is responsible for his own speech.

Mr. Bradley: I understand exactly what the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) is saying. I understand that, over the 14 years of this Tory Government, they have fiddled the figures 19, 20 or 21 times to cover up the real total of over 4 million unemployed—that is, all those eligible to look for work, but ineligible to claim benefit because that right has been taken away from them. We understand what is going on, and we shall fight to protect the interests of those 4 million people.

You have not only curtailed the right to benefit for unemployed people. We shall look in great detail at the second exposure resulting from the debates in the past couple of days. That is the exposure of the way in which you are going to treat people with an incapacity, people who are sick and those who have disabilities. Not only will their right to a decent level of benefit be curtailed through the draconian measures that you are likely to introduce, but——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is getting a bit carried away. The Chair is not responsible for anything in this Bill, or any other.

Mr. Bradley: I accept what you say, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I had no intention of drawing you into the net of the guilty people who sit on the Treasury Bench, who will significantly reduce the living standards of thousands of disabled people through the imposition of the new assessment of incapacity.

We know that such people will be caught in a trap, a trap that we exposed in the debate on the Statutory Sick Pay Bill yesterday. Because of the extra burden of having to pay statutory sick pay, employers will look carefully at people's health records. People with health problems will be denied the right to a decent benefit. They will be caught in a trap—too ill to work but not ill enough to receive benefit from this miserly Government. We are determined that, when the Bill dealing with incapacity goes into Committee, we shall look at every line dealing with the way that assessments are done. What you are doing——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already told the hon. Gentleman that the Chair is doing nothing. I am only conducting the debate, in accordance with the rules of procedure. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would bear that in mind.

Mr. Bradley: I apologise. As we enter the Christmas period, we feel even more the ways in which the people whom we represent are being downtrodden. I apologise for getting emotional. We are trying to protect the vulnerable —the people who do not have the income to match that of Tory Members. We are trying to protect them against the ravages of an incompetent Government, who in one day can lose £7 billion. At the same time they try to cut the benefits of the most vulnerable people in society. Such are this Government's priorities.

The Secretary of State is so appalled and is such a guilty man that he cannot even come to the Chamber to hear the closing speeches on this legislation. Where is he? I think I perhaps know. I suspect that there is an argument going on between the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State about the other area that we are determined to protect—the right to a decent level of state retirement pension.

The Chief Secretary is not interested in the future needs of people for the state retirement pension. He is looking for it to be continually eroded so that it has no real value in future. He believes that the state should not provide this sum in the 21st century and that everyone should look to the private market for an income in their old age. That is not good enough for us. We shall protect the elderly. We do not accept the arguments put to us and directed clearly by the Chief Secretary. We shall ensure that the millions of elderly people are properly protected by the policies of a Labour party committed to the interests of the elderly.

Today's debate has given my hon. Friends adequate opportunity to expose the Government's hypocrisy and the way in which they are trying to con the British people into believing that if direct taxation does not increase, somehow national insurance contribution increases are a side issue and do not affect pay packets in the same way. I assure Ministers that on 1 April next year when the public receive their pay slips the Government's con will be exposed.

At the same time as incomes are ravaged and limited by tax and national insurance impositions, bills will come through doors demanding VAT on fuel. Then the public will look at how mortgage interest tax relief has been eroded; they will look towards future travel and holidays and see that they have to pay tax on that. As their bills come in for home insurance and car insurance, it will be tax, tax, tax.

That from a party that went into the general election saying that it was the party of low taxation, that it had no plans and no need to raise taxation. Its hoardings argued against the Labour party's tax policies. Yet look what the country is having to suffer as a result of the mismanagement of the economy by these Ministers and all their guilty colleagues.

We have failed—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. For the last two minutes it might be wise for the House to settle down.

Mr. Hague: To help the hon. Gentleman through the last two minutes, may I suggest that he spends them by informing the House how the Labour party proposes to meet the shortfall in the national insurance fund?

Mr. Bradley: Is not it incredible that when Britain is faced with the biggest tax hike ever, amounting to £9 a week for the average family this year and £16 next year, the Government can ask only what we would do? The Government are responsible for what is happening. The Minister and all his right hon. and hon. Friends are the guilty men whom we have exposed during the past two days. We may not have won a vote in those two days, but I am assured that we have won the hearts and minds of the British people who know only too well where the guilt lies for the economic consequences.

It being six hours after the commencement of proceedings on Second Reading, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question already proposed from the Chair, pursuant to Order [14 December]:—*

The House divided: Ayes 303, Noes 256.

Division No. 56] **[11.10 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Aliason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark

Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas

Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*

Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

OWN RESOURCES

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9298/93 + COR 1, relating to the Communities' own resources: and endorses the Government's objective of ensuring that the new Own Resources Decision is in accordance with the financing decisions taken by the Edinburgh European Council of 11th and 12th December 1992.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

The House divided: Ayes 282, Noes 145.

Division No. 57] **[11.24 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*

Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Timothy Kirkwood.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benton, Joe
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Gordon McMaster and
Mr. Derek Enright.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Television Violence

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

11.34 pm

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): I am delighted to have the opportunity to debate a very important matter—the effect of violence shown on television, films and video on the behaviour of children.

We all know of the recent tragic case of James Bulger, and I believe that all hon. Members on both sides of the House were deeply distressed by it. When I heard reports of the trial and read some of the transcript, and found out that one of the young boys who had committed the murder had been watching a video called "Child's Play 3", I was absolutely horrified. The fact that a child that age was allowed to watch a video with that sort of content is cause for all of us to be gravely concerned.

It is also cause for grave concern that 181,000 children watched the same film on BSkyB, of whom 42,000 were under the age of nine. I feel strongly that it should not have been broadcast; but I also feel that the children's parents should not have allowed them to watch it. There must be parental responsibility. I cannot say much about the Suzanne Capper trial, except that the alleged perpetrators were apparently chanting the tune from the same film.

I believe that a royal commission should be set up to discover the causes of violence. I know that the Archbishop of Westminster and the Chief Rabbi have called for one, and my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) has tabled an early-day motion which was signed by 100 hon. Members, including me. However, we have not managed to bring about the setting up of such a commission.

I do not believe that a matter such as this is or should be party political. Hon. Members of all parties are deeply concerned about the level of violence in today's society. We must establish why those children committed that crime—and, indeed, why there is so much violence in society nowadays. It is all very well to cite poverty and poor living conditions; although they may contribute to the problem, I genuinely believe that children especially are desensitised by the diet of violence that they are fed by television, films and videos, day after day, as they sit in front of their television sets.

The majority of parents are very responsible, but many are not. Instead of entertaining their children—taking them out and spending time with them—they much prefer to go to the video shop. Quite often, they do not check the content of the videos that they take out before sitting their children down in front of the television. Those children become more and more used to violence; the more they see, the more they feel that that is the normal way in which to behave. If they cannot get something by means of reason, they will hit out.

Some say that there is no link between the violence on television and the violence in society—that there is no proof. That is why I believe that more research is needed. The public, however, do believe that there is a link. A recent *TV Times* survey found that 59 per cent. of viewers thought there was a link between television violence and violence in society, while 85 per cent. felt that television companies were not careful enough about what they screened. Even the Broadcasting Standards Commission said that complaints had trebled in the 12 months before last July.

I know that television films and videos have changed a great deal in those 12 months, but they changed even more in the years before that. That is one of the main problems. Films, television shows and videos have become more and more realistic. When I was younger I used to watch "Dixon of Dock Green". It was a crime series, but we never saw the violence that we see today. There was not the realism that we see today. The same applied to popular children's programmes such as "Popeye". There was always a moral, Popeye always won through. That may be simplifying matters, but there was a moral and the goodie always won. Today, I do not believe that the goodie does win. We must ensure that we have a certain morality running through television, films and video.

It is a tribute to the directors, producers, writers and actors that there is more realism today. It is no longer like "Dr. Who" or cowboys and indians. Many people who do not believe that there is a link say, "I grew up with cowboys and indians and it did not harm me." Children do not see cowboys, red indians or daleks in the street every day. That is the difference. What they see on their screens today is something that they know. They see a real person who could be their neighbour, the man down the street or a child who they know, committing acts of violence.

Many years ago when I worked with children, I asked them about violence and television. I did not ask them whether it had any influence on their behaviour, but I asked them whether they were terrified by violence. Incredibly, they proved the theory. I asked about "Dr. Who". They said, "That is fantasy. I have never met a dalek. I do not have nightmares about that." Most of them had nightmares about real-life drama, things with which they could identify.

There are many television shows, films and videos that are not as extreme as those watched by the children in the James Bulger case. Some films appear to be totally innocuous. I went to see "Home Alone 2". It was the first film that I had been to see in about a year. I had an evening off and that was the only cinema in which I could get a seat. I went with some friends who have children, one of whom is seven years old. She did not come with us, but I asked her parents later whether they would have let her come to the film. They said, "Yes, of course. What about all the other children there?"

In the film, a little boy went to the top of a building and started hurling bricks on to the villain. He was knocked out, but got up after 30 seconds. Another brick came down on top of him and he again got up. He then went into a building and was electrocuted. His hair stood on end and he went black all over. He survived everything. We did not see the real effect of the violence.

Children as young as four and five were watching that film. I do not think that they would have wanted to be violent or that it would necessarily have affected them in a violent way. However, films that do not show the consequences of violence are just as bad. Children will ape what they see on a television screen or in a film. They may go out and think, "I'll throw a brick at another child. It won't harm him. I saw it in a film and the person got up." I am not saying that we should ban such films, but we should ensure that their producers and writers look carefully at the sort of programmes that they are making.

[Ms Liz Lynne]

Some time ago I watched "Kilroy" because it was specifically about television and violence. There were two prisoners on day release from prison. One of them was asked, "Why did you commit your crime?" He said, "I saw it on Crimewatch. I saw someone go into a building society, steal the money and get away with it and I thought, 'I'm broke and that's an easy way to make money.'" He was caught. How many people watch those sorts of programmes? I am not saying that we should ban them, but programme makers must be responsible.

I am very worried about real-life crime and its effect on children as well. Many of them see it, as many programmes now depict and dramatise what has happened in real life. Again, I think that that is a worrying way to go about things.

There has to be a link between crime and video nasties and all the violence that we see in the media. If there was not a link and people did not feel that television influenced them, why would advertisers spend £1·7 billion a year on advertising their products? They cannot say, on the one hand, that it influences people who watch television and, on the other, that it does not. It either does or it does not.

We must ask ourselves what we should do about it. As I said, I feel that we need a royal commission to consider why people, especially children, are violent. I would like there to be a new classification, "Not suitable for home entertainment", on videos so that when parents go into shops they know that they cannot show them to their children. I want broadcasters to mark programmes with a "V" for violence. Perhaps that is a step in the right direction. We will not be able to get them to change overnight, but we might be able to persuade them to do so gradually.

How do we make parents responsible? How do we teach them to teach their children the difference between fact and fiction? We must study that seriously.

The BBC guidelines already state that a blow to the head must be treated as a serious matter. I want television companies to monitor whether those guidelines are working in practice. I suspect that they are not. They read very well, but from watching some programmes, I do not feel that some companies are following their own guidelines.

I would like actors, writers, directors and producers, along with politicians, to come together into some form of organisation to try to change the way in which people think and the programmes that are made. Writers could write programmes and plays with a far more positive message and we could get away from the climate of violence.

I congratulate Sir Anthony Hopkins, who, when asked to make a sequel to "The Silence of the Lambs", refused because he suddenly realised what sort of effect the first film had had on people, and Stanley Kubrik, who abandoned "A Clockwork Orange" because a tramp was beaten up after its first screening.

People in the profession need to be mobilised and politicians on both sides of the House must mobilise with people in the industry and ensure that we do something to stop the diet of violence.

If negative images influence people, positive images must, too. We must persuade programme makers to put positive images on our screens. Most importantly, we must all treat the matter seriously. I know that hon. Members in the House tonight do so and that they are here because they know that violence has got totally out of control and that something has to be done. I sincerely hope that we will be able to set up a royal commission.

11.48 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean): I congratulate the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) on obtaining this debate and raising this important issue. She is right. As she will know, it is unusual to have more than just a few hon. Members in the House for an Adjournment debate, but she is supported by her hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) and I see my hon. Friends the Members for Langaurgh (Mr. Bates, for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant), for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold), for Dover (Mr. Shaw) and for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) as well. I think that it was quite unique that, as the hon. Lady was talking, all around me I could hear murmurs of, "Yes, I agree with that", "She's absolutely right" and "She has hit the nail on the head" in response to so many of her arguments.

Of course, the debate has understandably attained particular prominence following the judge's remarks in the case arising from the tragic death of James Bulger. The whole House will be grateful to the hon. Member for Rochdale for her work, in association with my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) and others, in helping to draw attention to the challenge presented to society by the worst violent and pornographic material. In particular this evening, she has drawn attention to the paramount importance of protecting children from harmful influences.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has already made clear the Government's great concern about the murder of James Bulger and has expressed the sympathy that the whole House must feel for James's parents. I am sure that the House would like to take this opportunity to congratulate them on the birth of their new son, although of course nothing can make up for the son they have lost.

The murder of a child is always an appalling crime, whatever the circumstances. Nevertheless, it comes as no surprise that the James Bulger case has provoked such great concern, given the involvement of children both as perpetrators and as victim. Thankfully, murder carried out by young children is extremely rare. It may, therefore, be unsafe to draw any wider conclusions from that particular case.

Nevertheless, my right hon. and learned Friend and I have noted the remarks made by the trial judge, Mr. Justice Morland, who suggested that one explanation for the murder might be exposure to violent videos. We are currently studying these remarks, together with the views of the police officers who investigated the case. We shall also examine the results of current research into the viewing behaviour of juvenile offenders, which has been commissioned jointly by the British Board of Film Classification, the Broadcasting Standards Council, the BBC and the Independent Television Commission. The results of that research are expected to be published in the new year.

Of course, there has already been extensive research into the possibility of a link between on-screen violence and violent behaviour. Many hon. Members will have seen the reports in the press only yesterday about a new study which suggests that the playing of violent computer games encourages aggression in about one in five of the children who play them.

The balance of the research undertaken so far has failed to produce satisfactory evidence that a direct causal effect exists between exposure to violent material and the commission of violent crime. There are probably insuperable practical limitations to what it is possible for such research to achieve in investigating the causes of human behaviour.

None the less, we shall all accept that films, videos, television and computer games are powerful media. Simple common sense tells us that they must have some effect on at least part of their audience. I look at it this way: last year in the United Kingdom, our two commercial terrestrial channels alone generated some £1·7 billion in advertising revenue. Is it likely that advertisers—hard-faced capitalists—would be prepared to spend such vast sums if they did not believe that television could have some influence on people's choices or form their opinions? Of course it does. The Government therefore take the view that all broadcasters, film-makers and video games manufacturers should exercise due caution and assume that there may be some relationship between what they do and the way in which some people behave.

Following the murder of James Bulger there have been calls for the Government to take tough action to ban video nasties, violent videos and computer games and violence on television. I can well understand the concern that has led to such pressure, but as my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has made clear, it would not be right for the Government to rush into snap judgments on the issue, particularly on the question of any wider implications for the criminal law. We need to consider it carefully.

The Government have considerable sympathy for those who say that there is too much violence in the media and that too often children are exposed to violent films or videos which can turn any child and which we would prefer them not to see.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Does my hon. Friend accept that it is a fallacy to suppose that we can protect children from watching violent material simply by screening it after 9 pm or any other hour? Does he agree that, whatever we do, if such material is broadcast young children will see it and, therefore, the only answer is to ban it altogether?

Mr. Maclean: I largely accept that argument. We all know that it is usually only young children who can work the latest video recorders. I do not know whether watching violent films or videos can turn any child or adult into a murderer. But, as I have said, I believe that violent and horrific material must have some effect on a susceptible minority. That is one reason why our controls on videos, films and broadcasting are already among the most stringent in the world.

I shall briefly describe those controls, but before I do, I shall remind the House that they form only part of a much wider system of regulation over what children watch and how they behave. Of course, I am referring to the exercise of parental responsibility, to which the hon. Lady so rightly and wisely referred. That is a much more effective means of controlling children's behaviour than any system of regulation the Government could hope to establish. There is an obvious need for all of us who are responsible for children to ensure that they are not allowed to see unsuitable material. There is also a clear need for film makers, video producers and broadcasters to think very carefully about their wider responsibilities to society.

The Government recognise that there is considerable concern about the availability of violent and horrific videos, including video and computer games. The hon. Lady's comments about the difference between fantasy films and reality struck a chord with me and my hon. Friends. We can all watch films, including some of my favourites such as "Star Trek". They are wonderful escapism and I do not think that people realistically put themselves in that position.

I agree with the hon. Lady that some of the films which might—I say "might" because I do not have research to back this up, and I do not have research to prove I am wrong either—be the most dangerous do not appear to be the most obvious ones. I am referring to "The Termminator" and "Rambo". Those films may seem to be nice family videos, but the hon. Lady correctly said that there is a lot of violence and the baddies continue to get up and appear completely uninjured. I would love to know the effect of that on the susceptible minority.

We must all remember that we are not so much worried about the 95 per cent. of people who can watch a violent film or any type of material and not be affected or be depraved or corrupted. The problem is the susceptible minority who might be depraved or corrupted. I digressed slightly because the hon. Lady made a very good point.

All of us know where we might draw the line on the sort of violent material that we would not like 18-year-olds, 15-year-olds, children or, indeed, other members of our family to see. The difficulty is that if we redraw the line on violence, how do we transcribe that into guidelines or language to give to broadcasters or video producers? That is a difficulty that I am addressing at present.

Despite those difficulties, our existing system of video censorship and classification is already one of the most rigorous in the world. Under the Video Recordings Act 1984, all video works, apart from a small category of innocuous exempt material, must be submitted to the British Board of Film Classification for classificiation. The BBFC is an independent body and Ministers have no power to control or review its classification decisions. Under the Act, it is a criminal offence to supply a video which has not been classified by the BBFC or to supply a video in breach of the age classification awarded. The maximum penalty for supplying an unclassified video is a £20,000 fine, and the maximum penalty for the offence of under-age supply is a £5,000 fine. The hon. Lady suggested that perhaps we could legislate to introduce a new category of films not suitable for viewing in the home, but that would be no different from the present system.

We already require the BBFC to follow certain guidelines when performing its statutory classification duties. It must take into account the fact that videos are seen in the home and may therefore need to be censored or classified more restrictively than video films because children may replay them and see the one piece of violence repeatedly, which they would not normally do in the cinema. The BBFC must also seek to avoid classifying any work which could be considered obscene or otherwise unlawful.

When classifying films for video, the BBFC scrutinises every work in its entirety and adopts an active editing

[Mr. Maclean]

policy. It does not simply extend the same classification as was granted for cinema release, and frequently places films in a more restrictive age category, as well as requiring additional cuts of violent or explicit scenes which may be played over and over again in isolation and which are therefore unsuitable for viewing in the home, where access is not as strictly controlled as at a cinema. If the BBFC believes that a particular film is simply not suitable for home viewing in any circumstances, it will refuse video classification altogether.

We have already taken action to improve the enforcement of the 1984 Act. During the previous Session, we supported a Bill introduced by Lord Birkett—a vice-president of the BBFC—and in this House by my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth), which extended the time limit for the commencement of prosecutions under the Act. It also streamlined the procedure by which the BBFC may give evidence as to whether a particular video work either has or has not been classified. That Bill came into force on 20 September.

We will be taking further action under the forthcoming Criminal Justice Bill to give local authority trading standards officers stronger powers to enforce the 1984 Act by enabling them to investigate an entire chain of video supplies which is outside their area. The Bill will also contain other provisions designed to strengthen the enforcement of our legal controls on obscene material and child pornography. They will create new police powers of search and seizure; a new power of arrest for obscenity and child pornography offences; increase the maximum penalty for the mere possession of child pornography and extend the law to cover simulated child pornography that is manufactured by computer, where a real child is the basis of the photograph. We will also consider carefully the report of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, which is currently inquiring into computer pornography.

Video and computer games constitute video recordings for the purposes of the 1984 Act, but most games are exempt from the classification requirement under the Act. However, such games forfeit their exemption if they depict, to any significant extent, human sexual activity, the mutilation or torture of or gross violence towards humans or animals, or human genital organs. Games of this nature must be submitted for classification in the usual way. Probably the most famous one is the Sega game, "Night Trap", which has already been classified as "15" because of its use of real actors. As technology advances and the number of video games using realistic footage of real actors increases, the number of games requiring classification and possibly censorship is also likely to increase. In future, I believe that there might be a great expansion in such games as the technology improves. We are keeping a close eye on that sector.

I acknowledge the work done in a recent survey by Dr. Mark Griffiths and Mr. Nigel Hunt, which suggests that there may also be room for concern about the effects of those games which use what are very clearly computer graphics and which do not resemble real life or real people. This is why I welcome the work which the computer games industry itself, led by companies like Sega, has done under the aegis of the European Leisure Software Publishers Association—ELSPA—to establish an effective code of practice and a voluntary age classification system for those computer games which are exempt from classification as videos.

We have developed a system of media regulation in the United Kingdom based on arms-length principles and it is a long-standing tradition that the Government do not seek to intervene in matters such as programme content or scheduling. Within this framework, the responsibility for what is broadcast rests with the broadcaster and the broadcasting regulatory bodies, the BBC, the Independent Television Commission, the Welsh Fourth Channel authority and the Radio Authority. They are independent of Government and responsible to Parliament for safeguarding the public interest in broadcasting.

The Broadcasting Act 1990 places a clear framework for the independent broadcasters to follow with regard to broadcasting standards. The Act sets a statutory duty on the ITC to ensure that all its licensed services include nothing in their programmes

> "which offends against good taste and decency, is likely to encourage or incite to crime or to lead to disorder, or to be offensive to public feeling".

Similar provisions are also contained in the licence and agreement which set the framework for the BBC's operations.

Our broadcasting regulatory bodies also maintain detailed codes of practice for broadcasters and programme makers. In July this year, the BBC and the ITC issued revised tightened guidelines for their programme producers and purchasers on the portrayal of violence. Those guidelines prohibit the use of gratuitous violence —although we could all argue about what that is. They also require that the consequences of violent acts are not overlooked; that close attention is paid to the scheduling of violent programmes and advice given on the use of clear "on-air" warnings; and that warnings should be given of the dangers of broadcasting material depicting violent behaviour which children might imitate.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock on Wednesday evening, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at four minutes past Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Friday 17 December 1993

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Israel

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

9.34 am

Sir Thomas Arnold (Hazel Grove): I am grateful for the opportunity to address the House on the subject of British policy towards Israel at the United Nations. This year's General Assembly is now coming to a conclusion, and the debate will give the Government an opportunity to comment on the ways that Britain is seeking to further the peace process, both at the United Nations and in terms of our interests and responsibilities in the middle east.

I am looking forward to hearing what my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister has to say about Britain's attitude towards the many resolutions on the middle east, which come up year after year at the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

As long ago as 1982, I was able to secure an Adjournment debate on Britain's responsibilities under the United Nations charter for our dependent territories. I did so because, in late 1982, I spent some two months at the General Assembly as the parliamentary delegate from the United Kingdom. That experience taught me that the United Nations is a Parliament. Like every Parliament, if it is to function properly, it has what we would call Standing Orders. It has precise rules and procedures. The countries that perform effectively at the United Nations are those which, like Britain, have mastered the fine print of the United Nations charter and mastered in turn the way that a country must learn the Standing Orders of the United Nations to undertake the day-to-day work with speed and efficiency.

At the time of the Falklands, the role of the British mission in New York was not only vital to this country's effort but exemplary in terms of the contribution that our diplomats made. I do not believe that that contribution could have been as successful as it was had they not been masters of the art of United Nations diplomacy, which frequently means having an understanding of the fine print, not just of documents but of the rules of the organisation.

I believe that the peace process needs every possible encouragement. It continues to be fragile and we should therefore do everything that we possibly can to assist. I want particularly to raise the question of Israel's participation in a regional group. That issue has come up on previous occasions, and requires some clarification as the peace process develops.

I should like to see Israel playing a fuller part in the work of the United Nations, not least because that might help to make Israel's response on some issues less defensive, and would at the same time try to encourage and assist the situation in which Israel and the Arab countries can be seen to be working more closely together.

As I understand it, Israel is the only country which, unwillingly, does not belong to any regional group. That means that it cannot participate fully in the proceedings and work of the United Nations, with the adverse consequences to which I was referring earlier. I agree that Israel belongs naturally to the Asian group, but it is not accepted there because of Arab resistance.

As I understand it, Israel just wants to be treated as a normal country, in United Nations terms, and wants to be more involved and be elected to United Nations bodies. In that sense, Israel is isolated, because it is only by belonging to a regional grouping that a country can participate in internal United Nations elections or eventually become a member of the Security Council.

Israel has sought to deal with that problem by applying for temporary membership of the Western European and others group—temporary because, once peace in the middle east is established, Israel should join the Asian group. As I understand it, Israel is already accepted in the Western European and others group in other international organisations, such as the World Health Organisation, the International Labour Organisation, UNESCO and the Food and Agriculture Organisation.

I believe that rights bring responsibilities, and Israel's membership of a regional grouping within the United Nations would mean not only that it would take on the benefits of membership, but that its closer relationship with other group members could grant scope for a more responsive dialogue between the member countries. I attach weight and importance to that argument.

In that regard, the position of the United States is interesting. I note that in 1992, for example, a spokesman for the United States Department of State, Office of Assistant Secretary, was asked by the press the following question about Israel and the United Nations:

> "Does the United States have a position on whether Israel should be able to enjoy membership in the UN's elective offices, such as the Security Council?"

The answer was unequivocally

> "Yes, the United States strongly favours full Israeli eligibility for UN elective offices such as the Security Council. This is why we strongly support Israel's membership in one of the five regional groupings at the UN, which propose candidates for elective offices. Israel is not now a member of a regional grouping. For a number of years we have supported Israel's membership in a regional grouping, and we will continue to do so."

That is a clear statement of the United States' position. Canada and the Netherlands support that stance, and the remainder say that they would support a consensus to admit Israel, but will not lobby for it. I should be grateful if my right hon. and learned Friend could clarify the present position.

In July, in an answer to the hon. Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar), my right hon. and learned Friend said:

> "We believe Israel should be allowed into the Asian group of the United Nations. But until they are, we would not object to Israeli membership of the Western European and others group of the United Nations if there was a consensus among other member states."—*[Official Report,* 16 July 1993; Vol. 211, c. 725.]

On 13 August, I received a letter from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, which noted:

> "We have discussed this issue with EC colleagues and it is clear that there is no consensus in favour of Israeli membership of WEOG"—

the Western European and others group—

> "Our EC partners are fully aware of our own position."

[Sir Thomas Arnold]

In those circumstances, I should welcome further clarification of how the Government see the British position and their view on the way ahead on this issue.

At this juncture, I should like to draw the attention of the House to the implications of the arguments about Israel's membership of a regional grouping for the chemical weapons convention. At the 47th United Nations General Assembly, Israel co-sponsored the resolution endorsing that convention. On 13 January this year, it signed that convention in Paris, therefore making Israel one of the original signatories. As a consequence, Israel decided to send a delegation to participate in the work of PrepCom—the preparatory commission of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons—which is based in the Hague. Israel signed that convention with strong encouragement from the west.

Israel believes that that act should have strengthened its case for membership of the Western European and others group, particularly since some of Israel's neighbours still have chemical weapons. I should be grateful if my right hon. and learned Friend could say how he sees Israel's position within the particular context of the chemical weapons convention.

The wider question of British policy towards Israel and the middle east, as expressed in resolutions at the General Assembly and with particular reference to those passed this autumn, should be considered. For as long as I can remember, the texts of Security Council resolution 242 of 22 November 1967 and resolution 338 of 22 October 1973 have been the bedrock of the United Nations position on the middle east and that of many member countries. As the years have rolled by, the references to those resolutions have multiplied. Time and again, the House and other Parliaments have had detailed discussions of those resolutions and their implications.

As I understand it, the news from New York this week is that a new resolution has been tabled, which seems to represent a welcome step forward. It enjoys 105 sponsors, one of which is Britain. The resolution was adopted this week, with a vote of 155 member countries in favour. There was only one abstention, and Libya and three other countries voted against—Syria, the Lebanon and Iran. I should like my right hon. and learned Friend to say whether he believes that that new resolution will, in effect, be the bedrock resolution on which further debate and discussions at the United Nations will take place.

I note that the resolution refers to the earlier resolutions 242 and 338. It goes on to review the startling progress that has been made this year in seeking to bring peace to the middle east. It calls on member states to do everything possible to take that process further. I am sure that all hon. Members will attach great importance to that aim.

I should like to draw the attention of the House to correspondence that took place late in 1992 between a group of United States Senators and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, because it highlights a problem that still exists. Those Senators pointed out:

> "over 30 anti-Israeli resolutions are passed each year in the United Nations with the specific objective of condemning and embarrassing the government of Israel . . . We believe these resolutions are unjustified . . . In our opinion, Israel should be commended for its commitment to the peace talks rather than openly condemned in resolutions at the General Assembly."

My right hon. Friend replied:

> "We have made clear to the Arabs . . . our view that ritual condemnation of Israel in United Nations' resolutions is counter-productive, hindering rather than promoting the peace process."

I invite my right hon. and learned Friend to comment on the present situation and whether he believes that the plethora of resolutions at the UN General Assembly could now be reduced. May we take it that, henceforth, the resolution that was passed this week will be the principal resolution, and that it will be possible to concentrate on its wording, rather than deal continuously with other anti-Israeli resolutions, which have done so much damage in the past?

I welcome the changes that have taken place this year. I draw the attention of the House to the resolution on Israeli nuclear armament. In 1992, Britain abstained on that resolution, the text of which deplored Israel's refusal to renounce possession of nuclear weapons and urged it to accede to the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons convention.

That has been replaced this year by the call on Israel to renounce its possession of nuclear weapons and to accede to the treaty on non-proliferation. The United Kingdom and the rest of the European Community member states voted against that resolution.

What does my right hon. and learned Friend think will be the future approach to that resolution and others? Will it be British policy at the UN to try to persuade other countries to forgo resolutions of that kind in the foreseeable future? They do not help the peace process; in many respects, they hinder it, for the various reasons that I have given.

I remind the House that, although the UN has at times not seemed an especially appropriate place in which to further the aims of British diplomacy and there are occasions on which it is easy to become bogged down in what my noble Friend Baroness Thatcher referred to as a procedural morass, times change and, in the middle east, the UN has always participated in the various peace talks and working parties that have been set up; certainly, that situation will not change.

An understanding and knowledge of the rules of the organisation are essential if Israel, Britain and other countries are to pursue their diplomacy effectively. If Israel were allowed into a regional grouping, it would bring about an improvement in the present situation in New York.

The more that Israel can be encouraged to co-operate and to look for means whereby she can further her diplomacy in a manner that is consistent with the objectives that we all want to see fulfilled, the more that the peace process will be enhanced. I believe that British policy at the UN has been directed towards furthering that wholly necessary objective. I look forward to the reply of my right hon. and learned Friend on those specific points.

9.52 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold) for raising this subject and for giving me the opportunity to respond to the important points that he has made. It is a great pleasure to see my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) on the Front Bench; his interest in these matters and concern for the state of Israel is well known.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove began by speaking highly of the skills of the United Kingdom diplomats who work in New York. I entirely agree. I am sure that the House will agree that the reputations of Sir David Hannay and his colleagues are second to none. I pay tribute to Sir David Hannay and his colleagues, and thank them for the warm welcome they gave Members of the House who visited the UN some two or three weeks ago.

My hon. Friend concentrated at some length on the possibility of Israel's becoming a member of the Western European and others group, and also of participating in the organisation of the preparatory commission on the prohibition of chemical weapons.

Our position on Israel's admission to WEOG is as follows: like my hon. Friend, we believe that Israel's proper home is in the Asian group. We are at one on that. As my hon. Friend knows, there is a delicate balance to be struck between the regional groups in the UN system. WEOG has not accepted any member from outside the western European area in the past 40 years and, for that reason, there are natural inhibitions about doing so now. However, at the same time, we do not wish to be unhelpful towards Israel and we will not block a consensus in favour of Israel membership on a temporary basis. We anticipate that the membership will be renewed annually.

It is not for us to lobby for Israeli membership, but if there is consensus, we will not seek to block it, and will be content to see Israel as a temporary member of WEOG. The Government of Israel know that fact, partly because we have disclosed it to our colleagues and partly because, when I saw Foreign Minister Peres in Vienna earlier in the year, I stated our position clearly. I hope that my hon. Friend will be reassured on that point.

My hon. Friend also raised the question of Israel's membership of the preparatory commission of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons at the Hague on 15 December. It was agreed to accept conditionally Israel's request for temporary membership, pending its admission to the Asian group. I hope that my hon. Friend will be reassured by that fact.

The debate in the General Assembly took place against the background of the developments in the middle east. Is the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) seeking to intervene?

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful. I would have truncated my remarks if the hon. Member had wanted to intervene.

The breakthrough in the negotiations between the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Israel was a tremendous achievement and has unquestionably affected all our attitudes to the problem of the Arab-Israeli dispute. The handshake on the White House lawn on 13 September is an image which will rest in our minds for a long time, as will the visit of Chairman Arafat to London.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary gave a lunch for Chairman Arafat and, in many ways, it was an extraordinary occasion. Chairman Arafat was a welcome guest to lunch, and also present were the Israeli ambassador to London, the President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, Judge Finestein, and the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner).

We should give credit to the United States. In a sense, the breakthrough was the result of the Madrid process. It would not have begun without the initiative of Secretary Baker and President Bush, which was carried forward by the Norwegians in the Oslo talks. The process in Madrid that began in October 1991 was based on Security Council resolutions 242 and 338. Those resolutions and the principle of land for peace which is reflected in them, remain the basis for all negotiations.

In the declaration of principles signed by Israel and the PLO, the aim of the negotiations is described as a permanent settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and the permanent status negotiations aim at the implementations of those resolutions.

Against that background, we and our partners in the European Union have taken a fresh look at all the resolutions that concern Israel—as have the Arab states, which drafted many of those resolutions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove referred to the new resolution. We were delighted to be able to co-sponsor that new resolution, which we thought was forward looking, in that it welcomed the developments in the peace process. My hon. Friend rightly said that that resolution was adopted by a huge majority, with 155 votes for, three against and one abstention. Israel herself voted in favour. I hope that that is symptomatic of a new atmosphere of co-operation and relative harmony in New York.

I am glad to say that this year's resolutions have been much less condemnatory in tone than those in previous years, and that has made it possible for more resolutions to be adopted by consensus. I hope that people will be careful not to draft or seek to push through one-sided resolutions in the context of the debate in the middle east.

We must all be conscious that there are constituencies on both sides—in the state of Israel and in the occupied territories—that have to be carried if the peace process is to survive. It is unhelpful to pass one-sided resolutions that alienate one or other of the constituents. We need to be even handed in this matter.

Lebanon's opposition to the new resolution came about because there was no express reference to Security Council resolution 425—which does, of course, require Israel to withdraw from Lebanon. I should like to take this opportunity again to reiterate the support that Her Majesty's Government give support to resolution 425 and to the need for a peaceful solution to the Lebanon track of the peace process.

In that context, it was a great pleasure for me to welcome yesterday to London the Foreign Minister of Lebanon. I am pleased that the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie had the opportunity to talk to him. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary had a substantive meeting with him yesterday afternoon, which was no doubt extremely helpful, I hope for both sides.

The recent euphoria that has come about because of the agreement between Israel and the PLO emphasises the value that everybody places on movement. However, the Government adhere to the belief that peace in the middle east requires more than just a deal between those two parties. I have always taken the view that one cannot get a lasting settlement in the middle east unless and until there is an agreement between the Palestinians the state of Israel. It is a mistake to suppose that there is the possibility of making bilateral agreements between the state of Israel and individual Arab states unless there is agreement between the state of Israel and Palestinians.

[Mr. Hogg]

Therefore, the agreement made between Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Rabin is important not just because it opens up the possibility—even the probability—of a long-lasting accord between those two peoples, but because it unlocks the door to the wider, more comprehensive peace settlement that is essential. We need a comprehensive settlement that covers all tracks of the peace process and is freely agreed to by all the parties. I hope that, by next year, the General Assembly will be considering resolutions welcoming further progress on all tracks, including that of Syria and that of Lebanon.

Let me say a word about the Syrian track. The General Assembly resolutions have this year continued to address the question of the Golan Heights. We abstained on that question, as we have in the past, because we thought that the language would not help progress in the negotiations. But there can be no doubt about our support for attempts to resolve that problem as part of a comprehensive settlement.

An agreement between the state of Israel and Syria is, in my view, essential and urgent. Two key questions have to be addressed—first, the withdrawal by Israel from the Golan Heights and, secondly, the establishment of a full state of peace between Syria and the state of Israel.

One of the key problems at the moment is that both the negotiating parties are unwilling to make plain exactly what they mean by the concepts. What does the state of Israel mean by withdrawal? The Syrians are entitled to press the Israelis on that. And what does the state of Syria mean by peace—is it a full relationship between friendly states or is it merely a cessation of the state of hostility? The state of Israel is entitled to press President Assad on that.

Those negotiating positions must be opened up and disclosed as soon as possible. In that context, I welcome the fact that the parties are returning to talks, and that President Clinton is to hold a summit with President Assad. It is most important that the parties move urgently in those negotiations.

This week, we have seen the implementation of another resolution—Security Council resolution 799, which, as the House will recall, calls for the return of all those who were deported to south Lebanon at about this time last year. I am glad to say that all those who were deported and have spent the past 12 months in south Lebanon have now returned to the state of Israel.

Certain problems remain, however; they stand in the way of a peace process and need to be addressed. Perhaps most prominent of all is the Israeli settlement building in the occupied territories. It is true that settlement building has been reduced, but it has not been wholly stopped. That is particularly true of east Jerusalem. Not surprisingly, the Palestinians are deeply concerned by that.

We have taken every opportunity—I take the opportunity now—to say to our Israeli friends that the construction of fresh settlements is an obstacle to the peace process and we very much hope that it will stop. We voted for the General Assembly resolution condemning the settlement building.

In the light of the new situation this year, we have reconsidered how to vote on a number of Arab-Israeli resolutions. On the subject of Israeli nuclear armament, for instance, we felt that in the present situation it was no longer appropriate to refer only to Israel. The issue of security is an important one. Laying the foundations of the region's peace and security falls to each and every state in the area. All of them, without exception, need to be active in arms control and disarmament. All countries must play a full part in preventing the spread and build-up of weapons of mass destruction, which we regard as a major threat to security and stability in the area.

Nuclear non-proliferation is one of our highest security priorities. We fully support the concept of a nuclear weapons-free zone in the middle east, and we and our European partners supported the resolution calling for that at the United Nations General Assembly this year.

We do not, however, consider it desirable to single out one particular nation for condemnation. We prefer the subject to be dealt with in the overall context of peace in the middle east, so we voted against the resolution specific to Israeli nuclear armament. That is not, however, a sign that we take the issue less than seriously. We continue to call on Israel and all other states in the region to accede to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and to place all their nuclear facilities under full safeguard agreements with the Internationl Atomic Energy Agency.

Accession to the treaty by all states in the region, and their full compliance with its obligations, would be the best way to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the middle east. Similarly, we urge all states in the region that have not already done so to accede to the bilogical and chemical weapons convention as soon as possible. We fully support the work of the multilateral working group of the peace process on arms control and regional security.

I have already referred to WEOG and the chemical group. The 12 member states were pleased to be able to support the Israeli candidate for election to the UN administrative tribunal, and Mr. Gabay was elected on the first vote. The role of the United Nations in the middle east goes further than a string of resolutions. Hon. Members will be aware of the work being done by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees. It is important work, which will not be diminished by the peace accord. We fully support that organisation—politically, with bilateral donations and through the European Community—and we will continue to do so.

The peace process is of historic importance. No part of the world is more volatile and dangerous than the middle east. The economic interests of the whole world are focused on it. Years of history, tradition, hostility, fighting, murder and religious divide make it an extraordinarily difficult problem to resolve.

There are very legitimate concerns on all sides. Israel has a legitimate concern for security and we must keep that very much in mind. The Palestinians have a legitimate concern to assert their political rights as a people to acquire land of their own and create a political entity. The Arab states also have legitimate concerns. Syria's territory is occupied, as is that of Lebanon.

There are problems not only of history and tradition but of current needs and priorities. Against that background, what Prime Minister Rabin and Chairman Arafat have done is an extraordinarily courageous and statesmanlike act. Chairman Arafat has put his personal security on the line, as well as his political reputation. President Rabin has also put his political reputation on the line. They were right to do so. It was no small matter and they both deserve credit.

It is for that reason, at least in part, that my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary were pleased to receive Chairman Arafat in London as a guest of the Government. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is looking forward to his visit to Israel and the occupied territories in January.

We must rally behind the peace process, politically and financially. We can do some good by sending messages and making clear what we believe to be true. The central problem is that important constituencies, in both the territories and the state of Israel, must be carried if the peace process is to last. People in the occupied territories must realise that powerful benefits flow from the accord and that it is not the end of the matter but the beginning.

To the state of Israel, I say, "Be generous; make progress with all possible speed; make it plain that you are withdrawing and that Jericho-Gaza is but the first step. Press on, be generous." To our Palestinian friends, I say, "You must take account of the genuine security interests of the state of Israel. Do not press for more than public opinion in Israel can currently give. If you do, the process will collapse. Encourage your Arab friends to get closer to the state of Israel. Relax the trade embargo that is seen as a major obstacle to the establishment of proper relations. Do your utmost to ensure that there is no further violence in the territories."

We will do all we can to make sure that the negotiating parties recognise those facts. It is an historic moment and all parties deserve credit for what they have achieved. We believe that the process is irreversible and we will reinforce it as much as we can.

I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove has given me the opportunity to say that and that my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East was here to reinforce that message.

Hospitals (London)

10.15 am

Ms Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): I am grateful for the opportunity today to speak about the situation in London's hospitals. We have two contradictory views of reality—that of the Secretary of State for Health and everyone else's. The Secretary of State tells increasingly bewildered and angry Londoners that all is splendid in the national health service; another version is played out, day by day, in the casualty and acute wards of London's hospitals.

I received a letter yesterday from a constituent who is a consultant at Bart's—the hospital which the Secretary of State seems to have a particular mission to close. His letter was written on Wednesday of this week. He says:

> "You may be interested to know that the situation here today has been chaotic. There have been two patients waiting in casualty since Monday afternoon, that is for 40 hours, for beds to become available in the hospital. A further 11 patients were in casualty overnight as there were no beds available for admission to the hospital, and therefore 13 of the 16 casualty trolleys and cubicles were occupied prior to the working day commencing. In fact I visited the department and, as you can imagine, the situation is chaotic. Accident and emergency or casualty departments are not adequately staffed or in fact geared to having in-patients as there are no facilities for this. With regard to hospital admissions today, five out of 10 admissions have had to be cancelled for elective surgery. This includes two of my patients with gynaecological cancer."

Is that what the Secretary of State means about making London better?

Last night I visited four of the major casualty departments in London, and another this morning—five in all. At none of those hospitals—the Whittington, Bart's, St. Thomas's and King's—were any beds available. At King's, 16 patients were waiting to be admitted to the hospital and being nursed or cared for on trolleys. At Bart's a man who was clearly very ill arrived. The hospital had no trolleys and had to throw a mattress on the floor in order to treat him. Every hospital repeats the same story. When I asked the staff, "Has it got worse?" the unanimous answer from every nurse and doctor was, "Yes, it has got worse—much much worse."

What is needed to make it better? The answer is simple. More beds—so that hospitals can admit patients who need to be admitted. It is an irreconcilable contradiction that we have hospitals in London that can perform transplant surgery and give the hope of life to people who, even five years ago, would have been regarded as terminally ill—treatments that are more complex, more advanced than in almost any other part of the western world—yet we cannot guarantee that our hospitals can find a bed in order to admit an elderly lady with a broken arm, who needs to go into hospital only because there is no one at home to look after her.

For patients who wait on trolleys for admission to hospital in the middle of the night, their only hope of being admitted before the following morning—when other patients are discharged—is by filling beds left empty by patients who have died during the night. London hospitals regularly start the night with no empty beds.

None of that chaos has come about by chance; it is the predictable outcome of the Government's being hoodwinked by their own rhetoric—the rhetoric that says that London has too many hospital beds and that market forces will now do what successive Governments, and 20 inquiries into the state of London's hospitals, have so far failed to do. The situation that is now unfolding is entirely the result of Government policy, although the Government are now distancing themselves from it.

Let the Secretary of State tell the people to whom I spoke last night—nurses working in the casualty departments of London hospitals, consultants and the relatives of patients—that London has too many hospital beds. The Government are alone in believing that, when waiting lists lengthen, the answer is to cut the number of beds. That remedy will make matters even worse.

Moreover, Ministers do not even seem to know how many beds, consultants and staff are available, what the waiting times are for each unit and how many beds at any one time are "blocked"—which is the rather unpleasant term used when patients are waiting to be discharged, but are unable to leave the hospital. That information is not held centrally, although it is essential for Ministers to have it if they are to deal with the turmoil that they have created.

What, then, is the actual number of hospital beds in London, and how has the position changed in recent years? In 1986, London had nearly 50,000 acute beds; by 1991—the most recent year for which figures seem to be available—the number had fallen to 36,000, a reduction of more than 14,000. In the rest of the country—comparisons are constantly made with the rest of the country—the rate of closure was 80 beds per million people per year. In London, the rate has been three times as high: 240 beds for every million people close every year. That, too, is a direct result of Government policy, through the operation of the internal market.

[Ms Tessa Jowell]

In his report following the inquiry into London hospitals commissioned by Ministers, Sir Bernard Tomlinson estimated that London needed to lose 2,500 beds. It is not clear where that calculation came from, what was the start date for the closure programme or, indeed, whether that figure has long since been exceeded—which the statistics suggest is very likely. Even Sir Bernard offered a cautionary note, stating:

> "We do not make anywhere in the report the statement that there must be an immediate reduction in beds. We believe there have to be planned reductions in beds to go along with the other changes we have supported."

He offered the following warning:

> "It will be essential that adequate transitional funding be provided to ensure that service changes take place in an orderly fashion. The level of such funding will to a large extent dictate the pace of change. Change that is not managed and funded in this way is likely to be chaotic, and will do serious damage to London's health services, and to its medical research and teaching."

Given what Londoners now confront daily in their hospitals, Sir Bernard's remarks were prophetic. There is nothing planned about the random, chaotic and disruptive closures that are now taking place.

Rigorous and systematic research has been carried out on the required level of hospital beds in London. In April this year, Professor Jarman, of St. Mary's hospital medical school, published an article in the *British Medical Journal.* He concluded:

> "Hospital admission rates for acute geriatric services for London residents were very similar to the national values in all age groups."

In inner London, acute services showed an admission rate at 22 per cent. above the average value—or the average rate—for the rest of England.

> "However, the admission rate of inner deprived Londoners was 9 per cent. below that of comparable areas outside London. For psychiatry, admission rates in London roughly equalled those in comparable areas. When special health authorities were excluded"—

SHAs will, incidentally, join the market next April—

> "in 1990-91 there were 4 per cent. more acute plus geriatric beds available per resident in London than in England. Bed provision has been reduced more rapidly in London than nationally. Extrapolating the trend of bed closures forward indicates that beds (all and acute) per resident in London are now at about the national average. Data from the Emergency Bed Service indicate that the pressure on available hospital beds in London has been increasing since 1985."

Information from the Emergency Bed Service, which compels emergency admission to hospital by some means or another when hospitals say that they have no beds and cannot admit seriously ill people, is generally regarded as one of the best tests of the adequacy of hospital bed provision in London. Since 1985, the number of admissions of seriously ill people through the service—people who have had to be "refereed" into hospital—has risen threefold.

According to Professor Jarman,

> "Data regarding bed provision and utilisation for all specialties by London residents do not provide a case for reducing the total hospital bed stock in London at a rate faster than elsewhere. Bed closures should take account of London's relatively poorer social and primary health care circumstances, longer hospital waiting lists, poorer provision of residential homes, and the evidence from the Emergency Bed Service . . . higher average costs in London, some unavoidable, are forcing hospital beds to be closed at a faster rate in London than nationally."

In the light of the research evidence provided by Professor Jarman and his colleagues, and the daily experience of the Emergency Bed Service and London hospitals, I shall be interested to hear how the Minister will continue to sustain the case that London has too many hospital beds—given that waiting lists have lengthened, and the number of people waiting for more than two years for treatment has grown.

Waiting lists in London increased by a staggering 19·3 per cent. between June 1992 and August 1993. Within that average for the four Thames regions, there is a disturbing variation from 30·7 per cent. in North East Thames to 4·2 per cent. in South East Thames, with nearly 27,000 patients waiting more than a year for treatment at August 1993.

London's complex problem is made worse by the fact that six out of 10 hospital beds are occupied by elderly people over 65. The difficult relationship between acute care and community care in London must be understood, especially as two policies are heading for a collision. The loss of capacity to care for elderly people in hospital has not been matched by replacement facilities, or continuing care beds, as they are called, in the community—quite the reverse.

The health service has withdrawn, almost wholesale, from long-term care for the elderly. All that care—or virtually all—is now in the private sector, provided by private nursing and residential care homes. Many of my elderly constituents want to be looked after in the part of London in which they grew up and where they have always lived, but the nursing and residential care homes that they need do not exist in Southwark. For them, going into a residential nursing home means moving to Clacton, Bexhill or Eastbourne, many miles from their families and from what has always been their home. National comparisons shows that London has been specifically disadvantaged in that respect. In the rest of the country, about 12 beds are available for every 1,000 people, whereas in London the figure is little more than nine.

The way in which the Government chose to distribute the community care money last year—the special transitional grant—further disadvantaged London. My constituents lost close to £1 million because the Government chose to place the money where the homes rather than the elderly people and the needs were. That combined formula advantaged the parts of the country with large numbers of residential homes, but disadvantaged areas such as inner London where, for obvious reasons, the number of residential homes is very small. The crisis facing London's hospitals cannot, therefore, be separated from the crisis in community care

A consultant at one of the teaching hospitals told me recently that one needs to be very fit if one is leaving hospital at 85 and living in Southwark, Lewisham, Lambeth or any other part of our deprived inner city. The pressure on beds means that many elderly people are not fit when they leave hospital which is why the readmission rates are so disturbingly high. Elderly people may return to poor accommodation. They may live in poverty on a low and inadequate income, having to make daily choices between keeping warm and having enough to eat, and not have the support of relatives.

At King's yesterday, about 68 beds were occupied by people who were regarded as medically fit, but who were unable to leave the hospital because the community care that they needed was not available. Elderly people are often without the support and care at home which would enable them to cope for very long if they left hospital. They therefore stay in hospital in beds which would otherwise be available for other people and so exacerbate the crisis.

Before the Minister leaps to blame local authorities, let me remind him that the Government cannot follow their ideology and have good, working community care. One of the problems has been the straitjacket placed on local authorities in arranging their community care. They are required to spend about 85 per cent. of the money transferred by central Government in the independent sector, so their freedom to arrange what they regard as the best and most appropriate form of care is fettered by a purely ideological stricture placed on them by central Government.

All the headlines that we see almost daily in central London could have been foreseen. We have a lethal combination of the Tomlinson proposals laced with the rather contradictory recommendations of the specialty reviews and topped up with the internal market. The result is chaos, a chaos that keeps the Secretary of State away from the Dispatch Box and out of Marks and Spencer at times when shoppers would be there to confront her.

Sir Bernard Tomlinson said:

> "It would be quite disastrous to let hospitals simply be destroyed piecemeal by market forces. If you are going to have to remove a hospital it has to be done in a planned way over a considerable period of time."

That was his commentary on the aftermath of the impact of his proposals, the Government's reaction and the specialty reviews, his reaction to the chaos that he predicted when his report was published. It is time to ask whether Ministers listen to the advice that they receive or only to take account of what they want to hear.

The King's Fund also established a commission to examine the future of London hospitals. It was similarly concerned about the chaos that is now ensuing. At the end of October, its chief executive, Robert Maxwell, wrote in a letter to *The Times:*

> "It is now increasingly urgent that ministers announce their main decisions on the London hospitals, in the light of the specialty reviews published in June."

We were promised statements before the end of the year. The written answer that passed for a statement earlier this week scarcely fits the bill.

Robert Maxwell goes on to say that if we are to sort out the problems that have ensued, money must be made available to fund agreed capital and other expenditure, to enable all the changes to happen. He finishes by saying:

> "any business that was undertaking changes on a scale remotely resembling that of the changes that are proposed for the London hospital service would recognise that it simply has to spend more money to bring about the changes and it has to convince its customers and its staff that it knows what it is doing."

This week, the Secretary of State acted by putting her finger in the dyke and stopped University College hospital from going to the wall. In the same breath, however, she announced that Bart's accident and emergency department is to close. The Secretary of State claimed that the statement would bring an end to uncertainty in the health service in that part of London—the statement relating only to north and east London. When will the Secretary of State make a statement in the House of Commons that will end the uncertainty for Londoners throughout London and provide the stability that health services in London so desperately need?

It is interesting that when the Camden and Islington health authority put its purchasing plans in relation to UCH out to public consultation, not a single person replied in support of its proposals.

Let us compare two conflicting situations. When it appeared that the internal market would close UCH down after the threatened withdrawal of contracts by the Camden and Islington health authority, because it said that it could find cheaper treatment elsewhere, Ministers intervened. Contrast that with the situation in Dulwich that faces my constituents and hundreds of constituents of other hon. Members, where the renal unit at King's is threatened by the recommendations of the specialty review, not because it is not to use the Government's terms, "commercially successful", but because it is in the wrong place, according to the cursory appraisal of the renal specialty review.

Staff working in the renal unit were informed of the likely outcome for south London's renal services before the review team had made any visit or taken any evidence. The provisional decision to move the unit to St. George's hospital has been taken, therefore, without what, locally, is felt to be any recognition of the excellent service offered at King's, Dulwich. It is not a line with which the patients of the kidney unit at Dulwich agree. The patients have raised about £1 million for the refurbishment of the kidney unit; they know what an excellent service they receive. They have a sense of security, knowing that the unit provides dialysis as well as transplant where necessary. They are people who are chronically ill, many of whom have moved to be near the hospital. It is their lifeline. The proposal to move the unit tampers with the rawest feelings and anxieties in those patients' lives. Tampered with is what those patients feel. On Monday, I shall go with a deputation of patients and staff to Downing street with their petition, asking the Prime Minister to listen; asking the Prime Minister to be persuaded by the 25,000 signatures asking that the successful renal unit be allowed to remain at King's.

There is a broad consensus about the need to improve health care for Londonders. However, the need to reduce the number of beds further is completely unproven and indeed, as I have already indicated, is refuted by the available systematic evidence. Hon. Members on both sides of the House will accept that there is a crying need for the standard of primary care in London to be improved. Virtually nothing has been achieved in the 11 years since the Aitchison report, which was specifically about standards of primary care in London, was published.

It is not a simple equation, however, that improvements in primary care lead eventually and inexorably to a reduced demand for hospital places. Improved primary and community services would mean that patients who are in King's and other London hospitals waiting for discharge, would be able to leave, but the evidence rather contradicts the declining need for hospital beds; it suggests that better primary care means that people go to their doctors earlier and are treated earlier, and that the demand on hospital services actually increases.

Secondly, we do not know to what extent the particularly deprived conditions in inner London will act as a brake on demands on hospital services. The extent to which the work done in hospitals can be done as safely and effectively in the community remains to be seen.

The impact of new medical technologies is also uncertain, but I hope that the Government will maintain an open mind. I hope that they will look at the evidence, first,

[Ms Tessa Jowell]

that better primary care increases demand instead of reducing it and, secondly, that there is no certainty that the number of beds in London can be reduced further, and especially not reduced in anticipation of those long-heralded improvements in primary care.

There is also evidence, from the purchasing authority in my part of south-east London, that about 30 per cent. of the Tomlinson money that is being made available is being used simply to keep existing services going.

In conclusion, I shall leave some important questions with the Minister. The Government are devoted to the market as their means for distributing health care. The market will always choose the cheapest treatment, but there is no equivalence between the cheapest care and the best care.

What guarantees and monitors will there be of the quality of the contracts that are now being taken up by hospitals outside London which were previously placed with the specialist hospitals? What guarantee will the Minister offer patients, whose care is transferred to those hospitals, that their chances of recovery, their life expectancy and the quality of treatment that they receive will not in any way be compromised as a result of the change?

Is it true that the rate of success of heart bypass operations at Bart's is better than anywhere else? If so, is that successful unit to close? If so, what similar guarantees of excellence will the Minister offer patients whose treatment is transferred elsewhere? What guarantees will the Minister offer to parents whose babies are delivered very prematurely and do not go to a highly specilised neonatal unit, but to a special-care baby unit in their own areas?

Quality of care means people get better. What auditing of quality will Ministers undertake? Are the Government really set on making London better or are they simply set on making London's health service cheaper? Are they really concerned to provide a health service which everyone in London will use or is London's health service to become a service only for the poor and those who have no choice?

I will finish the words of a member of staff in an accident and emergency unit that I visited last night. When she looked at the line of people waiting on trolleys that were touching each other, she said, "I just don't know what I'd do if one of those people was my mother." Are those the kind of standards that the Government believe are fair and proper to apply to the health care of everyone who lives in London and uses London's health service?

10.52 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I congratulate the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell) on raising the subject. In particular, I commend her for her visits to various hospitals yesterday. I should like to comment generally on her points. If she will excuse me, I will consider the possibility of responding to her in writing on some of the specifics. However, I have a few minutes in which to comment on the points that she has raised.

As the hon. Lady is aware, the Tomlinson report is one of many reports that have identified the number of hospitals in London and the number of sites on which acute services are delivered. The Tomlinson report stated that there is, and will continue to be, over capacity in London in many specialties. That is a difficult situation and one which Health Ministers have faced for a long time. However, when the hon. Lady said that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health had a particular mission to close Bart's, she does my right hon. Friend an injustice.

If the hon. Member for Dulwich believes that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State enjoys having to recommend the reduction of acute services in some hospitals and the concentration on to fewer sites, with all the worry and disruption which that would cause potentially—and certainly worry in the short term in many people's minds—the hon. Lady seriously misjudges her.

The problem is very difficult and it must be handled with great care. That is precisely what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is doing. The hon. Lady will be aware that a great deal of time has already elapsed since the publication of the Tomlinson report. We have been extremely careful to assess all the possibilities. Many learned people from London and elsewhere have put together the reviews of different specialties and all the options so that we do not rush into decisions which we will regret later.

The hon. Member for Dulwich referred to accident and emergency units because she has visited them. I am aware that there are problems with some A and E units. I am aware of the current problems with regard to emergency admissions not just in London, but all over the country. For many reasons, including this winter's flu epidemic, emergency admissions have risen sharply and that is placing extreme pressure on A and E units and other hospital departments.

I remind the hon. Member for Dulwich that there are a number of major schemes in London to upgrade A and E departments. The hon. Lady will be aware of the scheme at King's in her constituency. She will also be aware of the £25 million development at the Homerton which involves considerable upgrading of A and E facilities. She will also be aware of proposals—not yet confirmed—to make improvements at the Whittington which she also visited last night. We are aware of the increasing demand and of why, for a whole series of reasons not all of which can be addressed quickly or in the short term, we need better and upgraded A and E facilities in London and elsewhere.

The hon. Member for Dulwich referred to the argument about numbers of beds. That is a long-term view of what will be needed in the years to come in respect of acute beds. While we may argue about different hospitals and numbers at different places, I remind the hon. Lady that there are certain fundamentals that mean that we will need fewer acute beds. Those fundamentals include the fact that developments are being made——

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Sackville: I do not have time to give way if I am to make a sensible response.

Provision is being made outside London for many specialties where previously it was necessary for people to travel to London. An example of that is the very impressive oncology centre in Maidstone. Many local people in the area who would otherwise have been treated in London, will now be treated near their homes. The hon. Lady might like to visit that facility to put the problem in perspective. She might like to talk to the staff there and discover what they are achieving. That facility will have an effect on provision in south-east London.

The increase in day surgery is another enormous factor. The hon. Lady will be aware that day surgery accounts for about 25 per cent. of operations in this country. That figure is heading towards 50 per cent. in America. I have opened many day surgery units around the country over the past year and a half. Day surgery will have an enormous effect on demand for in-patient acute beds.

It is absolutely right that, where possible, people should be treated within a day and then return to their own homes. There is nothing to be gained by unnecessary stays in hospital. There have been enormous advances in the efficient use of theatres and in-patient surgical beds. That is also having an effect on future demand. We must consider a 10 or 20-year period when deciding the real need in future. Therefore, we must take all those trends into account in our current plans.

As the hon. Lady is aware, there has also been a decline in the population of parts of inner London as there has been in most of our inner cities. That must have an effect on hospital provision. As people move out to the suburbs or other areas, they will quite rightly want to be treated close to where they live.

The hon. Lady said that the Government are alone in the view that we must make these changes. We are not. The King's Fund report is very clear and, in many ways, is even more radical than the Tomlinson report in its view of future provision. The main burden of the letter that the hon. Lady read out was that we had to get on and take decisions. The recent announcement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was the first of such announcements which must be made about our response to the Tomlinson inquiry.

Many professionals in London and elsewhere are acutely aware of the enormous subsidy to London health care from the rest of the country. They are aware of how much of the funding of the national health service is spent in London. We have to try to restore the balance to some degree.

Yesterday, an article in a national newspaper said:

> "No one likes shutting hospitals, but 20 reports going back 100 years have documented the surplus supply of hospital beds in London . . . inner London has 70 per cent. more beds than the national average and twice as many consultants. Closures have not kept pace with the falling population . . . yesterday's decision"—

it was made earlier this week—

> "makes sense."

That was not *The Daily Telegraph* or *The Times*—it was certainly not the *Evening Standard*—it was *The Guardian*.

UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs

10.59 am

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Perhaps six weeks ago, Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations with special responsibility for humanitarian affairs, resigned. His resignation became public immediately, although it will not take effect until the end of January 1994. It is a matter of such importance that I believe strongly that it should be marked by a rigorous analysis in this Chamber of the reasons for Mr. Eliasson's resignation, of the genesis of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs itself—a very recent part of the United Nations—and of the way forward, because of the value of the department in helping the neediest of the needy worldwide.

The start of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs was perhaps the Gulf war and the tragedies that lay in its wake, with the uprisings in the north and south of Iraq against the great dictator Saddam Hussein. At a G7 meeting in Houston in May 1991, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs was suggested and set up. Its purpose was to scrutinise the humanitarian work of the agencies of the United Nations, to increase the accountability of those agencies, and to bring transparency of operation to their role.

How was the structure proposed? It was planned that there would be the classic pyramid structure and that the department would have a direction role, that the agencies would, in effect, report to the department, and that the department would direct their work. On the location of the new department, it was suggested that, for policy, it had to be in New York. However, Geneva is the humanitarian capital of the world, so it had to be there as well.

The House quite properly endorsed the creation of the new department. In early-day motion 538 in January 1992, the House welcomed

> "the appointment of a single humanitarian aid co-ordinator by the United Nations who shall have the authority to deal with governments that deny assistance to suffering peoples, and those that use humanitarian relief for political ends".

I am afraid that the wording was just wishful thinking. Indeed, to see the real way in which the department was in fact set up, we need to look at the General Assembly resolution of 30 October 1992, the general overview of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the 47th session agenda item No. 37, the report of the Secretary-General entitled

> "Strengthening of the co-ordination of humanitarian and emergency assistance of the United Nations".

It is an important document, in which the Secretary-General tells us:

> "New demands for emergency humanitarian assistance underline the need to assess the scope of international response and continue to refine the modalities for co-ordinating it. The establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) was designed to strengthen a co-ordinated and coherent system-wide approach."

He goes on to tell us:

> "The new Department was staffed through the redeployment of resources, combining the former Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO) in Geneva with other existing capacities within the United Nations. The Department, both in New York and Geneva, is also supported by seconded staff made available by the World Food Programme . . . by . . . (UNICEF), by the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees . . . and the . . . (UNDP)."

The Secretary-General stated:

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> "The secondment has enabled the Department to benefit from the experiences of these organisations in its day-to-day work, thus enhancing its capacity to coordinate and to achieve a system-wide approach in response to emergency situations."

The Foreign Affairs Select Committee also reported on the DHA. Its report for the Session of 1992-93, ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 23 June 1993, entitled "The Expanding Role of the United Nations and its Implications for United Kingdom Policy", suggests:

> "The old constraints . . . against interference in matters which are "essentially" domestic are no longer accepted. The change is a very recent one and has occurred in response to two very different emergencies: in Somalia and in Iraq after the Gulf War. Decisions to intervene militarily on humanitarian grounds have not been taken according to a clear set of guiding principles, but in response to sudden emergencies. The UN has not so intervened in other humanitarian disasters of perhaps comparable scale—such as that in Sudan."

The report goes on:

> "Better criteria, which are internationally accepted, need to be drawn up to determine the circumstances in which armed intervention for humanitarian purposes is acceptable."

Earlier, the report talks about the need for intervention and about the way in which the United Nations has responded through the formation of the DHA.

On a critical matter, the Foreign Affairs Select Committee made the critical statement:

> "Perhaps the most complex and difficult problem with which the UN is currently grappling is this: under what circumstances is humanitarian intervention by the international community justified?"

The report goes on to state correctly:

> "the number and diversity of humanitarian crises have increased sharply over the past few years and enhanced media coverage has heightened public awareness of the suffering involved and increase expectations of the abilities of governments and of the UN to respond. Not only are there more concurrent crises, they are becoming more complex, with civil conflict inextricably linked with the need for humanitarian assistance . . . Humanitarian intervention does not always . . . involve use of the military . . . It has happened to protect aid convoys . . . distribute food directly . . . to protect areas designated as safe havens or safe areas (as in Iraq and now in Bosnia) and to help rebuild a civil society (as in Somalia)."

Since May 1991, therefore, a new United Nations department has existed in response to the need that a Select Committee discussed and reported on eight or nine months after its inception by the Secretary-General in the General Assembly report. The problems, however, were clear from the very beginning. Indeed, as I read out those statements, it could be seen that they conflicted at once, that the expectations that the creation of the new department brought with it were immediately thrown up in sharp relief against the actual support that the G7 countries and other members of the United Nations gave its new child.

If we look, for example, at the problems of structure, we can see immediately that to have such a new department split up already into two places gave a management problem of large proportions. If we look at the siting of other United Nations humanitarian agencies, we can also see at once that Geneva is undoubtedly the humanitarian capital of the world.

Geneva is home to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Mrs. Ogata, a truly remarkable person, leads UNHCR, with an annual budget of $1·2 billion. Geneva is naturally the site of the International Committee of the Red Cross. It is also home to the Federation of the Red Cross and Red Cross Societies. The World Health Organisation is in Geneva. So is the International Labour Organisation. The World Food Programme, which I have already mentioned, is only down the road in Rome. It is left to the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Development Programme among the major aid agencies of the United Nations to be based in New York.

Therefore, at once it can be seen that there is inter-agency competition, if only for attention. But, of course, competition goes much further than that. Funds are scarce always, even for the best of purposes—humanitarian purposes. Therefore, the budgetary problems needed to be addressed at once if the new department was to be successful. The appropriate budgets were not forthcoming. The DHA was given a very modest budget indeed, and a small number of staff. It has been noted already that those staff were drawn from other agencies.

The underpinning of the funding needed to make the department a success was not thus provided. As the department straddled the globe, or at any rate the Atlantic, core operating budgets were needed and were not forthcoming. The staff of the DHA in Geneva have worked immensely hard in mobilising expenditure funding.

Here I pay a special tribute to Mr. Gerhard Putnam Cramer, who is head of the Geneva office with special responsibility for Iraq. He and his staff mobilised $1 billion for Iraq alone for the United Nations agencies to spend. But that is not funding that belongs to the DHA. It is funding that he and his staff have managed to attract through diligent hard work for the United Nations agencies to spend in Iraq—generally in northern Iraq.

Indeed, the modality of the operating programme under the leadership of Mr. Putnam Cramer is excellent. The operating promgrammes in the field in Iraq alone at the practical level have been exemplary. Daily meetings have been co-ordinated with all the agencies involved in northern Iraq.

Within a short time, the DHA has made its mark in many areas of the world. Programme work has been carried out already and is continuing in the horn of Africa, southern Africa, Somalia, Mozambique, Angola and Luangwa, for example. In addition, thematic issues have been addressed. The department has responsibility for United Nations reaction to natural disasters. It has taken over responsibility for relief co-ordination from the United Nations Disaster Relief Organisation. It has the overriding responsibility for United Nations action in disaster prevention and mitigation, and for de-mining.

What a programme. What a responsibility. Surely carefully designed terms of reference are needed to carry out such a vast programme. Not only does the new department have to attract funding to support itself and for its organisations—the agencies of the United Nations—to spend, but it must offer sensitive support and strong leadership to those agencies. I believe that the true weakness of the United Nations is reflected in the fact that the correct and proper terms of reference for the DHA were not created. The G7 gave birth to the new department, which was a wonderful concept, but did not support it properly.

When the responsibility was given to Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali in the totality of his overall United Nations responsibility, he did not give the DHA full and proper support, either. Thus, the 100 staff in Geneva and the 50 staff in New York who make up the 150 full-time staffing of the DHA, have been left without leadership or proper terms of reference to fulfil their massive and crucial task.

My first conclusion this morning has to be that Mr. Jan Eliasson is the victim of that lack of will and managerial effectiveness within the United Nations. The role of the DHA was not properly defined. Mr. Eliasson, the key architect of resolution 36182 which created the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, has been the victim of a lack of practical support by the leading officials of the United Nations.

In the wake of the Gulf war, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, the special rapporteur for human rights in Iraq, resigned because of the enormous difficulties of trying to affect positively humanitarian matters inside Iraq. Now we have the resignation of Mr. Jan Eliasson, whose task was co-ordination, management and direction and who attempted a hands-on policy to effect the necessary resolution of the conflicts and the reconstruction of human rights in Iraq and other places.

I therefore felt that it was of large importance to discuss this important matter today. I wish to take as a critical example of the need for the DHA, the work that it has carried out in Iraq. I give once more a summary of the background. I take it from the United Nations inter-agency humanitarian programme in Iraq co-operation programme document for 1 April 1993 to 31 March 1994. The background statement says:

> "The United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs has continued to provide coordination of the Humanitarian Programme in Iraq through the Inter-Agency Relief Coordination Unit in Baghdad and the Special Unit for Iraq in Geneva. Since October 1993, IRCU has expanded its role by providing stronger field coordination in the north through field delegates located in Arbil, Dohuk and Suleimaniyah."

Mr. Putnam Cramer, under Mr. Jan Eliasson, gave us the implementation report of 1993, when he laid out for us the ways in which various agencies under his co-ordination had delivered their aid. I commend that work and those two reports to the House.

I have already displayed to the House the difficulties that the new department has faced and the ways in which it has not been strengthened or supported, tasked correctly or supported by proper terms of reference to enable it to fulfil the role that was laid out for it. Perhaps I should turn for a moment to the need for the department to continue, to be properly strengthened and co-ordinated and to have a proper budget. We know that it is always very easy for non-governmental organisations and similar United Nations outgrowths to spring up without proper need.

Indeed, it could be said that, with the resignation of Mr. Eliasson, we should accept that the move of the G7 in May 1991 has failed, and that perhaps the new department is not needed. Perhaps that is why it has essentially failed to attract and gain the support that it says it needs. I think not.

Permit me to spend a few moments considering the need, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Just a few days ago, on 13 December, the European Parliament passed on the nod a resolution on human rights violations by the Iraqi Government against the Iraqi Shi'ites. The draft resolution reads:

> "The European Parliament
>
> Appalled by the findings of Max van der Stoel, the UN Special Rapporteur for Iraq, in his latest rapport, on the continued Attacks on the Marsh Arabs,
>
> Drawing attention to the Special Rapporteur's statements that the Government of Iraq is responsible for continuing indiscriminate shelling of civilian settlements on a large scale, despite the creation of a no fly zone by the coalition powers on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 688,
>
> Drawing attention to the Special Rapporteur's statement that the Iraqi Government by various measures is denying the marsh dwellers access to food and health care,
>
> Drawing attention to the Special Rapporteur's conclusion that the Government of Iraq is responsible for the draining of the marshes and so for the consequent destruction of the traditional ways of life of the indigenous people,
>
> Points out that this drainage is detrimental to the environment of the marshes and has a negative impact on the neighbouring regions,
>
> Points out that the findings of the Rapporteur are in line with the report of Middle East Watch,
>
> Considers this action by the Iraqi authorities a flagrant violation of its international obligations,
>
> Taking into account that due to these actions thousands of Shia's have fled to Iran where they live in refugee camps in extremely poor conditions,
>
> Recalling its previous resolutions on the subject,
>
> Calls upon the Council in the framework of the Common foreign and security policy of the EU to take all necessary steps which might bring an end to these murderous campaigns by the Iraqi Government,
>
> Warns that further delay in bringing these atrocities to a halt might cause an escalation of violence in the region,
>
> Urges the Commission to provide emergency aid to the refugees in Iran and use all possible means to send food and medical supplies to the people in the marsh lands,
>
> Sees as one of the conditions to lift the international boycott against Iraq the fact that all actions against the Marsh People should be stopped,
>
> Requests its President to transmit this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the members of the UN Security Council and the Government of Iraq."

The very fact that that resolution was passed on the nod surely displays the European Community's understanding of the deliberate destruction of the south of Iraq.

I shall now mention the north, and I am indebted to the Kurdish Information Centre in London, which yesterday sent me its new year appeal for action on Kurdistan. The letter reads:

> "Dear Emma Nicholson . . . We are writing to you to request your urgent support in raising attention once again . . . What appears as a peaceful situation to the outside world is far from being so.
>
> The main threat is firstly still posed by the Iraqi Government which maintains a constant military presence just a few kilometres away from most of the main centres of habitation. Attacks are still feared and Saddam's agents keep the people living in suspense by carrying out bomb attacks in public places.
>
> The second threat comes from the Turkish Government's control of the only open border into the Kurdish region, which is the lifeline for all supplies coming in. The Turkish Government is frequently imposing difficult conditions on the Kurdish Administration in exchange for keeping the route open. For example, asking the Kurdish Administration to assist them in their war with their own Kurds, leading to Kurds from Iraq being forced to fight Kurds from Turkey against their will . . . It is very well known that the Turkish Government is no friend of the Kurdish people, as it is destroying Kurdish villages and massacring the people. In Turkey there are no rights for persons who claim Kurdish origin . . . There is the extraordinary difficulty caused by the fact that Kurdistan is still subject to the UN embargo because it is a part of Iraq . . . The Iraqi regime is refusing to allow any electricity to be supplied to the entire governate of Dohuk, where the people have been without power supply since August this year. Although the power is actually generated from the Kurdish region . . . it is routed through government controlled areas. It can be supplied directly by installing local supply stations. This is not costly, but it is currently impossible due to the embargo.".

I must again put on record a fact that I have mentioned to the House for many months. Most international aid for Iraq—most of that aid is for Kurdistan—is routed through

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Baghdad, and 95 per cent. of it is benefiting Baghdad and not the Iraqi people who depend on it. The Iraqi Government profiteers on the exchange rate and a huge amount of money is being lost by the aid agencies, including the UN and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in that way. That is a most important point.

I shall now move from the north to the south, and remind the House of the terrible situation of the Iraqi Shi'ites.

The marshlands of southern Iraq, as a unique habitat, are ceasing to exist. Perhaps within a few weeks, that damage could be irreversible. They have been drained in an exercise that has used civil engineering as a weapon of environmental terrorism. An eco-system that dates back to biblical times will soon cease to exist and the implications will feed through to the ecological systems of Europe and western Asia. The damage to wild life is incalculable—an area larger than the state of New Jersey is being made a quagmire of stinking mud.

Prince Charles has called that

> "an utterly inhuman policy of cultural genocide."

Those were his words in his introduction to the leaflet of the appeal by AMAR, Assisting Marsh Arabs and Refugees, an humanitarian aid agency which I chair, more than a year ago.

I remind the House that Saddam Hussein has diverted almost the entire flow of the Euphrates into a large drainage canal, known as the third river. Earlier this year, the UN human rights commissioner, special investigator Max van der Stoel, stated that two thirds of the water which normally flowed into the marshes had been prevented from doing so. That work has continued since his report. I have visited the area several times since it was written, and 80 or 90 per cent. of the water may now have gone and the people cannot live without water.

I remind the House that the International Wild Fowl and Wetlands Research Bureau believes that the marshlands are the most important wintering site for migrating birds from western Eurasia. The habitat has supported several million birds a year. By the end of this year, and certainly by the beginning of next, it will have disappeared into history.

The effects on the people have been devastating. Perhaps the House recalls that Wilfred Thesiger wrote a wonderful book called "The Marsh Arabs" and introduced the English-reading nations of the world to their way of life. They have been almost wholly destroyed. It is not merely their environment and their habitat that have been destroyed: the marsh Arabs as a people have been destroyed, because, without water, no human being can exist.

Thousands of marsh Arabs and other refugees have fled to Iran. Millions have been killed or imprisoned throughout the south of Iraq, which has suffered continuing bombardment and an increase in assaults of all types, including chemical weapons. The evidence given by myself and others to the United Nations on chemical weapon assaults led to a mission to Iran and the Iraqi marshlands, but it will be some months before we see the results of that.

It is difficult to prove that chemical weapons have been used anywhere. We were slow to accept that they had been used in Kurdistan in 1988 and even slower to recognise that they had been used in Iran in the early 1980s in the Iran-Iraq war. Subsequent conclusions by eminent scientists proved to them that chemical weapons had been used. Events that will come to light in the south of Iraq will prove conclusively that chemical weapons are continually used by Saddam Hussein's forces as normal weapons. Other nations that adhere to the 1925 Geneva convention do not use such weapons in that way.

The plight of the people in southern Iraq has for many years been abominable. Recently, the House was good enough to allow me to stage an exhibition from the AMAR appeal archives of the past two years. We showed photographs of the plight of the people and our most senior doctor, Dr. Al-Hariri came to speak. The exhibition was opened by my noble Friend Baroness Chalker, and the British Government have been generous and kind in enabling the AMAR appeal group to try to support survivors who have entered Iran.

The European Community has been wonderful in helping us to assist those still surviving in the marshes and on the borders. Dr. Al-Hariri, Dr. Mussawi and Dr. Amin, the three most important members of the AMAR appeal medical team in Iran, spoke to us, and I should like to quote from Dr. Al-Hariri's speech:

> "Iraq has suffered a lot under the aggressive regime of Saddam in the last 27 years. We Iraqis will never forget the bitter experience of what happened in Iraq. We have lived through the tragic era of Saddam's rule, we have witnessed the suffering and devastation of the two destructive wars. When we tell about the intimidation and torture that has happened in Iraq, nobody can believe. In Iraq one can be executed for his political or religious belief. Large numbers of people have met the same fate because they have refused to be involved in the past in the two destructive wars. The heart-rending view of manslaughter in our country will never be forgotten. Complete villages have been wiped out from the map in a short time because they said no to Saddam's rule."

What has happened in the marshlands is the most recent and perhaps the most horrible thing of all. Dr. Al-Hariri said:

> "He has violated the environment not only in Iraq . . . all the world witnessed what he did in Kuwait, now in the marshlands against his own people."

What has happened has been a disaster of unparalleled proportions. Dr. Al-Hariri said:

> "What happened in the marsh was really a disaster, an event that caused great harm and damage to the environment and to humanity. Half a million people have had their water turned off. The place in which they have been surviving for more than 6,000 years has been dried out. This will lead to the extinction of a civilisation that has existed almost untouched for centuries. The drying out of water means the end of these people. Saddam will do everything in order to stay in power. He will not hesitate to kill all the Iraqi people if that will allow him to stay in power."

Iraq is now facing destruction and the sanctions affect the poor people because Saddam will not use his power to give them food and medicine. Dr. Al-Hariri says:

> "The intimidation, the artillery, firing at random at villages and people, setting villages and farms on fire, polluting the environment, launching operations of mass arrest and deportation by forces have led his people to flee the area. They have been forced . . . to leave everything behind if they have left alive. They have been forced to leave everything behind, to leave a place and a civilisation that they have lived in for the last 6,000 years. Those new victims of Saddam Hussein came to the border of Iran in a miserable way. They were . . . suffering epidemics of diseases . . . polluted was all that they had to drink. Their survival was only a matter of chance."

I now believe that Saddam Hussein is in serious trouble. United Nations sanctions are biting, the Iraqi dinar has plunged to an historic low, and the butcher of Baghdad has embarked on the slaughter of Takriti kinsmen who underpin the security of his regime. It is surely a measure of the Iraqi dictator's insecurity that, for the first time, he has started to pick on members of his own tribe, one of the country's four sources of power. The others are the army, the Iraqi branch of the Ba'ath party, and the internal security apparatus.

In western countries, people and politicians niggle about the intrusion of the media, but in the context of the destruction of southern Iraq and the marshlands and of the horrors continually perpetrated in the north of Iraq in Kurdistan, I have nothing but praise for members of the press and of television and radio who have consistently tried to do the almost impossible—to bring out the news.

Shyam Bhatia of *The Observer* made an epic and historic journey, risking grave personal suffering and danger in the marshes nearly a year ago. Reporters from *The Sunday Times* have also been consistent in trying to trace stories in a different way. Managing editor Michael Williams has kept his attention focused on this important matter. The BBC has been especially remarkable. Recently, two senior people from its evening news team came with me to southern Iraq and to southern Iran.

However, all our advocacy is not enough, and if we are to help these people in Iraq and other places, we must look to the future of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations and to the major UN agencies. UNICEF has just published a book entitled "The State of the World's Children 1994", which shows that, in recent years, significant progress has been made against some of the major threats to the health and well being of the world's children.

Social goals reflecting the possibility of reducing child malnutrition, disease, disability and illiteracy show that such ills could be drastically reduced by the year 2000, and those goals have been agreed by a majority of the world's political leaders. Experience shows that national progress in health, nutrition and education depends not on economic development alone but on sustained commitment to improve the well-being of the poor.

Despite the great generosity of the European Community, its peoples and its Governments, and the people of other countries, only a small proportion of international aid is devoted to nutrition, primary health care, basic education, safe water supplies and family planning. It is clear that if we concentrated on those important goals, the state of the world's children would vastly improve.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to ponder thoughtfully and carefully on the problems of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. I pay special tribute to Mr. Eliasson, who has made his mark. I ask my hon. Friend to examine some of the difficulties that the department has faced in its first two and a half years—the lack of co-ordination, and in controlling its field operations in Iraq through Baghdad.

Those are tough political issues, but if they can be addressed positively, our Government should be a leader —if not the leader, because of our country's experience —in improving the state of the world's children internationally. Rescuing child and adult victims in Iraq could still be within our grasp.

11.40 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): This is an important subject, but this cannot be said to be a particularly full House. It does not do justice to the seriousness of the issues raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson). It reminds me that, when I began my maiden speech, I found myself addressing three hon. Members. When I ended, only the Speaker and myself were in the Chamber. On this occasion, at least there is an hon. Member on the Labour Front Bench, together with a Whip—my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes)—to hear what must be a brief winding-up speech.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West not just for her speech today but for all her work in drawing attention to humanitarian tragedies that beset the world, and particularly for her work—often at first hand—in drawing world attention to the plight of marsh Arabs in southern iraq.

Unfortunately, we live in a world in which the number and complexity of humanitarian disasters are increasing in scale. We have not only our normal share of natural disasters—drought, famine, earthquakes—but a number of deep-rooted political and unresolved ethnic conflicts, human rights abuses, and so on. They all create vast numbers of refugees and people displaced in their own country.

Money alone cannot solve those problems. They require huge political effort and co-ordination between all the agencies and non-governmental organisations involved. I think sometimes that we ask too much of the United Nations. We expect it to be the world's development authority, foreign affairs Ministry and, in some cases, Ministry of defence. It cannot take on all those tasks across the globe. However, we must do our best at local and international level.

The founding of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs described so well by my hon. Friend was an important initiative. It was established two years ago, largely in response to an initiative by Britain and Germany, and led to United Nations General Assembly resolution 46/182. Despite some disappointments and mistakes made by many people, the Department has been a force for good, and we will certainly not withdraw our support from its concept.

Whoever is appointed to take on the role vacated by Mr. Eliasson will have our support, and I hope that the right man or woman can be found. The job specification is daunting. The appointee must have a knowledge of humanitarian concerns and be a substantial and respected figure on the world stage, and must also be an effective manager of the agencies and financial resources that many Governments are committing to the problem.

The aims of the British Government and of the United Nations can be summed up in the observation that we all want humanitarian aid to be provided quickly, to the right people, and on a cost-effective basis that avoids waste and misappropriation. That last point is important, because if that is not done, humanitarian efforts risk being discredited. Any story of scandal and duplication undermines in the mind of the public the very aims that we are pursuing.

I pay particular tribute to the efforts of my hon. Friend in Iraq, and emphasise her remark that responsibility for the continuing suffering there lies with Saddam Hussein and with no one else.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I draw your attention to what I consider to be an abuse of the procedures of the House in the answering of written questions. I put down a question to a Home Office Minister after the Police Federation, to which I am a parliamentary adviser, received the information that the number of officers in the Metropolitan police area was reduced by more than 400 in the first eight months of this year.

The Home Office replied that it would answer in a letter, which will presumably reach me after the House adjourns for the Christmas recess. Should not the House be provided with such serious information in a written answer in *Hansard*, rather than in a letter?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The content of answers has nothing to do with the Chair.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Has the Chair received any indication from the President of the Board of Trade that a statement will be made this morning on the Stock Exchange announcement just made by British Gas about a a major restructuring that will possibly involve the loss of 20,000 jobs and the elimination of the regional tiers of management of British Gas Scotland and British Gas Wales?

The House has been awaiting a statement from the President of the Board of Trade in response to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry, which has apparently been delayed a number of times—as recently as this week. If British Gas has gone ahead with its restructuring, that would indicate that it knows the content of the President's announcement before the House, or does not know the content but does not care two hoots. May inquiries be made to establish whether there is any vestige of influence left over that powerful, over-mighty company?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair is not aware of any such information, but no doubt the hon. Gentleman's remarks will be noted by the occupants of the Government Front Bench.

Arable Aid

11.47 am

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): I apologise to the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland for delaying his Christmas holiday and mine, but I offer no apology for raising this important subject. The short Adjournment debate on the issue three weeks ago raised more questions than it provided answers, so it is important to examine again a matter that affects the entire Scottish agricultural industry and similar industries.

The Minister must be aware of widespread anger and anxiety at the effect of his Department's attitudes and actions. I have been a Member of Parliament a long time, but I have never experienced lobbying as extensive as that relating to this subject by not only farmers but representatives of all the ancillary industries, who came to the House to express their great concern and request that the Minister change his mind and take appropriate action.

This is not a party political issue. It is an agricultural matter first, as is signified by the presence in the Chamber of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), who supports the agricultural industry's plea to the Minister, and of the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), representing the view of the Labour party. All parties are telling the Minister that something must be done —that he should listen to the industry's arguments and produce action that allows it a level playing field in the European context.

There is genuine and continuing anger about this. It is not good enough for the Minister to say that nothing can be done, that it is all settled and that he is stuck with EC rules and cannot do anything about it, or that the statistics involved in calculating the base area are immutable and unchangeable. That is not good enough, because the industry genuinely feels let down and discriminated against on that issue. It is an issue which simply will not go away. Nor can it be swept under the carpet or ignored by the Government. By its very nature, the base area and the set aside problem will recur year by year and, unless changes are made, will be a cumulative problem and burden on the industry.

The purpose of the debate is to allow the Governnment to explain more fully the basis of their actions and get to the truth regarding the base area situation. I know that the Minister feels that he has been misunderstood and that false statistics have been used. This is his opportunity to get the record straight. What cannot be disputed is that the 5·4 set aside penalty being imposed on the industry will cost the industry dear unless something is done to alleviate the situation.

The industry is concerned about the direct consequences of such a Scottish set aside penalty. More than 20 per cent. of arable land in the main grain-growing areas will be set aside next year despite output having declined by some 20 per cent. this year. If the policy is carried out, I am told that Scottish farm incomes will probably fall by about £20 million as a direct consequence. Producers' net margins could drop by up to 57 per cent. The increased set aside is likely to hit the spring barley crop in particular, reducing production by about 300,000 tonnes. Those are the concerns of the industry and I hope that the Minister will react and provide a solution to them.

I am told that users of Scottish grain, especially maltsters, distillers and oat millers will have to source a sizeable proportion of their requirements outside of Scotland. That is a crazy situation for our industry to be in. The lost acreage will reduce the turnover of Scottish merchants and co-operatives by £33 million, which includes lost sales of £3·5 million in seed, £2·5 million in fertiliser and about £1·4 million in agrochemicals.

Unless it is changed, the consequences of the decision will reverberate throughout the whole of the farming industry and its ancillary industries. For example, the haulage industry reckons that lorry movements will be reduced by about 13,000 trips. That means lost opportunity, lost income and lost job opportunities unless something is done. That is the general picture, but it also applies in individual cases. A farmer in Angus said to me:

> "On this farm it means a loss of income of £5,000 for 1993-94, makes it uneconomical to retain my one employee and involves a 36 per cent. increase in my set-aside area for 1994. This is on a typical 320 acre arable farm"

Both globally and specifically, the measure can be damaging to the industry unless action is taken.

The Government cannot simply wash their hands of that responsibility. Nor can they ignore the genuine anger and fears throughout Scotland's agriculture and ancillary industries. The agriculture industry has a right to expect the Minister to defend its interests when it is facing such financial problems. It now looks for an urgent political response. If action is required in Europe, action must be taken in Europe to defend one of Scotland's fundamental and crucial economic interests.

The Minister has said that the "base areas are correct", and that there is "no discrepancy whatsoever" in the statistics. He is sure that the overshoot is "a real one".

I should like to challenge those assertions, because they have been at the root of the Government's inaction in the face of this crisis situation. The Minister believes the data to be unshakable, but two sets of data were used to calculate the set-aside base area: the June census returns and the set-aside payments made. The base area for Scotland was worked out using actual set-aside payment figures and was not based on the June census returns.

While England is better off by some 11 per cent. using the actual rather than the census figures, Scotland is 140 per cent. worse off. The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department must have known that. Yet as late as November 1993, the Department was using two sets of data, despite the fact that it knew in the summer of 1992 that the base area calculation was to be on 1989-90 and 1991. Yet it made no attempt to reconcile the massive discrepancy involved. In other words, it was a disaster waiting to happen, about which only the Scottish Office knew and about which only the Scottish Office could do something.

The claim has been made that the set-aside figures are higher in Scotland because a few farmers mistakenly included the area that they registered for set-aside and not the area for which they were claiming. Why did the Department not take that up at the time in 1989 and 1990? It is normally a very fastidious and efficient Department. The Minister has enormous expertise available at his disposal within the Department.

If there is a difference of 0·1 hectare in the total submitted on their forms, farmers find that their forms will be sent back to them pronto, yet these enormous global discrepancies are appearing. The census forms clearly paid a part in the present problem. Like many other statistics, agricultural census data are useful in portraying trends, but are less accurate in absolute terms. However, it appears that the Scottish Office was issuing two differing sets of data from different sections of its Agriculture and Fisheries Department.

The census unit figures show a mean average that closely corresponds with the integrated administration and control system, and therefore with the accurate data. The Scottish Office appears to have used actual payment figures to calculate the base area, at a far lower and therefore punitive overshoot level. To my mind, that seems to be the core of the present problem. The Minister, however, has stated that the Scottish Office figures are "absolutely accurate". Yet I have a note from the Scottish Office stating:

> "Set aside: Please note we are currently revising all June census data under this heading for every year it has been collected. We know many farmers have entered incorrect areas when completing their census form. Please disregard any set aside data previously supplied."

It is dated 10 November 1993—only last month—so those are hardly immutable and absolutely accurate figures on which the Minister bases his overshoot case. That view is also confirmed in correspondence that I have received from farmers.

If the Minister believes that those statistics are absolutely reliable can he explain why the total area of agricultural land in Scotland dropped from 5,967,551 hectares in 1986 to 5,364,003 hectares in 1987? That is equivalent to a drop of 11 per cent. According to the June census, the amount of land in agricultural use remains at that lower figure. Why does an area of land the size of Tayside disappear from statistics that are supposed to be immutable and absolutely accurate? I should be interested to know whether common grazing has been taken out of the total.

Perhaps the Minister can also explain why the area devoted to roads, yards and buildings, as recorded in the June census for the years 1982 to 1992, varies from the mean by minus 15 per cent. to plus 25 per cent. Why is such a gigantic variation of 40 per cent. acceptable to the Scottish Office? Roads, yards and buildings do not just materialise and dematerialise, but that is what has happened according to the reliable, immutable statistics on which the Minister has based his case. So far he has said that he will brook no further changes to them.

The doubts about the statistics and their effect on agriculture are grave enough to enable the Minister to argue in Europe about the base area in order to ensure a better deal for our agricultural sector.

The statistics have been used to impose a massive financial penalty on Scottish agriculture. Why did the Scottish Office declare to the European Commission an overshoot of 16 per cent., before it realised that some farms had been wrongly classified as belonging purely to the less-favoured area category? Those farms were split between LFAs and non-LFAs. Surely that problem should have been foreseen when the base figure was being calculated. A glance at the size of the LFA figure should have warned the Scottish Office, because it was far too high, but it used that figure to declare an overshoot of 16 per cent. It then had to rush to negotiate that down to 5·4 per cent. At least that action has established a precedent, because the Scottish Office changed those supposedly immutable, absolutely accurate statistics.

The Scottish Office changed the figures relating to the LFA and non-LFA split, but no allowance was made for

[Mr. Andrew Welsh]

the fact that the percentage area of crop in LFAs could vary from season to season. That is yet another possible variation in the supposedly immutable statistics.

The Minister set a precedent—I am glad that he did so —by using IACS forms in 1993 to adjust retrospectively the LFA and non-LFA split. Given that it is not possible to pinpoint the LFA and non-LFA crop on such split farms, can the Minister confirm that it was only possible to estimate the area of land included in the LFA base area? I am told that it is not possible to calculate that figure accurately. The answer derived must have been a guesstimate because it uses figures which, by their nature, cannot be accurately substantiated.

The Minister was prepared to argue the 16 per cent., overshoot down to 5·4 per cent. on the basis of the figures quoted, but he should go one further. He should follow the example of the Germans and argue to get the set-aside penalty reduced further.

For the purpose of the June census, the split farms were returned as LFAs, but we know that that return has always been false because the estimated number of LFAs is greater than the number that exist. It is on the basis of that miscalculation that Scottish agriculture now faces a swingeing set-aside penalty.

The Minister should consider Scotland in its international context within the European Union. So far only two countries have officially admitted to an overshoot in their base areas—Scotland has admitted a 5·4 per cent. overshoot in non-LFAs and Germany has admitted an overshoot of 9·7 per cent. Germany, however, has had that overshoot reduced to 1 per cent. and is now arguing for a further reduction. Scotland's overshoot was reduced from 16 per cent. to 5·4 per cent. as a result of the figures submitted, but the Scottish Office has now stopped arguing its own corner.

The English figures are due out soon, and it is thought that the original substantial undershoot will be reduced close to the English baseline limit. The Minister should also consider the example of Spain. It had reported an overshoot, but, because of a drought during the three base years on which calculations were based, the Spaniards are sorting that problem out, before their figures are submitted.

If I were at the Cortes and I were a Spanish Member of Parliament, I would find that the Minister would agree and would do something about the matter. If I were a German Member of Parliament, I would find that the Minister would go further and ask for more reductions to the much reduced levels that had been achieved. Fortunately, I am a Scottish Member of Parliament; unfortunately, however, I am arguing with a Minister who appears to be remaining static over the 5·4 per cent. figure.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): The hon. Gentleman may be surprised.

Mr. Welsh: I hope that I shall be surprised and that the Minister will make an appropriate announcement. As I would be the first to criticise his mistakes, I would also be the first to congratulate him if he does make an announcement. It would be the result of calls from representatives of the sector and hon. Members of all parties to reverse a decision that should not have been made in the first place.

The Scottish farmers are asking the Minister to fight on the political front and to reconsider the Scottish figures and, like his European counterparts, to take that political battle to the Commission before penalties are imposed. Scottish cereal growers already have the highest rate of set-aside and the highest reduction of production in Europe. Unless that 5·4 per cent. figure is withdrawn, further excessive penalties will be imposed on the agricultural sector.

In a recent Adjournment debate, the Minister stated that the scheme was entirely voluntary and that farmers do not have to use it and can grow as much as they wish. My reading of his own example of a 600-acre farm is that farmers would be 56 per cent. worse off in 1994 and 77 per cent. worse off in 1995 if they stayed out of the scheme. Far from the Minister's claim that the income of a 600-acre farm would increase by 17 per cent. in 1994, I am informed that farmers would face reductions in profitability of between 28 and 56 per cent. next year and between 51 and 77 per cent. in 1995. Farmers' returns will remain reasonably static, as the scheme intends, only if there is no penal set-aside imposed on the sector.

The Minister said that English farmers are growing malting barley over and above feed barley, which is, he said:

"perhaps being grown ineffectively in Scotland."—[*Official Report*, 24 November 1993; Vol. 233, c. 560.]

Such comments only make Scottish arable farmers feel that they do not have the support of the Minister in charge of agriculture. If the Minister thinks about that comment, which was perhaps made in the heat of the debate, he may wish to withdraw it or to clarify it further.

The farmers are facing an acute situation. Who is to blame? The Government say that it is not them and that they gave a clear warning over a year ago on overshoot penalties. The Minister said that the farmers are to blame and that Scottish farmers were:

"No doubt following what their college advisors or other experts told them."

He said that the farmers have tried to maximise their share of £80 million taxpayers' support available to them on a voluntarily scheme. The Minister is accusing Scottish farmers of greed and Scottish colleges and advisers of offering bad advice. I find that incredible. The Minister is also attacking his own Scottish Office officials who worked hard to advise farmers at meetings throughout Scotland about the new scheme.

The whole exercise has been Treasury driven. The Minister was keen to point out the total amount of cash that has been provided for the agriculture sector and that the £20 million loss should be put in that context. He should also acknowledge that politicians created the set-aside provision as a mechanism to reduce cereal production and to stabilise incomes through a period of transition. Politicians created the system in Europe to ease dislocation during that period of transition. If that system is the bedrock of change in other parts of Europe, why single out Scotland for extra financial punishment? Is the measure Treasury-driven rather than agriculture-driven? There must be more than a suspicion that it is. Compensation given by Europe is designed, as the Minister will know because of his background, to redress the balance against prices falling to world levels. Set-aside payments leading to lower production and oil seed payments replacing crushing subsidy paid to crushers are all measures introduced to help the industry through a period of transition.

I must refer the Minister to the heart of the matter, which is the base area calculation. I believe that the Council of Ministers met at 6.50 this morning, and that the base area of the new Länder in Germany is to be increased by 181,000 hectares to take account of a statistical error. I hope that the Minister will continue to ensure that Scotland is treated in a similar fashion. Let him join his German colleagues who succeeded in securing a reduction from 9 to 1 per cent. and who have now gone further, securing that extra concession from the Commission.

I believe that penalties that would otherwise apply in Scotland because of the overshoot in the base area will be reduced in line with the procedure already used for the new German Länder—namely, the progressive application of the levy. Will the Minister clarify that? If the penalties are reduced in line with the arrangements for the new Länder, it will be on a reducing scale. But there will be overshoot next year and, although it may be less, a penalty on overshoot remains.

Can the Minister clarify whether the new move through the EC Commission applies to the base area or purely to the payments? If it applies to the payments alone, it is a palliative and the problems will continue, because it is the base area calculation which lies at the heart of the difficulties facing the industry and which will cumulatively impose a penalty on it in coming years. Is the derogation for both payments and set-aside or for payments alone? If it is for payments alone, the root base area problem will not be solved.

If the base area difficulty remains, will the Minister look again at base area size to ensure that it truly reflects the reality of Scottish agriculture? Unless that is done, the problems will return to haunt us year after year, and the problems and anxieties of the past traumatic months will remain. Agriculture is too important to Scotland and the Scottish economy to be treated in this way. I ask the Minister to give our industry the sort of level playing field that his European counterparts have fought to secure for their industries. I hope that he will clarify the base area issue and tackle that problem, which lies at the heart of the difficulties that the industry faces.

12.11 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I thank the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) for allowing me a couple of minutes. I doubt whether I have ever known a time when Scottish farmers were so upset. I am deeply concerned at the breakdown in communications between agriculture and the Department. That needs to be mended. It is important that the good relations enjoyed in the past continue.

My views on Europe are well known to the House. We are supposed to be at the heart of Europe. I want to be sure that farmers in Scotland cannot point the finger at the Government and say, "We are not at the heart of Europe because we are not being treated in the same way as everyone else."

12.12 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I congratulate the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) on his contribution to the debate. Let me also remind the House that my hon. Friends the Members for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) and for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) have been closely involved in the debate generally and share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the overshoot in Scottish agricultural payments.

The points about the German treatment were well made. I understand that the penalty has been reduced to about 10 per cent. of what was originally suggested. Can the Minister say just how the Germans have managed to achieve that and whether the British Government can secure a similar deal for our producers?

My second point is that Opposition Members have always had grave doubts about the whole principle of the set-aside programme. Is it not disgraceful that Scottish farmers are being prevented from meeting a demand for barley? I thought that the whole point of the reform of agriculture was that we should match supply to demand, not that we should restrict Scottish producers from providing cereals for which there is a demand and so support jobs in the ancillary industries.

12.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): I am grateful to those hon. Members who have participated in this important debate. They made valid points.

Just a quickie to the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh): he quoted a sentence about "ineffectively producing barley". I must say that I winced at that when I read it the next morning. Something must have happened in *Hansard*. I certainly did not say that and, if I did, I did not mean it.

I welcome the debate because it gives me a further opportunity to answer various points that have been made in the press over the past few weeks. It is essential that farmers should not be misled and should know the true position about the overshoot that has occurred. I can announce good news from this week's Agriculture Council in Brussels, which finished earlier this morning.

The issue is detailed and complex. A good deal of misleading material has been circulating, hence my public rebuttal last week of the claims that my Department's figures were inaccurate. The statistical position has not changed, in essence, since we last discussed the matter in the House.

The overshoot is a real one. When we brought in the CAP reform package in 1992 it was a major United Kingdom victory—a point acknowledged by the National Farmers Union of Scotland at the time. We all have our views on set-aside. I have never been an enthusiast because I do not like to see agricultural land lying fallow or with a poor level of husbandry. I do not think that it is a good principle, but it is there and it is bringing a huge amount of money into agriculture.

The agreement was that the base arable area would be the average of the last three years before the CAP deal was struck. There was no discretion about which three years to use. Farmers had to use the three previous years, as laid down by the regulation. There was a discretion to divide Scotland into two base areas, specifically to allow our large high-yielding specialist arable farmers to benefit from the higher rate of payments available to them under the scheme. We did this with the agreement of the union, which was enthusiastic about it.

The Scottish base areas are correct; there is no discrepancy in the statistics. I specifically emphasise that it was correct, and a formal requirement under the EEC rules,

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to include in the base area the land that farmers actually set aside in the base years, and not the land that they might have thought about setting aside at one time or other. There is a considerable difference between the two.

The failure to realise this has contributed to much of the confusion within the industry. For example, some 6,000 farmers registered an interest in the five-year set-aside scheme whereas only 780 have entered the scheme. I once again give a categorical assurance that the figures used in my Department in relation to overshoot are accurate. Officials take great care and expend considerable efforts in their statistical work. It is a matter of regret that others have misunderstood or misinterpreted them. People did not choose to question the figures that were used to defeat the MacSharry proposals last year.

Mr. Welsh: Will the Minister give way?

Sir Hector Monro: No, I will press on because I have something important to say.

We do not believe that it would serve any useful purpose to repeat all that I said during the previous debate about the LFA—non-LFA split, but I must stress that it was with the NFU's agreement and encouragement that the Government secured that split so that the grain-growing areas of the non-LFA would receive more grant to reflect their higher yields than grain growers in the LFA region.

It is important to reiterate that the compensation under the scheme is substantially in excess of that required to overcome any fall in prices that may have occured. Compensation rates under the scheme are very generous, and it is not surprising if individual producers have claimed every possible hectare in their IACS forms, as it is their right to do. It is wrong for those producers, and others, to try to discredit the base area figures because of the collective result of the individual actions of some farmers. We must face up to what has occurred. Over a year ago, my Department gave a clear warning about the penalty for any overshoot over base area.

Participation in the scheme is entirely voluntary. Farmers are not obliged to join; they may sell as much arable crops outwith the scheme as they wish without setting aside land. If farmers do apply, there is no obligation on them to do so on all their arable land. They can be in the scheme and still grow grain over and above what they have applied for in terms of compensation. They are, however, collectively responsible for their individual actions. Those are, quite simply, the rules of the scheme.

Compensation rates will rise substantially in 1994. The increase will be combined with other increased payments to Scottish farmers so that the total direct agricultural support available in 1993-94 is estimated at some £300 million, an increase of almost 60 per cent. on this year's support of £188 million. Against that background, it is not credible to talk—as many have—about a spiral decline in the rural economy as a result of the overshoot.

Today, the Ministry is starting to issue payments to farmers under the scheme. A total of £64 million will be disbursed among 9,000 farmers. By the end of March next year, some £93 million will have been paid under the scheme. That is a huge sum in anyone's book. It should be remembered that the farmers did not have that £93 million last year; it is new money. The scheme is voluntary, and is there to help farmers withstand any fall in the grain price. I know that we have had a frightful harvest, but, by and large, the fall has not been substantial.

As the hon. Member for Angus, East explained the Spanish position very clearly, I shall not explain it again; nor shall I say any more about Brussels. Let me deal with a more important point. The hon. Gentleman did not give Ministers much credit for beavering away fiendishly over recent weeks to try to rectify the position resulting from the overshoot. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has been doing superb work in Brussels over the past few days, and has come up with a very satisfactory solution this morning. I give her great credit for what she has achieved. She will add to what I have said about set-aside—and, indeed, the whole issue —in a written answer later this afternoon.

Changes in the rules have been agreed specifically to alleviate the penalties that have applied in Scotland. Both the cut in hectare payments this year and the uncompensated set-aside penalty next year will be very much reduced. The arrangements are expected to be comparable to those relating to the German Länder. Those arrangements ensure that only 10 per cent. of the penalties due for the 1993 overshoot will be applied. If there is another overshoot in 1994, only 20 per cent. of the new penalty will be applied, and only 50 per cent. will apply in the event of an overshoot in a future year. The full penalty will apply only from 1996 onwards.

"Ten per cent." means 10 per cent. of 5·4: the penalty will be 0·5 per cent. The uncompensated set-aside in 1994 will be reduced from 23,000 hectares to around 2,300—a relatively small percentage in terms of overshoot. I stress that if we had the same overshoot in 1994—and we really must try to ensure that that does not happen—the figure would be 20 per cent. of 5·4: that is, 1 per cent. That represents a substantial improvement in the position of farmers in Scotland. If the 1994 overshoot were 23,000 hectares, the uncompensated set-aside in 1995 would be reduced to 4,600. All in all, that is a spectacular improvement in the position that farmers have got themselves into this year.

Mr. Welsh: Does that derogation apply to both set-aside and payments, or only to payments? I am sure that all farmers will welcome this respite, but if it does not apply to the base area the problem will recur.

Sir Hector Monro: I hope that I have already explained that the payment this year will be 0·5 per cent.—10 per cent. of 5·4—while the uncompensated set-aside will be reduced from 23,000 hectares to 2,300. That is a very small amount, when it is spread over the whole of the non-LFA area. It is an important victory for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and it has been warmly supported by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, both of whom have been beavering away in Europe to achieve a satisfactory solution. However, as Scottish farmers, we must understand that we must not overshoot again because, as has been proved, the problem builds up and will prove detrimental to the overall payments.

I in no way underestimate the large sums coming into Scottish agriculture this year as a result of the scheme. It was wrong of the industry, the millers and others to say that £20 million would be lost to the rural economy when I am putting £93 million into it. I do not understand how the hon. Member for Angus, East came up with the astonishing equation that the rural economy will be £20 million worse off when £93 million of absolutely new money is entering the Scottish agricultural scene.

The new scheme is extremely satisfactory for Scottish farmers and it is something which they should greet with open hands—I am sure that they will welcome the cheques that are already being sent out this week. I hope that farmers will realise that the change means that we shall have to continue to make the payments that were in the pipeline earlier in the week but that the additional money will be sent to them as soon as we can carry out the necessary administrative work.

Bearing in mind that the compensation rates will rise in 1994 and that there have been other increases in payments to Scottish farmers, the total direct agricultural support available in 1993-94 is estimated to be some £300 million, an increase of 60 per cent. on this year's support of £188 million. That makes it one of the best deals that the Scottish farming has had for many a day. That is true not only for the grain and arable sector but for the livestock sector, where payments have substantially increased and will overtake the income lost because of the reduction in the hill compensatory allowance. The extension of the suckler cow payment will mean that the same will happen for cattle.

We hope that with the continuing high level of the annual sheep premium, the farming community will realise that it is being well looked after by the Government, particularly in the less-favoured areas and hill areas. Of course, in the highlands and islands a special additional payment is also being made this year, so I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) is here.

Mr. Bill Walker: My hon. Friend's comments will have done much to restore confidence and faith and to allay the concerns that brought me here this morning. I congratulate him and his colleagues on what they have achieved.

Sir Hector Monro: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. We have made a significant announcement today, which shows that we have been doing all that we possibly could to alleviate the serious problem of overshoot. The position has now been clarified and the payments will go ahead, but I must issue a warning.

The Government want to help farming and ensure that the farming community receives the greatest possible income because of all the hazards of rural life. In exchange, however, we must ask farmers to try not to overshoot in the coming year. They will perhaps find ways of setting aside other areas of land, thereby not reducing the area of land under crop, especially grain. No one grows better malting barley than we do in Scotland and I do not want the quantity to be reduced. We want to help our distilleries further—they have already been helped by the general agreement on tariffs and trade and the Chancellor. We want to give the Scotch whisky industry the very best quality malt so that it can provide the best drink available anywhere in the world.

All in all, we are going away from our Christmas recess feeling that a major problem has been resolved, and that farmers can enjoy their cheques and use them—as I know they will have to—to maintain the quality of their output and the environmental advantages of living in Scotland. I hope that they feel that the Government have worked very hard to resolve the problem and that that is now satisfactorily resolved.

Royal Assent

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Act:

CONSOLIDATED FUND (NO. 3) ACT 1993.

Community Care

12.30 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Policies for the care of the mentally ill were far too restricted in the 1940s and the 1950s. Many people who should have been allowed to stay in the community were incarcerated in asylums. I believe that the pendulum has swung too far in the other direction. The entire basis of our policy is predicated on the assumption that the mentally ill are sufficiently mentally well to take rational decisions about their treatment. That paradox is compounded by the all-too-frequent reluctance of psychiatrists to section patients.

I shall refer to two letters that were sent to me by constituents. In one, a constituent said that her son had been released from prison where he spent four months as a result of violent behaviour. He was then sectioned by a judge to stay in Friern hospital for up to six months. Two days after he had arrived at Friern hospital, he telephoned his mother and said that he had been told words to the effect that he was well enough to leave. It was only as a result of the mother ringing up the hospital and imploring its staff to keep her son there that a meeting was arranged which she attended and it was agreed that he could stay in hospital somewhat longer.

That is an example of a judge sectioning someone to stay in hospital for up to six months and the hospital saying after two days, "You are well enough to leave". On closer examination, it was obvious that the boy was not well enough to leave and that he should stay in hospital.

A neighbour who lives just up the road from me in Hendon has had great problems with his sister. He wrote earlier this year that his sister had been arrested at the end of last year after a number of incidents. As a result, she was sectioned and taken into Napsbury hospital and detained for two weeks. She behaved herself in there, but refused any treatment and was released. The family was most concerned that that could happen and a meeting was arranged with her social worker. The other members of the family were invited to attend the meeting, which took place at Edgware general hospital. When they arrived, however, they were told that the sister and her husband had refused to attend. The meeting served only to convince my constituent that the social workers are just "not of this planet" and that the whole system needs reforming, for the main reason that, as he says,

> "a human being is living a life of anguish and torment when there is a possibility that with treatment her condition could be improved."

As my constituent continues—and no one could disagree —he finds it

> "incomprehensible that a person who is known to be mentally unbalanced is asked to decide if she wishes to receive treatment or not."

He ends the letter:

> "We can only cling to the hope that the present law will be reformed sooner rather than later."

I shall give another example of the reluctance of psychiatrists to section patients who need treatment in mental homes but who may not be willing to take it. A constituent of mine is convinced that the most gentle right hon. colleague of ours, my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson), is trying to poison her. One weekend there were 19 messages on my answerphone saying, "Sir Roddy"—as she calls him—"is trying to get me." I can think of no Member of this House who is less likely to poison a constituent than my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North.

I can think of no reason why my right hon. Friend should decide to move to a west Hendon council estate to poison one of my constituents. However, that poor lady suffers from that particular delusion and nothing is being done to help her. I have written letters to doctors and others, but they have not been dealt with satisfactorily.

That example underlines my point that all too often when a psychiatrist has to decide whether to err on the side of individual freedom or sectioning a patient, he will nearly always say, "Let him stay in the community as that is his freedom and right." At the end of the day, that benefits no one.

I want to underline that point by referring to a case in respect of which I attended the funeral of a 24-year-old constituent last summer. There is nothing unusual in Members of Parliament attending the funerals of their constituents. However, this occasion was particularly poignant because it was the funeral of a 24-year-old schizophrenic who had been receiving care in the community and who had committed suicide.

That young man had once been a lively, artistic and friendly lad who had never played a mean trick on anyone. However, he is alive no more. The occasion was particularly poignant because that boy's mother had warned the psychiatrists for many years that they were not giving that boy the right kind of treatment.

I have a file that deals with that case. The first letter on the file dates back to 29 November 1989 when a meeting took place between the psychiatrists and the boy's mother. The psychiatrists wrote back saying:

> "Following our last meeting with you and David and Diana, I thought that it would be helpful to clarify the agreements that we reached on that occasion. We are aware that you all feel that Mark is suffering from a mental illness sufficient to warrant his detention in hospital under the Mental Health Act since he is unwilling to come into hospital voluntarily and that so far on the occasions when he has been assessed by our crisis team, their assessments have not concurred with yours."

The mother battled on for another four years to try to secure the treatment that she felt was suitable and satisfactory for her son. The psychiatrists always said, "No, you don't understand. We are the experts. You are just the mother." However, at the end of the day, the mother understood her son better than they did. That poor boy finally committed suicide by jumping off a seven-storey building. It seems to me that we should listen more to the relatives on those occasions than we sometimes do.

When Ben Silcock was mauled by a lion, the problems of schizophrenics momentarily became headline news. However, I believe that there is little doubt that mental health has become the Cinderella of the health service. What is even worse is that the whole policy has become far too optimistic.

Care in the community sounds wonderful, but it ignores the wishes of relatives and basic reality. The reality is that many patients and schizophrenics refuse to take their medication when they are released from prison or hospital. Public opinion may concentrate on the 32 murders committed by schizophrenics who were enjoying care in the community. However, those deaths—all of which are regrettable and, more importantly, all of which were avoidable—are but the tip of a much larger iceberg.

Since I was first elected to the House, I have had several meetings with my local branch of the Schizophrenia Fellowship. The stories it tells are uniformly horrific. I will always remember a mother telling me that her daughter was sleeping on a park bench somewhere in London. She did not know which park and still less which bench. It is one of the ironies of care in the community that many of those who sleep rough in London are discharged mental patients.

Do we really enhance the quality of their lives by saying, "No, we will not give you care in an institution, but you can sleep rough on the embankment"?

One hears stories of a vicious circle—patients failing to take their medication and often becoming violent. All too often, those who are released into care in the community end up receiving institutional care in prison. They suffer unnecessarily; so, too, do their relatives, who feel powerless to influence psychiatrists and policy makers, and so, too do many innocent third parties.

On one occasion, I received a delegation from residents of a block of council flats in my constituency. I said, "What is your problem?" I wondered what Barnet council had done to annoy them. They said, "It's Mr. Campbell." I said, "What's Mr. Campbell done to annoy you?" They said, "Well, he was released from Napsbury." I said, "Yes, what else?" They said, "He has a hobby. It is to play his hi-fi system for 12 hours a day, starting at 8 pm and finishing at 8 am," rather like the sittings of the House this week, but it was quite unsocial for those who had to do a day's work after having their night disturbed by that gentleman.

The suicide case to which I referred is not isolated. Some of the others who attended that funeral told me that, in north-west London, five or six people who had received care in the community had committed suicide. The Boyd report said that, in one year, 107 discharged psychiatric patients had committed suicide. Each week, about three people die either by suicide or are murdered by schizophrenics because care in the community has failed them and failed the community.

It is not only in Britain that difficulty has been experienced in persuading schizophrenics to take their medication. In Canada, for example, social security benefits are now paid only to those who are still taking their medication. Although that policy was originally opposed on civil liberty grounds, it is seen to be effective and it could be tried here.

There needs to be a closer working relationship between psychiatrists and relatives. The mother of my deceased constituent said of the psychiatrist, "If only he had listened to me." Many of those whom I meet are critical of psychiatrists' attitudes to them, the parents, and those who know the victims of schizophrenia.

In London, patients have frequently been released, despite an adequate number of psychiatric beds elsewhere in London which could take them. Despite the reluctance of individuals to take drugs when they are released into the community, they are still released into the community. One cannot blame individuals for refusing to take medication —it is not particularly pleasant. When we were children, we were told that the nastiest medicine was the most effective, but that did not make us more willing to take it, whatever else our mothers might have said and however well they might have tried to sweeten the pill.

If a patient is told, "You can go into the community, but carry on taking the medicine," he must be tempted to say to himself, "They have said that I can go into the community, so I must now be all right; I do not need to take the medication." We then have the vicious circle of individuals refusing to take medication, becoming violent and then indulging in antisocial behaviour, ending with their being institutionalised, not in hospitals but in prisons.

We must remember the impact of the release of individuals not only on themselves but on others. We must consider the impact on relatives. They are frequently devastated when they see the poor quality of life that their loved ones have outside hospital. We must remember victims who are murdered, assaulted, attacked or raped when individuals are cared for in the community.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health is widely recognised as a humane Minister and someone who is socially concerned. I should like to ask her and my hon. Friend the Minister who will reply to the debate to look again at the policy that has caused heartache to so many and to look again at the availability of psychiatric beds in London before deciding to close our other hospitals or to encourage psychiatrists to release people into the community.

We must also remember the potential victims and try to stop them becoming victims when people who should not be are released. Only a few thousand people need to be treated in institutions rather than in the community. It is not a major problem in terms of numbers, but it can be a major problem if one is the patient, the patient's relative or a potential victim of someone who is not taking his medication.

Individuals who suffer from mental illness are just as deserving of care in hospital as victims of other illnesses. In days gone by, there was no disgrace in being sent to a fever hospital because one suffered from fevers. Today, there should be no disgrace in being in an asylum if one suffers from an illness which needs to be treated there. It is much better that such individuals are treated in the appropriate place rather than sent into the community, where the care may well be inappropriate to their illness and may cause them to do things that they later regret, and which their relatives and their victims regret.

12.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on securing time today to debate the important topic of community care and the mentally ill. I think that my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) will read the proceedings with some interest, if not some astonishment.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South has close links with several voluntary organisations working in mental illness. He takes a keen interest in matters that affect mentally ill people. I pay tribute to his hard work on behalf of that vulnerable group in our society. I know that he is a keen supporter of the National Schizophrenia Fellowship. The NSF does much valuable work to promote the interests of people with schizophrenia. That is why we are supporting it to the tune of more than £170,000 this year.

My hon. Friend expressed several concerns about the provision of services. I am pleased to be able to respond and say how we are taking forward care in the community for the mentally ill. I begin by reminding the House of the size of the agenda before us. About one person in 10 suffers

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from some form of mental illness in the course of a year. Mental illness is as common as heart disease and three times more common as cancer. For example, about seven people per 1,000 of the population will suffer from schizophrenia at some point in their life. Currently, it affects an estimated quarter of a million people.

Our policy is to encourage the development of locally based health and social services to meet the needs of people of all ages who suffer from mental illness. The aim is to provide a range of services that are local, comprehensive and sensible. The principal components of such a service must be effective assessment of need, community mental health teams supporting mentally ill people in their home, effective links with primary care services, an adequate range of day care services, adequate short and long-term hospital provision and an adequate range of health authority and local authority respite services.

This policy can be delivered successfully only by health authorities and local authorities working together and in co-operation with the relevant voluntary organisations and the private sector to provide a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary range of services, treatment and care. There is no doubt that our policy of providing care in the community enjoys widespread support, which is borne out by public attitude surveys. However, I recognise and understand the concern about the level and range of services being provided. That is why we set up the mental health task force. Its remit is to help unlock resources from the old, long-stay institutions and to help build up a balanced range of local services, based on best practice. That should meet my hon. Friend's request about places being available before hospitals are closed.

My hon. Friend also referred to rough sleepers and mental illness. He is right that very often many people who sleep rough suffer from some degree of mental illness. However, surveys of such people show that they have never been in touch with the psychiatric services. They have not been under their care and then returned to the community. He also mentioned some suggestions on conditions for benefits based on the experience in Canada. I, too, have visited Canada and the United States to look at some of their schemes. The one that he highlighted would be a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, should it be decided that conditions be attached to benefit. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend will see and hear what my hon. Friend has said.

We are taking several initiatives to help provide a better range of services and those include the mental illness specific grant and the care programme approach.

The grant is paid to local authorities to help bring about a significant improvement in the social care provided to people with mental illness. It has been widely welcomed by local authorities and has proved a great success, stimulating more than 800 projects and bringing help to about 64,000 people. Since we started the grant two years ago, we have increased it by 47 per cent. in real terms and this year it stands at £34·4 million, supporting total spending of £48·4 million.

We introduced the care programme approach in April 1991 and it is intended to cover all patients being considered for discharge from mental illness hospitals and all new patients accepted by the specialist psychiatric services. The needs of each patient for continuing health and social care and for accommodation should be systematically assessed and effective systems should be put in place to ensure that agreed health and, where necessary, social care services are provided to those patients who can be treated in the community. Explicit, individually tailored care programmes are drawn up and a key worker is identified to keep in close touch with the patient and to ensure that the agreed package of health and social care is being delivered.

We now intend to strengthen that system. In particular, we want to deal urgently with the problem presented by a very small number of patients who, as my hon. Friend said, slip through the net of community care. On 12 August, we announced a 10-point plan to reinforce the provision of community care for mentally ill people. That plan very much takes into account the sort of difficulties and the occasional tragic cases that my hon. Friend mentioned.

That comprehensive package of measures, reinforced by stronger legal powers, includes a new power of supervised discharge. That was discussed in depth in the report that we published of the Department of Health review of the legal powers and of the care of mentally ill people, on which we are consulting.

The idea is to provide a legislative framework to enable carers to give greater support to that small minority of especially vulnerable patients. Those are the people whose condition can deteriorate, especially if they fail to take their medication as my hon. Friend said, so that they present a risk either to themselves or to others. We want patients to be clear about what their treatment in the community involves and their care programmes will be carefully agreed with them before they are discharged. A failure to comply with the conditions would lead to an immediate review of the case and recall to hospital, if appropriate.

The other measures announced in our 10-point plan are intended to ensure that that happens. They include clarification of existing powers under the Mental Health Act 1983, attention to the special demands on the mental health services in London to which my hon. Friend referred, and a review of the clinical standards of care for people with schizophrenia. We shortly aim to issue new guidance on the discharge of psychiatric patients, and we are moving ahead with arrangements for a national conference to establish an agreed approach to the training of key workers.

The new version of the code of practice that has been approved by Parliament emphasises the criteria for admission to hospital under the Act. In addition, we are discussing with the Royal College of Psychiatrists a possible training pack for section 12 doctors who are approved under the 1983 Act as having special experience in the diagnosis or treatment of mental disorder. As part of that, we shall consider whether the material might be used for training social workers in their responsibilities under the Act.

I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the code of practice, which makes it clear that people can be taken to hospital for assessment should their health be at risk or if they are a potential safety risk to themselves or to anybody else. Perhaps that has not always been understood in the past, but it is made clear in the new code of practice and I hope that that will be helpful.

The best safeguards for patients and the public are still professional judgment, co-operation between services and a proper understanding of the powers that are available under the Act and the limits that it imposes. It is just over a year since the Government's public health strategy, "The Health of the Nation" was published. As the House knows, the White Paper set targets for improvements in health and reductions in morbidity. It is significant that mental illness, which has often received insufficient attention in the past, was chosen as one of the five key areas. Reducing suicide is the other side of the coin of improving the health and treatment of people with mental illness.

My hon. Friend spoke about a tragic case and I am determined to do everything possible to reduce the rate of suicide. As he knows, the targets in "The Health of the Nation" are for the overall rate of suicide and the specific rate in the case of people who have some form of mental illness.

We also seek to improve primary care for the mentally ill. General practitioners come into contact with, and are responsible for treating, the bulk of those with psychiatric disorders. My Department is funding the work of the senior mental health fellow in general practice so as to cascade knowledge and skills to GP tutors and course organisers, and it supports the "Defeat depression" campaign being run by the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the Royal College of General Practitioners.

Adequate resources are important and the Government are firmly committed to improving services for the mentally ill. That is demonstrated by the fact that, including secure provision, about £2 billion is being spent this year on mental illness. That figure, although impressive, does not tell the whole story, because it does not show the 37 per cent. increase in real-terms in gross expenditure on hospital and community health services since 1979, and a real terms increase of 86 per cent. in gross expenditure on local authority social services.

Those figures clearly demonstrate that the Government are committed to their policies for the mentally ill. However, the Government can provide only the framework and guidelines for policy. It is up to local health and social services departments to use and develop those as they assess and seek to meet local needs in mental health. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for initiating the debate and for the measured way in which he put his case.

I am grateful to the many people working in the professions and voluntary organisations, who do so much for mentally ill people. I am grateful also for the opportunity to respond to my hon. Friend. I share his determination that mentally ill people should receive the right blend of high-quality treatment and care.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order.

Cyprus

12.59 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): Cyprus is often debated by the House and we would all say rightly so. It is a member of the Commonwealth, and the United Kingdom is one of the island's guarantor powers. Nineteen years after the brutal invasion by the Turkish army that divided the island, thousands of Turkish troops are still there and thousands more settlers have been brought from mainland Turkey. Both actions were and remain a scandalous infringement of the rights of the democratic republic of Cyprus and its people.

I welcome the presence in the Chamber of my hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) and the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend), who have loyally been committed to finding an honourable and just solution to the tragedy that has befallen Cyprus since the Turkish invasion. We have always made it clear that we seek a settlement that ensures the rights of both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities.

There have been many hopes of such a settlement over the years, but time and again Mr. Denktash and Ankara have rejected any attempt to reach one. One has only to read the reports of the United Nations Secretary-General to know who is clearly to blame for that lack of progress.

After 19 years, can progress be reported? After all the discussions, is it possible to say, "Progress has been slow in some respects, but here is an example of the commitment of Mr. Denktash and Ankara"? The purpose of this debate is to learn Government thinking, the actions that they think should or need to be taken to restart talks, and what they think should be on the agenda. Are the Government in discussions with the United Nations Secretary-General? If so, what is the subject of that discussion?

The United Kingdom is not only a guarantor power but a member of the United Nations Security Council. What contacts have the Government made with the two other guarantor powers—Greece and Turkey? I hope that the Minister will give a clear and direct answer. Would the Government support any action taken on Cyprus by the Greek Government when it assumes the EC presidency in the near future? What would be the Government's attitude if the Greek Government wanted, as a guarantor power, to put Cyprus high on the agenda?

When Commonwealth Heads of Government met in Cyprus last October, they issued a statement on the Cyprus situation that was fully supported by the British Government and every country represented at that conference.

Perhaps the Minister will tell us what has happened since then. Will I hear today? Will the House be informed of the actions that the Government have taken following the passing of unanimous resolutions at the Commonwealth Heads of Government conference in Cyprus in October? We hear repeatedly of the need for confidence-building measures and we would all agree with that.

I could name a couple of actions that could be taken in a matter of days and which, without doubt, would lead to confidence-building measures starting to take place: first, a sizeable reduction in the number of Turkish issue troops who are now in northern Cyprus; and, secondly, a complete stop—I emphasise "complete stop"—in the number of settlers who now come from Turkey into

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northern Cyprus. Those are confidence-building measures which could be taken without any great delay or problem if the Turkish Government wished to.

I must tell the Minister that the real confidence-building measure would be regarded as the decision that is taken on the town of Famagusta. It is empty of people, except for troops. Just what do the Government say on the issue of Famagusta? Do they support the return of Famagusta? I stress "Famagusta". I do not say "parts of Famagusta", but the full return of the town. The Minister may be aware that that is fully supported by the United Nations.

I am often told, as are other hon. Members who have come to hear my remarks and who hope to make a short contribution, that the United Kingdom Government fully support the efforts of the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General is now calling for the full return of Famagusta. As one of the guarantor powers, do we support that? I must stress to the Minister that it is not some kind of trade-off. It is an issue on which the actions of Mr. Denktash and Ankara will be judged as to their real commitment to a settlement and to the full return of the town of Famagusta.

I have a copy of the document of the Security Council of the United Nations dated 15 December, which was adopted unanimously. Perhaps the Minister has seen it. It says that the Security Council

> "Requests the Secretary-General to submit a report by the end of February 1994 on the outcome of his efforts to achieve an agreement on a package of confidence-building measures."

The next two months will test the sincerity of Mr. Denktash and Ankara. I stress to the Minister that that sincerity will not be expressed through their ideas or proposals, but by their full support for the actions of the Secretary-General on Famagusta. The Cyprus Government have fully supported the proposals of the Secretary-General since May this year. There is no question of needing to go to the Cyprus Government to see what they believe. They have clearly announced their stand on this very important issue. The real test of commitment will soon be on Mr. Denktas and Ankara. I hope that we shall hear today where the British Government stand on that commitment.

During Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs questions this week, my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) asked what the Government's response would be to the request from the European Union to have a monitor attending the forthcoming discussions between Cyprus and the officials from northern Cyprus. That person would sit in on those discussions and report back to the Community. The Minister replied that a decision would be made on 20 December. I need hardly remind the House that Monday is 20 December. I expect the Government have already made their decision and I hope that it is favourable to my hon. Friend's request.

Last week, elections took place in occupied northern Cyprus. Although no other country in the world, with the exception of Turkey, recognises northern Cyprus, to be frank, we all know that the Government have contacts in that area. That is what one would expect. What is the Government's views of those elections? To whom are they talking in northern Cyprus?

Those who care about Cyprus look to the future when we genuinely hope that the island of Cyprus becomes a united Cyprus in which the rights of both communities are properly safeguarded. The British Government should ensure that basic freedoms are secured for the people of Cyprus—that is of paramount importance. Refugees should be free to return to wherever their homes were before the 1974 invasion. People should have the freedom to own property and the freedom to move anywhere within the island of Cyprus. Those basic freedoms should be guaranteed for all Cypriots and should be contained within any agreement. I hope that the Minister will make it clear that such commitments and confidence-building measures, about which we hear repeatedly, are supported by the Government. I hope, in time, that they will also be supported by Mr. Denktash and others in Ankara because, as I have already said, in February the Secretary-General will report back to the Security Council on what has happened in the intervening two months since this week's resolution was passed.

I am grateful to the Minister for his presence today, because this debate is of crucial importance to our country. We cannot say that we are concerned about the problem but argue that it does not affect us. I hope that the Minister will offer a real commitment on the part of the British Government. I also hope that he will confirm that between now and when the Secretary-General reports to the Security Council, the Government will make it clear to Mr. Denktash and his colleagues in Ankara that the time has come for their meaningful involvement in the discussions conducted by the Secretary-General.

In recent years, we have had many discussions that have got nowhere. The latest discussion in the long-running tragedy is a test of the sincerity of Mr. Denktash and those in Ankara.

1.13 pm

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): I am immensely grateful to the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox), who is a fellow friend of Cyprus, for allowing me to contribute to this debate. I congratulate him on securing more Adjournment debates on Cyprus than I have managed to do over the years. I thought that I had the record. I also congratulate him on putting the obvious points with great vigour and effectiveness.

I have been involved in the fortunes and misfortunes of the beautiful but tragic island of Cyprus since I first went there as a young, inexperienced soldier in 1958, when I had the privilege to guard the last colonial governor of Cyprus. From that time, Britain has had more responsibility towards Cyprus than any of the other 180 countries in the United Nations. In recent years, there has been a temptation for the Foreign Office to say that we are fitting in behind the United Nations and the Commonwealth and that we are playing our part. I passionately believe that we should not just be playing a part, but taking a leading role because of our unique responsibilities. Indeed, the United States looks to London to give a lead.

What is happening in Cyprus is intolerable. It is a European and fellow Commonwealth country which is tragically divided. It is too small in political, economic and commercial terms to be divided in that cruel way.

I hope that the Minister will comment on the use of northern Cyprus to harbour refugees from justice, which is an unattractive feature and a growing tendency. As the Ministers knows from my correspondence with him and his officials, it is time for the Government to take some action and we are anxious to hear the Minister's response. Above all, I hope that he will tell us that Britain understands its clear duty in the matter.

1.17 pm

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) for allowing other hon. Members a few minutes in which to speak and I congratulate him on securing the debate.

After almost 20 years, it is time that the Government, as a guarantor, decided to do something positive. For almost 20 years, the northern part of Cyprus has been illegally occupied by Turkish troops and it is time that the Government set about settling the problem. Most people refer to the occupation as the Cyprus problem. I refer to it as the Turkish problem, because Turkey made the initial decision and it has the problem. How could we allow such a situation to occur and how can we allow it to continue in this day and age? I welcome the recent moves that the Government have made over Northern Ireland, as do most hon. Members, but it is time that the Government started to make moves to sort out the problem in Cyprus.

On a recent visit to Cyprus, what moved me most was meeting the people who are refugees in their own country. It is unimaginable to us that those refugees look over the border and the barbed wire and see living in their houses and stealing their property, people who were brought in by Turkey and were not born and bred in Cyprus. It cannot be nice to look over that barbed wire week in and week out for almost 20 years at other people who are occupying one's land. It is time that the Government began dealing properly with the problem.

1.18 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on having secured the debate on this important issue. I know how strongly he feels about the matter from meetings that we have had at the Foreign Office and from correspondence on behalf of the people whom he represents. He has brought his judgment to bear on that issue for many years, as have the hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) and my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend).

We are bound to Cyprus by many ties of family, of history, and of political interests. It is an island which is tragically divided and I also believe that the division is unacceptable. We must not accept that just because the division has existed for 20 years we must somehow learn to live with it. We must redouble our efforts to reach a settlement and a solution. This is not a party political issue: the original division took place under a Labour Government and it has persisted under Conservative Governments. It is generally recognised on both sides of the House that the present situation is unacceptable.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I warmly welcome the Minister's comments—especially those about the unacceptability of the division of Cyprus. Have the British Government officially made it clear to Turkey and the illegal regime in northern Cyprus that, no matter how long it continues, the present division can never be tolerated or accepted in a civilised society?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I can add to that. We have made it clear that we do not recognise the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and that we have no intention of doing so. We were disappointed—and said so—when Mr. Denktash was not able to follow President Clerides in accepting a package of confidence-building measures, which, as we heard, was proposed by the United Nations Secretary-General. We were particularly disappointed when Mr. Denktash did not return to New York—effectively stalling the talks since that time in the summer. We attach considerable weight to the success of those measures. The hon. Member for Tooting mentioned Famagusta. Among the confidence-building measures is the return of Varosha, which is part of Famagusta, to the control of the United Nations. That, in turn, should lead to a more general settlement.

Such measures are crucial because confidence is essential if any long-term settlement is to be achieved. A new generation is growing up on both sides of the divide. Those young people have no experience of living together in a united island. At one time, Turks, Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots lived together and, despite undoubted differences, by and large rubbed along and learnt to live with one another. Memories of that time are fading; it is outside young people's experience. For that reason, too, it is important that the political leaders on the island find it in themselves to reach a long-term political settlement.

Since the talks were stalled, there have been elections in northern Cyprus. We do not know what the final outcome will be in terms of the Government, but those elections give a new opportunity. There is the hope—shared, I know, by the United Nations—that we can return to the question of the confidence-building measures. Mr. Clark, the special representative of the Secretary-General, has been asked to resume intensive contact with both sides—and, indeed, with Turkey—following the elections. On 15 December—the date mentioned by the hon. Member for Tooting—the Security Council also endorsed that approach.

The question of an EC observer has been raised. I have been asked what will happen on Monday at the Foreign Affairs Council. That will depend on what European Union member states conclude at the time. I cannot prejudge that discussion. It is, after all, a joint decision that we hope to reach about the possible appointment of an EC observer. I can tell the House that we are being genuinely open-minded about the matter and approach it without prejudice. Our judgment must be influenced chiefly by what is best for the prospect of confidence-building measures. Will the appointment of an observer aid that process? In answer to a question on Wednesday, I said that, if we are satisfied that that will help and not impede the success of those confidence-building measures, we will give the matter favourable consideration.

The Secretary-General laid considerable emphasis on other means by which the European Union might visibly support his efforts. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary did just that when he, along with other European Ministers, met Mr. Cetin, the Turkish Foreign Minister, on 8 November at the European Union/Turkey Association Council. My right hon. Friend made it clear to the Turkish Minister that we wished to make rapid progress with the confidence-building measures, after the election in northern Cyprus, and that we looked to the Turkish Government to use their influence and best endeavours to accelerate that process.

[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory]

We all want a just, viable and lasting settlement, which must be reached by the two communities together. No great imperial power can impose a settlement. The days of colonialism are past—*[Interruption.]* No doubt to the regret of my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames). We must take the longer, perhaps stonier, road of getting the local communities and politicians to negotiate between themselves, within a framework set by others, together with all possible assistance and support from friends of Cyprus and from both sides of the community.

We are aiming at a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary put it clearly in the House on 19 November when he said that he was aiming for

> "one country, one Cyprus, one Government and two communities."—[*Official Report*, 19 November 1993; Vol. 233, c. 117.]

There is no question of our recognising the so-called "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus." We condemned its purported declaration in 1983 and the Government helped to secure the United Nations Security Council resolution 541, which considered that declaration to be legally invalid, and that remains our position.

People get confused about why we have contact with the Turkish Cypriot community at all. We are one of the guarantor powers of the treaty of guarantee, and we have a clear obligation to deal with both communities. For that reason, we maintain contact with Mr. Denktash and others who are prominent and have influence in the northern Cyprus community—but that does not imply recognition.

Future efforts will be directed chiefly towards the success of the confidence-building measures, and the recent elections have given us a new opportunity in that respect. Following those elections, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has sent messages to his Greek and Turkish counterparts, and to Mr. Clerides and Mr. Denktash, urging them to do their utmost to reach a settlement.

We will follow that up. We have reopened the issue not only by way of direct correspondence with those concerned, but my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will discuss Cyprus with Mrs. Ciller, the Prime Minister of Turkey, when he meets her in the margins of the NATO summit on 10 January. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will raise the issue of Cyprus when he meets Mr. Cetin, the Turkish Foreign Minister, in Akara during his visit to Turkey on 19 and 20 January. After that visit, my right hon. Friend plans to visit Greece and to follow up those discussions in direct communications with the Greek Government on 21 January.

We should see the package of confidence-building measures as important, but they are only the first step. After that, we must make progress with the Secretary-General's set of ideas—which, naturally, we shall support. We cannot compel a solution to be found, but we must work with a will.

Compromises will be required on both sides. We require genuine power sharing between the two communities. The possible nature of the ultimate political arrangement cannot be foreseen at this point, but I can reaffirm that we will not rest until a final solution has been achieved.

Live Animals (Transport)

1.29 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): This is a matter of great concern to hon. Members on both sides of the House. I have been involved with horses all my life, as a rider and as one concerned about their welfare; I am in my 21st year of service on the council of the British Horse Society, to which I have been consistently re-elected. The society is the national controlling body: it controls everything to do with horses except racing. Some years ago, I received the award of merit from the society for outstanding services to the horse world.

This is probably the last chance for us to wish my hon. Friend the Minister all happiness: next week, he is marrying a wonderful lady, and marrying into a wonderful family whom I have known for some years.

The transport of live animals deserves considerable attention from both the United Kingdom Government and the European Community—and, indeed, from the whole world. The British people are enormously concerned about the welfare of animals, which is reflected in the size of the post bags received by Members of Parliament. A recent survey revealed that, apart from housing, animal welfare constituted the largest single element of hon. Members' post bags.

Although animal welfare as a whole covers a huge range of subjects, the House should be in no doubt about the extent of public concern about the transport of live animals. In a recent parliamentary answer, my hon. Friend the Minister acknowledged that his Department had received more than 100,000 items of correspondence on the issue, as well as numerous petitions. A further answer revealed that, since 1 November, the Ministry had received more than 17,000 letters. In recent weeks, more than 800 letters a day have been pouring in. I congratulate the Minister on coping with all that, and the British people on their vigilance in writing.

Why should the British public express themselves in such numbers? They may have been made aware by the campaigns of the RSPCA, the British Horse Society and others—including the International League for the Protection of Horses—of the plight of animals subjected to lengthy and unnecessary journeys en route to slaughter; but awareness alone does not generate such large post bags. The answer lies in public revulsion at the suffering of the animals—more than 2 million of them—that leave our shores each year, and impatience with the continuing trade and the horrors that accompany it.

In recent years, undercover RSPCA inspectors have documented numerous examples of animals suffering in transit. It is true that some are treated properly, but many experience real, terrible suffering leading to death. In September this year, at the port of Trieste in northern Italy, RSPCA inspectors recorded on film, for all to see, a plethora of abuses to animals after long journeys across Europe. Sheep, for instance, were starved and dehydrated after a long journey, and then unloaded into a holding pen. The water troughs in the pen were so high that the animals were unable to drink from them—what meanness. Dying sheep, exhausted and stressed after one journey, were reloaded without rest on to another vehicle to begin the same nightmare all over again. Dead sheep were dragged off a lorry, which is evidence in itself. A horse was stabbed in the eye because it was reluctant to move due to severe exhaustion. Such scenes are so horrific and disturbing that I do not think that they should be shown on television before 9 pm. Indeed, I doubt whether they could be shown before 9 pm.

On one occasion, after pigs had made a 35-hour journey from Holland to Rome without rest, food or water—the three essentials of life—RSPCA inspectors witnessed them so exhausted after their nightmare journey that they were not able to walk steadily. They were falling from the vehicle while being unloaded. I have heard many personal testimonies by the late Glenda Spooner, a great fighter for the welfare of horses, who saw horses being unloaded after travelling long distances, stumbling and not behaving as they should, and receiving a severe thrashing for it. The beating was inflicted either out of bad behaviour, to indulge the miserable temperament and mood of individuals or out of sheer cruelty.

Such scenes, which appear commonplace, suggest that the European rules are rarely enforced. The abuses are so widespread that on almost every occasion that RSPCA inspectors monitor ports such as Calais they record yet another journey of 30, 40, 50 and even 60 hours without respite for the animals. Such journey times are in breach of European law. I have asked the RSPCA what intelligence or information it requires to follow such illegal journeys.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I agree with what the hon. Gentleman has said so far. His interest in horses is well known. Does he agree that we need to establish maximum journey times? I am sure that he will share my disappointment about the recent draft directive which failed because it extended the length of journey times above our legal maximum. Does he also agree that, apart from the cruelty of exporting animals, the problem also exports jobs from this country? Should not slaughter take place as near as possible to the point of production?

Mr. Greenway: I agree with the hon. Gentleman on both points. It is a tragedy that when, led by the Government, we were making good progress on journey times and on the general welfare of horses and other live animals, we have now moved in the oppositite direction.

I was talking about illegal journeys. The answer appears less conspiratorial than I had suspected. Inspectors wait at Calais or other ports, watching for the arrival of a multi-decked lorry. They look for two drivers, which is a sign of a long journey. When lorries arrive on ferries from the United Kingdom, up to 800 sheep are loaded and the horrendous journey begins. Most disturbing of all is the fact that on almost every occasion the lorries have not been stopped once en route through several countries. Enforcement appears to be wholly mythical.

That begs the question that, if a handful of RSPCA inspectors can so easily find examples of cruelty and disregard for animal welfare, why should basic enforcement be such a problem? It is so easy to find examples of abuse that they should be picked up without the slightest difficulty. Some hard punishment for those involved would have a tremendous effect on a wicked trade.

I am aware that following yesterday's deliberation at the Council of Ministers, there is still much to be resolved on the live transport directive. I hope that equal weight will be given to enforcement and the basic limitation of journey times. Enforcement matters just as much as limitation; if that principle is not established, the lengthy and difficult negotiations will have been wasted.

The deliberations on the European directive on live transportation bring me to a matter about which I and the British Horse Society, on whose council I have served for 21 years, feel most passionately. That is the retention of the Minimum Values Order.

The fight against the trade in live horses and ponies has been going on for more than 100 years. The RSPCA, the British Horse Society, the International League for the Protection of Horses and others have sought to stem the suffering inflicted on thousands of old, decayed and worn-out horses, as they are described, sent across the channel for butchery in continental slaughterhouses. That was at one time a lucrative trade and many people were brought before the courts for transporting a horse in an unfit state. In 1900 alone, the RSPCA, secured 4,651 convictions for that form of cruelty to horses.

The Minimum Values Order has played a huge part, which cannot be over-estimated, in stemming that trade. Today's Minimum Values Order, which prevents the export of any horses valued at less than £495 or pony valued at less than £220 or any horse over the age of eight years, except in very limited circumstances, has proved a valuable weapon against cruelty.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): Hear, hear.

Mr. Greenway: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support.

We have to remember that horses who were, and sometimes are, exported for slaughter have often done a lifetime's hard work and do not deserve that type of treatment. However, there is great worry in horse circles that our open border with the Republic of Ireland—to which the order does not apply, unfortunately—provides a back-door route to butchery and death for many horses. It is a worry because each year many horses are stolen from loving owners and are never recovered. It would appear that stolen horses can be transmitted to the Republic of Ireland without paperwork and could then be shipped to the continent for slaughter.

I am grateful that the hon. Gentleman the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is in his place, because he and I have done a great deal of work together on that and many other animal issues.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for saying that. May I offer him a double congratulation this afternoon? I congratulate him on all the work that he has done for the welfare of animals; I also congratulate him on getting this Adjournment debate, and therefore perhaps preventing the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) from going out and—who knows—shooting a number of small furry and feathered things and eating them in even greater quantity.

Mr. Greenway: I thank the hon. Gentleman for the initial compliment.

Finally, I commend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for her determined stand during the live transport negotiations by refusing to accept a lowering of

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

[Mr. Greenway]

the high standards of protection for animals who are transported live to mainland Europe. That is a matter for great thanksgiving and congratulation and I welcome it warmly.

I hope that in future negotiations, the Government will seek to establish the important principle of maximum journey limit for animals destined for slaughter, as the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) so rightly said. That was supported by 271 votes to six in the European Parliament on Wednesday this week. More importantly, we must establish that the good practice of slaughter happens close to the point of rearing. The hon. Gentleman said it; I have been saying it for years, in the House and in many other places.

An eight-hour journey limit would allow any purchasers to reach a choice of slaughterhouses of proper standing. Furthermore, we must promote the carcase trade. It represents 80 per cent. of British exports and, as has been shown in a recent report on the economics of the trade, it costs only £1·20 to transport a carcase from the United Kingdom to southern France, but £6·25 to transport the sheep live. Those figures tell their own story.

It is also surely in our best interests for British lamb to be sold as British lamb—the best lamb in the world—and not sold in French butchers' shops masquerading as French produce. British farmers received not a penny more at market for the 2 million sheep who were transported live to the continent this year. Meanwhile, jobs in our slaughter industry decline and the needless suffering continues.

The other reason for a maximum journey limit is enforcement. Feeding and resting periods complicate the enforcement of such rules. Indeed, the dreadful case that was successfully prosecuted by the Ministry just two months ago—I congratulate the Minister on that—highlights the difficulty of enforcement. The transporter in question had submitted to the Ministry, as part of the export licence that was used then, details of the stopping points for resting and feeding the animals. However, on no fewer than 42 occasions, he breached the written guarantees on the treatment of the animals in his care.

On one occasion, no doubt to save time and money, the journey lasted 44 hours from Calais to Piannella in Italy during which time the sheep were not fed or watered. On another ocaasion, the same journey lasted 47 hours. I wonder whether that individual would have done that to his next of kin. However, in respect of 42 instances of false declarations, the transporter concerned—a Mr. Mills—was fined only £4,200 and £3,500 costs.

Mr. Morley: Disgraceful.

Mr. Greenway: I absolutely agree with the hon. Gentleman. The transporter concerned was fined £7,700 for the trails of suffering that he sanctioned. That is an outrage. I wonder how much Mr. Mills saved in respect of feeding costs and wages by completing those journeys without stops. I am sure that he must have saved quite a lot more than £7,700.

I hope that the penalties for breaches of the live transport rules will be toughened. We cannot let that cruelty pay and we should not allow traders who compromise the welfare of those animals to continue in that business. I am grateful for the opportunity to raise an issue about which many of my constituents, and the constituents of many other hon. Members, feel very strongly.

In the years to come, I hope that I shall not feel that I have to return to the issue to highlight further cruelty and suffering; a sensible and rational policy, well enforced, would safeguard Britain's reputation as the guardian of animal welfare without compromising Britain's economic interest.

1.46 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) for his kind words and, in the Christmas spirit, I ask him to forgive me for the disagreeable manner in which I let him know that I had to give up a day that I intended to devote to matters relating to conservation in the north of England in order to answer my hon. Friend's debate. I am glad to have given up that day on this occasion——

Mr. Morley: And so are the animals.

Mr. Soames: They are not animals—they are birds.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North is a real expert on the matter. The horses and ponies of the United Kingdom, past, present and future, owe him a considerable debt for his great knowledge and quite exceptional contribution to the horse world which, as he mentioned, was recognised when the British Horse Society gave him one of its highest awards. My hon. Friend has served for 21 years on the British Horse Society, which is one of the most important bodies governing horses in this country. My hon. Friend's knowledge of the matter is well known.

I am also grateful for, and should like to acknowledge publicly, my hon. Friend's support and the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House, by and large—and certainly unqualified in the case of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North—for the very tough line that the Government have been taking in the European Community negotiations on the protection of animals during transport.

I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will recognise that what happened in Brussels over the past two days—which frankly was a most unsatisfactory result as far as animals are concerned—was no fault of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who laboured hard and long, as did the chief vet, his colleagues and the officials in the Ministry who spent months preparing for the Council, lobbying in Europe and trying to bring the other countries round to a more sensible and honourable way of thinking about the care of animals. It was a great sadness to all of us that we were unable to reach a conclusion. However, I will return to that point later.

As my hon. Friend rightly said, the treatment of animals in transport and elsewhere is a subject for which the British people have enormous vital, instinctive and entirely justified concern. I hope that my hon. Friend agrees that the Government's approach fully reflects that concern. We are not prepared to accept proposals that would fail to improve the welfare of animals during transport; nor will we play politics on the way in which we arrive at such agreements. Negotiations are taking place with people who simply do not understand and who have a cultural and attitudinal difference from ourselves about the handling, keeping and using of animals. That is why my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food demonstrated the strength of our resolve this week in Brussels, when she refused point blank to accept a compromise proposal which failed to address our vital concerns.

I hope that my hon. Friend and Opposition Members will not mind if I rehearse the background to the negotiations, as they are complex and the situation bears careful thought.

In 1991, when the existing directive on the transport of animals was adopted, it was acknowledged as being incomplete. It lacked vital and, as my hon. Friend said, enforceable details on the intervals between rest, food and water for animals. This summer, the Commission published proposals to complete the directive based on advice from its own scientific veterinary committee. We regarded the proposals as a sound and prudent starting point for discussions. Pending implementation of the further rules, member states are permitted to have their own national rules.

Mr. Morley: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Soames: I shall give way if the hon. Gentleman is brief.

Mr. Morley: I shall be very brief.

On the point about national rules and enforceability, the Minister will be aware that we had a brief discussion in Committee about the concept of a licensing regime for animal transporters. The Minister will know also that I have written to him further on that matter. I do not expect a response until he has had time to consider the point, but it might be useful if he would indicate whether it is a principle which might be worth examining further.

Mr. Soames: I cannot comment on that. I have seen the hon. Gentleman's letter, and I applaud him for following up where other people do not bother to follow up after making a suggestion. We shall study the proposal with care. I have no intention of commenting one way or the other on the principle. I shall be happy to talk to him about it later.

The United Kingdom has taken advantage of the right to use national rules, and we maintain a maximum interval of 15 hours between feeding and watering horses and farm animals. We have always made it clear that, in negotiations, we would seek a solution reflecting our standards.

The Commission's proposal set a maximum feeding and watering interval of six hours for horses. For other farm animals, the intervals varied between eight and 24 hours. In negotiations under the Belgian presidency, it soon became apparent that many member states had acute difficulties with the Commission's proposals. In addition, much attention was devoted to measures that could improve enforcement of the rules, and we were extremely keen to encourage that. Those aspects are of fundamental importance for the proper care of animals, and we were encouraged by the realistic approach demonstrated during that part of the discussions. There was general agreement that the proposals should be simplified in order to set a smaller number of categories of animals for which different feeding and watering intervals would be established.

In the initial stages of the discussion, it was pleasing to have the weight of our arguments accepted, because the presidency proposed rules that were indeed very close to our own ideas. In the final stages of the negotiations, however, it was clear that several member states would support only intervals significantly longer than those that we have maintained in the United Kingdom.

There was also pressure to reduce the eight-hour rest period during long journeys, which the presidency had proposed. The final compromise which was on offer failed to meet any of our vital objectives. Accordingly, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food made it clear in the Council that the compromise was wholly unacceptable to the United Kingdom and, as a number of other states shared our concerns, no agreement could be reached.

I shall read an extract from the communiqué that my right hon. Friend issued following the animal welfare discussions. It bears some reading.

She said:

> "Our vets had worked hard to try to establish satisfactory intervals for feeding, watering and resting animals during transport. They pressed for current United Kingdom national rules . . . to be adopted throughout Europe where the current maximum is 24 hours. We also pressed successfully to link health certificates and journey plans so that national authorities can more easily enforce those intervals.
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> Going along with a package which was fundamentally flawed would have further prejudiced the welfare of those animals already most at risk. I was not prepared to support this. In the meantime, the United Kingdom's national rule of 15-hours maximum journey periods, between watering, feeding and rest will remain in place. We shall continue to press for these high standards to become the norm in all parts of Europe."

Mr. Harry Greenway: I wish to say how pleased we all are about that and how strongly the whole House and the whole country are behind the Government on the basic points that my hon. Friend the Minister is putting before us. We should make that clear.

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

The events have demonstrated once more the huge gulf which sadly exists between those countries in Europe that have an enlightened attitude to animal welfare, and others that see no need for improvements and have little interest even in talking about the subject. It is perfectly clear that the latter countries are the obstacle to progress and it is to them that the protests of animal welfare lobbyists need to be addressed.

I wish to say some harsh words about the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals which I regret having to say. I warned the RSPCA months ago that there was no point in its wasting huge sums raised from its hard-pressed supporters to run a series of advertising campaigns in this country promoting animal welfare. The RSPCA already has our support. We are the animals' friends in Europe. We are what stands between the animals and real cruelty in some of the southern states of Europe.

By pursuing that fatuous, money-wasting campaign, the RSPCA has failed to spend any money lobbying where it should have lobbied—in the capital cities of those countries which do not support our proposals such as Spain, Greece, Italy and France. It should have concentrated its efforts——

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Soames: No, I will not give way. I am sorry, but I must get on. The RSPCA really must concentrate its efforts where it can help the animals.

[Mr. Soames]

In addition to anxiety about the transport of farm animals, I fully understand and share the special regard for horses. Welfare interests help to ensure that the subject is kept on the European agenda by vigorous lobbying. The horse lobby is an example to the rest of the animal welfare world of how to get one's points across in Europe.

Following earlier talks in the Community, we had obtained agreement that our national rules on horses could continue. We have accordingly maintained our controls, which you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will know as the minimum value system for horses. That was one of our major achievements in the 1991 negotiations. The discussions in Brussels this week did not contain any proposals to place that agreement in jeopardy. Of course, the concern for horses extends far beyond Britain. There is great concern about the trade in horses between eastern Europe and the Community. We are most anxious that such trade should be conducted under proper and decent conditions, if it has to take place at all, so that those vulnerable animals do not suffer the indignity of being treated like junk. The 1991 directive already goes some way towards achieving that objective. It provides the authorities with powers to stop journeys if any animal is suffering.

The key point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North and the really important point with which the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will agree with is that there is no point in any regulation in Europe on the welfare of animals if it is not properly enforced by the member states. Until we have a proper system of enforcement of the rules on transport of animals in Europe, any improvements that we might secure are not worth the paper they are written on. That is why every effort must be made to lobby the countries that oppose these ideas in order to secure the interests and welfare of animals throughout Europe.

In future negotiations, Her Majesty's Government will continue to seek the best possible standards of transport for all animals in the European Community and, above all —almost standing over that—a proper and decent enforcement regime so that the public in Britain and elsewhere in the Community, and everyone who minds about animals may have complete confidence that such matters are handled with the care, attention and decency with which they should be treated.

Perhaps most important of all is that everyone with an interest in improving standards should do everything possible to promote a more enlightened attitude towards animal welfare—an attitude which, is so seriously lacking in some other Community countries. Until that happens, we will fight with all the vigour and force at our command. We have the moral authority of a huge animal welfare lobby in this country, of whose views we are acutely aware. The trouble does not exist here.

I hope that my hon. Friend will continue to press, through his other interests, those countries that so flagrantly ensure that animal welfare is not properly attended to when animals are transported through their territory.

Mr. James Smyth (Extradition)

2 pm

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): I have been associated with many of the campaigns against miscarriages of justice that have resulted from the problems of Northern Ireland and the way in which those problems have spilled over into Great Britain during the past 25 years. I must start by making it absolutely clear that I do not for one minute believe that injusticies have been done only to nationalists and Catholics. Many miscarriages of justice have been perpetrated against the majority community and loyalists in the north and I have been associated with the campaign for the UDR Four.

Whereas in war, truth is the first casualty, in the dirty war that has been going on during the past quarter of a century, justice has been one of the first casualties, as the urgencies of the hour have tended to lead to unreasonable decisions that are taken without due regard for the facts.

My involvement in the case of Jimmy Smyth arose because I happened by chance to meet him and his defending counsel when I addressed an Irish Americans for Clinton rally, just before the November presidential elections in California. Following a discussion about the work that I had done in the House, I was asked to submit to the defence 242 questions that I have tabled in Parliament, 30 written questions, 13 oral questions and six of my speeches. That led to my being invited to appear to give evidence in court, as an expert witness on British Government policy. The Government may not have been terribly happy about that, but I seem to have spent a great deal of time examining British Government policy.

I must read into the record two decisions taken by the judge presiding over the case because they are very concise and easy to follow and enable me to boil down the essence of the matter very rapidly——

Mr. A. Cecil Walker (Belfast, North): I beg to move, That strangers do withdraw.

Notice being taken that strangers were present, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 143 (Withdrawal of Strangers from the House), put forthwith the Question,* That strangers do withdraw:—

The House proceeded to a Division: but no Member being willing to act as a Teller for the Ayes, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *declared that the Noes have it.*

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): They have been nominated. On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You asked for names for the Tellers for the Ayes and my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) said, "Mr. Cecil Walker and Mr. John D. Taylor."

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Both hon. Members have been in the House long enough to know that the Chair looks to one side for the Ayes and to the other side for the Noes. I looked to the right and there were no Tellers in position for the Ayes. The hon. Gentleman should know the rules of the House. The Tellers for the Ayes were not present.

Question again proposed, That this House do now adjourn.

Mr. Livingstone: I hope that hon. Members who are interested in preventing this debate will not miss any of it. As I did not expect to continue my speech, I lost my place in my notes.

The case in question is taking place at the moment, and yesterday the closing written submissions were submitted by the defence and the prosecution. The court's written judgment is expected to be delivered some time after Christmas. Before I was so rudely interrupted, I was about to read into the record two accounts written by the presiding judge that perfectly capture the specific problems in understanding this case. They are two judgments by Judge Barbara Caulfield, a United States federal judge who was appointed by President Bush on the nomination of the Republican senator for California, Senator Wilson, who is now Governor Wilson. This is not some dear old radical hangover from the good old days of the new deal: it is a fairly recent judicial appointment under the Republican Administration.

This is the first airing and testing of the extradition treaty that was negotiated by Prime Minister Thatcher with the then President Ronald Reagan. The House will recall that the British Government were profoundly unhappy with the operation of the previous extradition treaty and, after considerable pressure by Mrs. Thatcher, an amendment was carried. It is under that that the case is being heard.

On 14 September 1992 the United Kingdom filed a formal request for the extradition of James Joseph Smyth to serve the remainder of his sentence for a 1978 conviction in Belfast, Northern Ireland. The case is being heard under the supplemental extradition treaty between the Government of the United States and the Government of the United Kingdom which went into effect on 23 December 1986. That is quite specific. The treaty negotiated by Mrs. Thatcher with former President Reagan spells out that

> "extradition shall not occur if the person sought establishes to the satisfaction of the competent judicial authority by a preponderance of the evidence that the request for extradition has in fact been made with a view to try or punish him on account of his race, religion, nationality, or political opinions, or that he would, if surrendered, be prejudiced at his trial or punished, detained or restricted in his personal liberty by reason of his race, religion, nationality or political opinions."

It is remarkable that such a wide-ranging defence opened up after Mrs. Thatcher's intervention, because that ruling effectively changed the way in which extradition cases would be heard. Now, the British Government and their conduct of policy are on trial.

Judge Caulfield issued a decision on 29 September 1992 on whether Jimmy Smyth should be granted bail. It examined the basic bones of the case, based on the judge's reading of the Diplock judgment that convicted Mr. Smyth in 1978. She stated:

> "Mr. Smyth has indicated that he will attempt to prove at the hearing that he is not guilty of the crime of attempted murder for which he was imprisoned in 1977. He will argue that his imprisonment was the result of his political views and religious background rather than his conduct. He has indicated that he will offer expert testimony regarding the due process problems of the Diplock court system which can lead to unjust convictions and did so in his case.
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> This court has had an opportunity to review the opinion of the Diplock judge who convicted Mr. Smyth in 1978. The evidence against him was almost entirely circumstantial. The fact that the victim and his wife, who were purportedly in the presence of the perpetrators for ten to fifteen minutes, were unable to identify Mr. Smyth is noteworthy, as is the lack of any forensic evidence connecting Mr. Smyth to the crime scene. Despite the fact that numerous fingerprints were recovered at the scene none of them were Smyth's. Indeed, the only eyewitness evidence against Mr. Smyth was the testimony of an off-duty police officer who stated that he saw a man near the victim's house, lost him three times as he chased him in his car and eventually captured Mr. Smyth about a mile away from the crime scene. This is not a case where the defendant argues that the evidence does not establish his guilt beyond any reasonable doubt; rather it raises serious questions about the validity of Mr. Smyth's underlying conviction.
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> Between 1972 and 1976, Smyth was detained on at least six occasions. Only once was he charged or convicted of any offence —that being in 1972 when he was sentenced to six months for disorderly conduct; a conviction that was overturned on appeal. On one occasion, Mr. Smyth was interned for an entire year without charges. He maintains that, during his detentions, he was beaten by police and military personnel.
>
> After Mr. Smyth's internment, his name was in the police files. He was stopped and questioned by police as many as four times per week while walking home. He was often put up against a wall, spread-eagled, and then soldiers or police would come up behind him and stomp on his feet. On one occasion, Mr. Smyth was kicked between the legs. On another occasion he was given two black eyes.
>
> Mr. Smyth has also offered to prove and has presented some evidence which indicates that his life was threatened by guards when he was imprisoned in the Maze. Such a threat was specifically noted in the opinion of Judge Babington, the Diplock judge who convicted Mr. Smyth.
>
> In addition, Mr. Smyth has offered to prove that other men who escaped from the Maze prison with him and have been released from prison have been killed by British military personnel and protestant Loyalists. He has further offered to prove that men from his cellblock who remained behind when he escaped were subjected to inhumane treatment. He has offered to prove that guard dogs were set on them and they were denied medical treatment for their resultant injuries."

Judge Caulfield concluded:

> "This case is distinguishable from other recent reported cases in which Irish nationals have fought extradition to the United Kingdom in that Mr. Smyth denies membership in the IRA. And indeed, the government has presented no evidence to indicate that Mr. Smyth has ever been charged with membership of that organization."

The case started to deteriorate when Mr. Smyth's counsel asked for discovery of certain Government documents. It seems quite remarkable that if we seek to extradite people from the United States that we should then ignore American court procedure and traditions in hearing the case. The defence asked for access to several Government reports. I shall quote once again from the judgment handed down by Judge Caulfield after the British Government refused to grant the documents.

Of the Stalker-Sampson reports, the report says:

> "The Stalker-Sampson reports arise out of the investigation of officers in the Royal Ulster Constabulary ("RUC") for the shooting deaths of six people in 1982 whom they suspected of being members of the IRA. The purpose of the inquiry was to determine whether or not criminal offences (involving, *inter alia*, the giving of false or misleading evidence and conspiracy to pervert the course of justice) had been committed . . . The UK maintains that the reports contain highly sensitive information regarding internal affairs investigations and the procedures and identity of security forces personnel.
>
> The Kelly report: In 1988, Charles Kelly, the Chief Constable of Staffordshire, was appointed to consider whether disciplinary charges should be brought against RUC officers of the rank of chief superintendent and below who had been identified by Stalker and Sampson as having committed criminal offences, including murder. The declarations of Patrick Mayhew, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, filed on June 7, 1993 and June 18, 1993, do not specificially invoke a state secret or national security privilege claim with respect to this report. Instead, Mr. Mayhew states that '[t]he public interest here is in the maintenance of an honorable, disciplined, law-abiding and incurrupt police force.' Mr. Mayhew's declarations not only fail to specify that he has read the report, but they also fail to specify that the report contains any state or national secrets.

[Mr. Livingstone]

> The Stevens Inquiry: . . . into allegations of collusion between members of the Security Forces and Loyalist paramilitaries. As a result of the investigation, the RUC confirmed that Security Forces personnel had disclosed to Loyalists photos of republican suspects and the names, addresses and photographs of more than 400 people from the Catholic community in Northern Ireland. With respect to the Stevens' Report, Mr. Mayhew's June 7, 1993 declaration states:
>
> 'So far the actual report is concerned, I am satisfied that its disclosure would be injurious on two grounds; firstly the integrity of the process of criminal investigations and the making of decisions as to prosecutions and secondly, the efficacy of the efforts of the Government of the United Kingdom to counter terrorism and the protection of persons involved in those efforts.'
>
> A summary of this report has been disclosed to Smyth; however, the court finds that the summary does not contain sufficient detail to aid Smyth in preparing his defense . . .
>
> The government of the United Kingdom, through the United States Attorney's office for the Northern District of California, has refused to produce any of the above-referenced documents to Mr. Smyth. The UK has also refused to permit an in camera review of the documents by the Court . . .
>
> In light of Smyth's strong showing of need for the documents and the vagueness of the UK's declarations invoking privileges from production, the court viewed that an in camera review of the documents was necessary . . .

That was refused by the British Government. It seems to me that it is not a good start to a case when one insults the judge by suggesting that the judge may not be someone that one would trust to review the documents.

The judgment continues:

> "The court welcomed any suggestion from the UK regarding the redaction of particularly sensitive information regarding the identity of activities of security forces personnel. In response, the UK has indicated that it would not be possible to redact the documents and declined to submit the documents for in camera review by the court."

In conclusion, the judge ruled:

> "For the foregoing reasons, the good cause appearing therefrom, the court grants Smyth the following presumption:
>
> (1) Catholic Irish nationals accused or found guilty of offenses against members of the security forces or prison officials are subjected systematically to retaliatory harm, physical intimidation and death in Northern Ireland.
>
> (2) Members of the security forces in Northern Ireland either participate directly or tacitly endorse these actions."

That is the result of the British Government's failure to co-operate with the court and provide the documents. The court has conducted its business on the basis that those presumptions are taken as true. I submit that that represents a gross misconduct of the British case. I hope that we shall hear today which politician, and at what level, decided that those documents should not be submitted to the court, not even in camera, for the judge to consider.

As the case wound its way through the courts, the problems associated with it were compounded by the fact that, on 31 occasions, British Government witnesses refused to answer direct questions in court. That created the impression in America that those officials were rather like the godfathers who appear in mafia movies and refuse to answer questions on the ground that they might incriminate themselves. I should like to be told which politician, or Minister, was responsible for deciding that British Government officials should refuse to answer questions on oath in an American court.

The evidence against Mr. Smyth is flimsy and I believe that he is innocent. Normally, no IRA member denies membership of the organisation; rather he or she refuses to co-operate with the court system. Those IRA men who escaped from the Maze along with Mr. Smyth went back to bombing and killing, but he got to America, married and settled down to become a painter and decorator. There is nothing in that to suggest that Mr. Smyth is guilty of the crime of which he is charged. He was convicted at a time of hysteria when anyone whom the security forces considered to be a threat was likely to be convicted, on virtually no evidence, in a Diplock court.

The final evidence in my case is absolutely damning. On my advice, I suggested that the American court should call Captain Fred Holroyd as a witness. The House will be aware from the many other questions that I have put in the past that he served for two and a half years in Portadown with distinction and courage. He operated many agents —who put their lives on the line—in the area on behalf of MI6.

Fred Holroyd appeared in court and gave testimony. The British Government, however, were unable to question him because, although they had been given a week's notice, they claimed they did not have enough time to prepare detailed questions. They had no rebuttal to the evidence of Fred Holroyd. Given that the row has gone on for 20 years, it is completely unacceptable for the British Government to say suddenly that they did not have time to prepare questions to challenge his evidence.

I believe that Fred Holroyd finally got his day in court. The British Government had no case to answer the charges that he has made for years, for which he has been rubbished and his reputaion smeared by the British press.

As I came out of the American court I was met, as the House can imagine, by a large number of British journalists and we held a press conference. They asked me whether I had been traitorous and suggested that my behaviour had been outrageous. I can back to them with one simple reply, "Was there anything that I said in court which you would say was untrue?" Not one journalist could point to such an instance.

The conduct of the case has not just been mishandled, but it has damaged Britain's reputation. The Government have pursued an innocent man who is now suffering severely from ulcers after years of worry and strain. I hope that when Mr. Smyth wins his case, as I expect him to do, the British Government will recognise that they made a mistake. They have pursued an innocent man. I hope that they will not drag him through further years of doubt and worry, which will damage his health. I hope that they will let the case drop.

I am sorry that I have overrun my time. I have tried to squeeze my remarks into a shorter speech, but it is not my fault that we have such a problem.

2.22 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Sir John Wheeler): It is customary on these occasions to congratulate an hon. Member on securing an Adjournment debate and I do so now.

In the limited time available to me, I shall try to catch up on some of the points that the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) has made, even though his recollection of the proceedings in San Francisco is highly selective. The hon. Gentleman referred to the allegations of a Mr. Fred Holroyd. Her Majesty's Government had 48 hours' notice, not a week, of Mr. Holroyd's appearance before the court in San Francisco. He gave evidence and he repeated and embellished allegations that he has made over a number of years and which are certainly now well known and in the public domain.

Rather than having his day in court, I am afraid that Mr. Holroyd departed from it. Before the Government could cross examine him and call witnesses to refute some of his extremely serious allegations, he claimed that he had a more important engagement elsewhere. He decided to leave San Francisco rather than to face cross-examination. The judge, in her wisdom, accordingly struck Mr. Holroyd's evidence from the court record—so much for the testimony of Mr. Holroyd.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the Stevens report and the allegation that Her Majesty's Government refused to disclose aspects of that report during the court proceedings. It is important to deal with that issue at the outset of my remarks. Her Majesty's Government refused to disclose or to discuss the report because it is entirely irrelevant to the issue in the Smyth case. The issue is whether a terrorist who is convicted of attempted murder and who escaped from prison should be returned to Northern Ireland to continue to serve his sentence. In any event, Her Majesty's Government would not disclose or discuss the Stevens report because to do so would give information to terrorists about security and intelligence structures in Northern Ireland that could lead only to more death and destruction. I cannot believe that any Member of the House would wish to see that continue.

I am grateful to have the opportunity to respond to some of the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the San Francisco trial in which Mr. James Smyth is engaged. It will help the House to know that Smyth was convicted in 1978 of a number of offences including the attempted murder of a prison officer, John Carlisle, who was shot at in his home in Belfast. For his part in the offence, Smyth was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment.

In 1983, Smyth participated in the violent, mass breakout from the Maze prison with 37 other prisoners. He was subsequently arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation on 3 June 1992 in San Francisco, where he had lived for eight years. He had in his possession a false passport in the name of a person who has been dead for many years. He was charged with making a false passport application with another Maze escaper, who had been arrested on the same day. A third Maze escaper, Paul Brennan, was arrested in California in January.

The Government's policy is to return all fugitive convicted terrorists to custody. All three men were convicted of serious crimes and Her Majesty's Government seek the return of all of them. James Smyth's extradition hearing is being dealt with first. It will be the first terrorist case that has arisen since the 1986 United States—United Kingdom supplementary treaty, to which the hon. Gentleman referred. That treaty was negotiated between the British and American Governments to eliminate the so-called political defence. That defence enabled Provisional IRA terrorists to escape extradition by claiming that their offence had a political motive. If it were not for that treaty, James Smyth might have argued that his attempted murder of a prison officer was a political offence and he might have escaped extradition on that basis.

I am sure that right hon. and hon. Members will agree that the 1986 supplementary treaty was an important advance in international co-operation against terrorism. In James Smyth's case, on which the judge has not yet decided, Smyth is arguing that, on return to Northern Ireland and after his release from prison there, he will suffer punishment, detention or restrictions of his personal liberty. Smyth says that that is because he is Irish, Catholic and a nationalist. I can tell the House that the Government have contested that argument resolutely. James Smyth will suffer no such thing. He will be fairly and properly treated in prison, as he was before he escaped; and when he is eventually released, he will be free to go about his business like anyone else in Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom.

Right hon. and hon. Members will be aware that the hon. Member for Brent, East, as he disclosed, took it upon himself to give evidence on behalf of James Smyth in San Francisco in October. Hon. Members may recall that the hon. Gentleman told the court that, once elected, the British Government have powers similar to those of the old eastern European regimes. That may surprise hon. Members.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

NON-DOMESTIC RATING BILL

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Non-Domestic Rating Bill, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Organ Donation

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise this most important subject in this, the last debate of 1993. I do not believe that it could have been better timed. As people look forward to sharing Christmas with their families and to what 1994 has to offer, one group will be looking to the new year with hope but also with fear and trepidation. I refer to the 5,500 people awaiting organs for transplant operations. Unfortunately, approximately 1,300 will die next year because a suitable organ will not be found.

The Government have gone some way towards trying to find more donors for people waiting for operations—with the introduction of the donor card scheme in 1971, for example. But even with that scheme, approximately 40,000 people have died waiting for an organ since 1971. We can put that into perspective by comparing it with the 3,111 people who have been killed in Northern Ireland during the same period. We are talking about a needless waste of life—a tragedy being played out. I use the word "tragedy" purposely; it need not happen.

One reason why there is such a shortfall between organs needed and organs available is that the number of road deaths in this country has declined dramatically over the years, with the use of seat belts, air bags and motor cycle helmets. We now have some of the safest roads in the world. The House will appreciate that I am not complaining about that, merely referring to the reality. The most recent figures show that the United Kingdom had 81 road accident deaths per million people; Germany, 117 per million; France, 168 per million; and Spain, 172 per million. My concern today is to ensure that those people whose lives are cut short can lengthen and improve the quality of the lives of others.

The situation was brought home to me by the BBC 2 "40 Minutes" programme entitled "Will they ring tonight?" No one who witnessed the brave struggle facing thousands of families in this country daily and hourly as they wait for the telephone to ring—to be told that an organ has become available and that their life chance has arrived —can have failed to be moved. I have nothing but admiration for the families who miraculously discover the inner strength to cope with the pressure that is put on them. Stress and uncertainty greet their every waking hour. We must also not forget the stress experienced by doctors and nurses, as they see their patients fading away.

We have an opportunity to ease those people's pain. We have at our disposal the ability to give them a better chance of life. We cannot stand by. We do not have the moral choice to turn our backs on these people: we have to act.

I pay tribute to the amazing skills of our surgeons, doctors and nurses, who help to perform these miraculous operations. In 1992, 1,614 kidney transplants, 301 heart transplants, 53 heart and lung transplants, 89 lung transplants and 501 liver transplants were performed.

John Wallwork—whose father lives in my constituency —performed the first heart and lung transplant in the country. He works at that great centre of excellence, Papworth. He and others like him are testament to the high level of service and care available in hospitals in Britain today. It is thanks to their ability and dedication that the success rate of transplants is so high.

Notwithstanding that success rate, the number of people waiting for transplants, as at 30 March 1993, is almost 4,500 for kidneys, 270 for hearts, 231 for lungs and hearts, 124 for lungs and 109 for liver transplants.

The public's goodwill towards donating organs is evidenced by the number of people who have filled out an organ donor card—approximately 18 million people—but, unlike the American Express card, unfortunately not everyone never leaves home without it. In too many cases, the card is not available when needed.

The Government's commitment to the scheme is unquestioned. I applaud the campaign that took place earlier this year, on which the Government spent more than £1·5 million, to raise the profile of the donor card scheme, but we must harness the technology currently available to bring the organ donor scheme into the 21st century.

When I first considered how a scheme that matched organs to patients could be devised, I thought of using a normal credit card on which there would be stamped a heart symbol, so that in an emergency or accident doctors would know that the card holder wished his or her organs to be donated. Then I thought about why we needed a card. We use computers to store data on virtually every subject; why not use a computer to register organ donors?

The driver and vehicle licensing centre in Swansea has a computer that registers 35·5 million car licence holders; perhaps that computer would be appropriate for the scheme. The national insurance computer has an enormous capability; perhaps that could be utilised. The technology —into which hospitals could tap to find out what organs are available and match them to waiting patients—is available.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will know of the scheme that is operating in Wales called "Lifeline Wales". That scheme was launched by the Princess of Wales in 1986 and currently has 300,000 entries on its computer. The information on its computer is made available to intensive care units and neuro units in Wales. The computer can store up to 6 million entries, so even that scheme has a long way to go.

For any scheme to be a success, it must be sold well and the advantages of registeration to the nation spelled out. The donor message should be targeted towards certain groups, particularly young people. That could be achieved by advertising in magazines that are read by young people, or by advertising on television or by being featured in television programmes that are watched by them. Radio 1 recently ran a campaign to raise the profile of the problem of homeless people, which I heard on the Lynn Parsons show. It was so successful that it had to be extended so that more people could participate. The organ donor scheme could be equally successful if we target it carefully.

The two ten-minute Bills that were introduced this year promoting the opt-out scheme—under which it is assumed that people wish their organs to be used after their death unless they say otherwise—are evidence of the importance of the subject. Similar schemes are operated in Belgium, France and Austria. I oppose that measure: an assumption that inaction means consent is not good enough—we have to persuade people to come with us, not hope that the mass of people will slip into the system because they had not noticed that it was there. It would also lead to confusion for relatives—particularly if they are to be consulted about the scheme—and further pressure would then be put on doctors to negotiate with them.

Mr. Robert Johnson, a doctor working at Manchester royal infirmary, told me yesterday that he believed that doctors should be trained far more in the skills of coping with bereaved relatives when seeking their permission to use organs. He had recently attended the European donor hospital education programme in France; he said that he had learnt more in two days than in his entire previous working life. I believe that, if we can ensure that far more of our doctors are given an opportunity to take part in such schemes, we may be able to reduce the number of instances in which people are so shell shocked by the sudden death of a relative that they refuse to allow that relative's organs to be transplanted, although he had filled in the donor card.

Mr. Johnson also said that we must ensure that intensive care beds are made available and manned, giving a better chance to those who are critically ill, and also ensuring that those people's organs are in perfect condition should they die.

I cite two cases of brave young people who chose to donate the gift of life. One was a 10-year old called Paula. Last year, after being informed that she had a brain tumour, she told her mother that she wanted to donate her organs so that others could benefit. An eight-month-old baby girl received her liver; her heart went to a 57-year-old man; two teenagers received her kidneys; and her corneas went to two other people.

The other case is that of Peter Cox, who died four years ago aged 24. I pay tribute to his family, who have helped me with my campaign—his sister Christine, and his father John. Christine recently wrote this about her brother:

> "My brother Peter was born in Wolverhampton on 21st September 1965. He was educated at Malvern Boys College and graduated in Civil Engineering from Nottingham University. Pete was a keen Wolves supporter and enjoyed running the London Marathon in under 4 hours one year, an accomplishment I was unable to equal!
>
> Pete was 23 when he was found to have an inoperable brain tumour. It was particularly hard to understand since he had been healthy, brilliant, good and kind with a terrific sense of humour. Moreover, he was totally unselfish and always thought of others before himself.
>
> He was certainly one in a billion. Throughout his illness Pete remained brave and positive without complaining once about the difficulties and the pain he was experiencing. When the Specialist told us that the fight was lost and medication should be stopped, it was Peter who told us that he wanted to die as long as others could benefit from his organs. To our knowledge, possibly 17 people did and with his ultimate gift he saved lives and improved the quality of life for not only the recipients but their families as well.
>
> Peter died aged 24 on 12th November 1989."

One of the recipients wrote to Christine Cox afterwards. He said:

> "I have been in limbo for 6 years and now thanks to your nurses on the unit, I can start my life."

The quantity of life is obviously important, but the quality of life makes the quantity worth while.

I remind the Minister that Christmas—which is only a few days away—is a time for giving as well as receiving. Today, he has the opportunity to play Father Christmas to thousands of people by helping those who are able to give to do so, and allowing those in need to receive. I hope that he will take that opportunity. I believe that there is nothing in the world more precious than the gift of life; I plead with the Minister to give these people some good news this Christmas.

2.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) for the moving way in which he presented his case. I am very pleased that for the last topic for 1993 he has chosen the subject of organ donation.

We can be justly proud of the way in which the organ transplantation programme has developed in this country. This debate is about courage and life—the courage of relatives who say yes and the life that is saved or enhanced by our willingness to sign and hold a small card.

Advances in medicine have enabled the doubling of kidney transplants in the past 15 years from 849 in 1978 to 1,640 last year. There are now in the United Kingdom more than 11,500 people with functioning grafted kidneys —more than in any other country in Europe. There were just three heart transplants in 1979; last year there were 325. The liver transplant programme did not start until 1982. In that year, there were 21 liver transplants; last year, there were 506. We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the dedicated doctors, scientists, nurses and all others who helped to pioneer, develop and carry forward the transplantation programme. However, we should never forget that all those operations required donors—all volunteers or people who had died and whose relatives wished their organs to be used in that way. They, too, deserve to be remembered with deep gratitude.

It is perhaps ironic that advances in medicine similar to those that have enabled more transplants have contributed to the growing waiting list. In each of the past few years, there have been some 2,500 transplants of solid organs —kidneys, hearts, livers and lungs—but there are currently about 5,500 people awaiting such organs, of whom about 4,500 are awaiting kidneys.

The situation has arisen because advances in medicine have enabled many people to live who would previously have died. For example, more people than ever are receiving renal dialysis—more than 21,000 in 1991, an advance of 200 per cent. on 1978. However, the majority of dialysis patients would, I am sure, prefer to have a transplant. Many of them find dialysis unpleasant as well as inconvenient. If they were able to receive transplants, most of them would be able to lead fuller and much more independent lives. Anyone who attended the British Transplant Games in Newcastle this summer would have been tremendously impressed by the participants' ability not only to perform strenuous sports but to achieve such high standards.

For people awaiting hearts, livers and lungs, of course, there is at present no alternative. Without new organs, they will surely die. The remedy is to increase the supply of donor organs and the Government would dearly like that to happen. There is no shortage of funds or expertise for transplants; there is a shortage of donor organs. As my hon. Friend said, that shortage is in part due to the fact that the potential pool of suitable organs is limited. Generally speaking, organs are suitable only if they have come from people who have suffered sudden brain damage from a stroke, road accident or something similar. Organs must also be free of disease or other damage to be suitable for transplantation. That means that the maximum potential yield of suitable organs is only a few thousand a year.

Another problem is that the pool is shrinking. About a quarter of current donors are the victims of road accidents.

[Mr. John Bowis]

As my hon. Friend said, deaths from road accidents in the United Kingdom have, happily, been falling for many years; they have gone down from 5,554 in 1989 to 4,379 in 1992—a reduction of more than 20 per cent. That is welcome news, but it presents problems for organ transplantation. Deaths from other conditions that can result in organ donation are also going down—brain haemorrhages, for example. We are, therefore, faced with the prospect of fewer transplants unless the number of people prepared to be donors can be increased.

An important principle of organ donation, to which the Government have always subscribed, is that donation should be a matter of choice by the individual or his immediate family and that it should be a positive, altruistic gift. That was also recognised by the working group set up by the Government under the chairmanship of Sir Raymond Hoffenberg, a past president of the Royal College of Physicians, to consider ways of increasing the supply of donor organs. In its 1987 report, the working party made a number of recommendations. They included regional health authorities having plans and written guidance on organ donation and the identification of donors, education and publicity initiatives, education for medical and nursing professionals, a reimbursement scheme for donor hospitals, multi-organ retrieval teams and a donor declaration on driving licences. I am pleased to say that all those recommendations have now been implemented.

As I have said, one of the Hoffenberg recommendations was about publicity. Last year, we were able to increase the Department of Health's budget for organ donation publicity to £350,000. That has been used for a variety of purposes, including providing publicity material to charities, funding the Freefone advice line, research, exhibitions and displays, and publicity for ethnic minorities. In addition, the Department of Health funded the prime time television campaign last March. Given that the pool of potential donors is shrinking, it is vital to maintain publicity and, if possible, to increase the numbers.

At this point, I pay tribute to the many voluntary organisations that do so much valuable work to publicise organ donation. The Government must and will play their part, but not nearly so much could be achieved without the help of the voluntary organisations.

One of the main ways in which people can indicate their wish to be donors is by means of the donor card. People sometimes claim that the donor card scheme is not effective, or there would be more transplants. I disagree. Research has shown that the card is well known and popular. It is excellent publicity and good value for money and there can be no doubt that it has made a major contribution to the cause of transplants over the years. However, research has also shown that although about 70 per cent. of adults claim to favour the scheme, only about 25 per cent. claim to carry the card at all times. That underlines the point that my hon. Friend made. I suspect that the true figure is probably somewhat less.

That can cause hospitals considerable problems. It is, of course, possible to find out whether a person wished to be a donor even without a donor card, but the presence of a card makes life a lot easier for hospitals. That is why the department's publicity states:

"carry your card at all times"

—but unfortunately, many still do not.

In that connection, as my hon. Friend has pointed out, a computerised register of organ donors would be a help. That would enable hospitals to ascertain quickly whether a person is a donor. We are considering carefully options for such a register and we will consider the ideas that my hon. Friend has put forward today. We hope to make a decision early in 1994. I am not sure whether Father Christmas is allowed to arrive after Christmas as well as on the eve, but if my hon. Friend will allow him that latitude I am sure that he will see what he can do.

Whether or not a patient has a donor card, doctors invariably establish with his or her next of kin that they are content for the organs to be donated and will not proceed if the relatives object. That is common practice even in countries that operate opt-out schemes, where the presumption is that one is willing to donate one's organs unless one specifically expresses a wish not to. The reason for that practice, which in the United Kingdom and many other countries is not a legal requirement, is that certain people have strong religious or other beliefs in the integrity of the human body after death and we respect those views. Doctors also fear that families could be profoundly shocked if they discovered that their loved one's organs had been removed without their consent. The whole organ donation programme could be damaged if such a thing were to happen.

I am informed that refusal is virtually unknown if the relatives know that the deceased wished to donate. The problem is that relatives often do not know and it is hardly surprising that in their state of grief some of them refuse. In fact, refusal by relatives who do not know is the biggest single reason why suitable organs are lost to the transplant programme. About 30 per cent. of families who are asked refuse in that way. That is a loss we can ill afford. My Department is therefore funding a study into the reasons why relatives refuse. The study is expected to be completed by July of next year.

A number of people have called for a presumed consent or "opting out" system under which anyone's organs could be taken unless they had registered their objection. However, there is no consensus support in the medical profession or in the public generally for a system which would make retrieval of organs a presumed right on the part of the state. The evidence from countries where it is used seems to be that, after an initial increase, supply drops off as a result of people opting out—perhaps as a result of the publicity surrounding the introduction of such a scheme. It is also probable that even if such a scheme were introduced, doctors would still continue to consult relatives.

Another suggestion has been the "required request" which has been introduced in some states of the United States of America. That legislation requires doctors to ask relatives in every case if they may remove organs. Results so far are not encouraging and enforcement has been a problem. Doctors may judge that in some cases it would be inadvisable to approach relatives and we must respect that judgment.

In response to a point made by my hon. Friend, may I say that my Department is funding a pilot project in teaching doctors and nurses about techniques of approaching relatives. I hope that that will play a big part in enabling doctors to reassure relatives and to encourage the 30 per cent., to whom I referred, to be more willing to give their consent.

The standard of British transplantation services is second to none in the world, not least because those services have developed cautiously and responsibly. Survival following transplant is now 10 years in 85 per cent. of cases and the improvement in quality of life is enormous. Great progress has been made in the short period since transplantation began. I am sure that the House will want to join me in paying tribute to the dedication and skill of all those who have played a part in this story of success and to thank all those who, by their extraordinary generosity, have donated their organs to help others.

Madam Speaker, as I wish you, my hon. Friends, all hon. Members, Officers and staff of the House the very warmest of good wishes for Christmas and the coming year, there is one present that I hope everyone in the House and beyond it will consider: please give blood for Christmas. We need 10,000 donations every day. In every sense, such a donation, with the carrying of a donor card, really would be a present for life.

Madam Speaker: May I reciprocate by placing on record my good wishes for a merry Christmas to all hon. Members, Officers and staff of this House and I wish them a very happy and, if I may say so, peaceful new year.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes to Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 6 December 1993

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Public Libraries (Hansard)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what information he has received on the cancellation by public libraries of subscriptions to *Hansard* due to shortage of funds; and what steps he is taking to ensure the public access to the *Official Report* via public libraries is maintained with sufficient resources.

Mr. Sproat: I have received no information from library authorities, or from any other source, that public libraries have cancelled *Hansard* subscriptions. The responsibility for providing public library services, and for choosing their stock, rests with local library authorities, most of which provide an extensive range of official publications—among them, *Hansard.*

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether he has incorporated the code of practice for information security management, published by the British Standards Institution, into relevant contracts with information technology suppliers.

Mr. Sproat: The security requirements for IT systems and services used by central Government Departments are stated in the HMG IT security policy document. This document is supported by use of the CCTA risk analysis and management method—CRAMM—and baseline security for IT systems—BSITS—risk analysis methods and by supporting advice and guidance published by the HMG IT security authorities. These are regularly reviewed to ensure best practice, have been developed specifically for use within government and have been in operation for some time. The code of practice for information security management was developed by and established for use by commercial organisations and does not specifically address the requirements for the protection of official information.

NAO and PAC

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by the Department; and how many are marked "Not for Public Accounts Committee eyes".

Mr. Sproat: My Department, which was established in April 1992, has not yet reviewed the full range of files inherited from former parent Departments and it is not possible to give a figure for those bearing a marking "Not for NAO eyes". Since April 1992 DNH has opened a very small number of new files with this marking.

The marking "Not for NAO eyes" is used in accordance with an agreement between the Treasury and the National Audit Office, under which documents relating to the handling of relations between Departments and the NAO and PAC are not automatically available to the NAO while they are current.

There is no marking "Not for PAC eyes".

Film Industry

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list those London boroughs of which he is aware which *(a)* have fully dedicated personnel working to attract film production companies to locations and facilities in their area and *(b)* which do not have such facilities.

Mr. Brooke: I am informed that no London borough has personnel dedicated solely to this work, but all have staff who combine it with other tasks such as press, marketing or sponsorship work.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he is taking to ensure that overseas film producers have access to a single co-ordinating body which is specifically intended to give advice on film locations and facilities in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The British Film Commission, which is funded by my Department, is helping to finance a series of studies on the establishment of film commissioners in those areas of the United Kingdom, such as London, where no such bodies yet exist. As part of the research, business plans will be drawn up for use in raising funds for the establishment of commissions for London and elsewhere.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) if he will make a statement setting out the background of representations he has received and made about the future of the Elstree film studios;

(2) when he last met the owners of the Elstree film studios to discuss with them the current plans for the redevelopment of the site as a major retail outlet;

(3) what plans he has to make it his policy to seek to intervene to initiate discussions between relevant parties in an attempt to preserve the Elstree film studios as an ongoing commercial venture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The future use of Elstree studios is a matter for the commercial judgment of the owners, subject to any planning consent which may have to be obtained. Although I have received a number of representations about the matter, I have not met the owners of the studios and have no plans to intervene.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what information he has concerning the financial and other incentives which are made available by the Republic of Ireland to attract investment by film production companies.

Mr. Brooke: This is not a matter for the United Kingdom Government, but the Irish authorities are happy to provide Members with the information sought and I will place it in the Library when it is received.

National Lottery

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage which consultants have been retained by the Director General of the National Lottery to evaluate the lottery franchise bids.

Mr. Sproat: This is an operational issue and therefore a matter for the director general. I shall ask him to write to the hon. Member and place copies of his letter in the Libraries of the House.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Computerised Criminal Records

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has held with the Police Complaints Authority or the Data Protection Registrar concerning computerised criminal records and their use by police officers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Officials are in regular contact with the office of the Data Protection Registrar on these matters, but I am not aware of any similar discussions with the Police Complaints Authority.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions or dismissals of police officers for the persistent misuse of computerised criminal records have taken place in each of the last five years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not collected centrally.

"Sunday Trading—A Guide to the Options for Reform"

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which bus company is portrayed in the photograph on page 18 of the White Paper "Sunday Trading—A Guide to the Options for Reform", Cm 2300.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Leaside bus company.

Prison Ships

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what lessons his Department learned from the incident involving the MV Earl William in 1987; what account has been taken of such incidents in his consideration of the proposal for prison ships; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The incident involving the MV Earl William highlighted the importance of safety issues in using ships for purposes of detention.

Health and safety issues are being fully taken into account in considering the option of using marine detention facilities to accommodate the rising prison population.

This is only one option being considered; no final decision has been taken on its feasibility.

Electoral Register

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has of the number of electoral registration officers who have implemented the voluntary scheme described in Home Office circular RPA 356, which requires records to be retained by electoral registration officers detailing who has been sold copies of the electoral register; and what plans he has to make the scheme compulsory.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the number of electoral registration officers participating in the scheme set out in circular RPA 356 is not collected centrally. There are no plans to make the scheme compulsory.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department spends annually on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising and *(c)* press advertising; and what were the corresponding figures for 1985 and 1979.

Mr. Howard: Figures for expenditure on television and press advertising for 1979-80 were given in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 25 May 1984, column *587* and those for 1984-85 were given in answer to another question from the hon. Member for Newham, North-West on 19 December 1985, column *275*.

Figures for radio advertising for 1979-80 and 1984-85 were given in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 19 November 1986, column *203*.

During the current financial year—1993-94—advertising expenditure has been as follows:

	£
Television advertising	3,722,469
Radio advertising	120,450
Press advertising	478,129

Estimate projected spent on advertising for the remainder of this financial year—1993-94—subject to confirmation is:

	£
Television advertising	—
Radio advertising	—
Press advertising	212,000

Police Vests

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what consideration is being given by the police security scientific development branch to the production of a standard for *(a)* a knife-proof vest and *(b)* a bullet-resistant vest; when he expects a standard to be adopted; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what offers his Department has received from manufacturers of knife-proof and bullet-resistant vests to pay for the testing and approval of such equipment; if he will make it his policy to take advantage of such offers to enable a testing programme to be carried out quickly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The police scientific development branch—PSDB—has published standard procedures and criteria which it uses in assessing both types of vest.

No offers have been received from manufacturers to fund the testing of such equipment. It is primarily for chief officers of police and their police authorities to decide on the equipment to be used in an individual force. PSDB carries out tests on such equipment as part of its function as a research and development organisation and gives advice to police forces on the equipment's performance and characteristics. Charging manufacturers for testing products would compromise the PSDB's independence and reduce its capability to respond to the requirements of the police and the Home Office.

Jack the Ripper Diaries

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what inquiries have been conducted by the Metropolitan police into the alleged diaries of Jack the Ripper; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if the report of the Metropolitan police on the Jack the Ripper diaries has been sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner that the Metropolitan police have conducted inquiries into the origin and authenticity of the manuscript diary purporting to have been written by Jack the Ripper, and into the circumstances surrounding the publication of the manuscript. A report has been prepared and will be submitted shortly to the Crown Prosecution Service.

North Wales Police

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many additional police officers were *(a)* sought by and *(b)* authorised for the North Wales police in each year since 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is set out in the table:

North Wales Police	*Number of posts applied for*	*Number of posts approved*
1989-90	31	4
1990-91	21	21
1991-92	0	0
1992-93	30	17
1993-94	58	0
1994-95	58	0

My right hon. and noble Friend wrote to the hon. Member of 1 December, letting him know that there will be no establishment increases next year, and explaining a number of initiatives which will allow forces to increase their available operational resources during 1994-95. A copy of that letter has been placed in the Library.

Forced Subject Access

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to make forced subject access a criminal offence; and what estimate he has of the scale of the use of forced subject access.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The issue of enforced subject access is dealt with in the draft EU directive on data protection which is currently under negotiation in Brussels. The Government will review the position in the light of the outcome of that directive. No firm figures for the use of enforced subject access are available, but the Data Protection Registrar estimates that a substantial proportion of subject access requests in certain sectors may be instigated by third parties.

Visa Application Interviews

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women who were waiting for interview for (i) settlement, (ii) education and (iii) visitors' visas at Bombay, New Delhi, Karachi and Islamabad on 22 November.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The latest available information on settlement queues and non-settlement applications awaiting first interview for posts in Pakistan and India relates to 31 October 1993 and is given in the table. No information is available centrally on the gender of applicants.

Number of applicants for Entry Clearance Visas waiting for first interview at 31 October 1993

	Bombay	*New Delhi*	*Islamabad*
Settlement queues awaiting first interview			
Queue 1[1]	0	0	92
Queue 2[2]	56	337	1,172
Queue 3[3]	314	218	233
Queue 4[4]	262	137	769
Non-settlement applications awaiting first interview			
Visitors	1,124	39	231
Students	4	0	0

[1] Persons with a claim to the right of abode, dependent relatives over 70-years-old, special compassionate cases.

[2] Spouses, and children under 18-years-old.

[3] Fiance(e)s and others applying for the first time for resettlement.

[4] Re-applicants.

Information on the number of applicants in Karachi is not available centrally but all applicants are expected to receive a first interview within three weeks.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women remand prisoners being held in police cells in England and Wales as of 22 November.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 6 December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of remand prisoners held in police cells as at 22 November.

A total of 17 prisoners, all male, were held in police cells on 22 November. All 17 were received into prison custody the following day.

Home Leave

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many convicted criminals have failed to return from home leave in each of the last five years; and for what crimes they had been convicted;

(2) on what criteria convicted criminals are allowed home leave; and upon whose judgment home leave is granted;

(3) in which year the system of home leave was instituted; and how many convicted criminals have committed further offences while on home leave since the system was introduced;

(4) if he will indicate what representations he has received regarding the abuse by convicted criminals of home leave.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Mr. Bob Dunn, dated 6 December 1993

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the grant of home leave to offenders and the availability of statistics concerning prisoners who have committed offences or absconded whilst on home leave.

It is understood that the home leave scheme was introduced in the 1950s as a means of enabling suitable prisoners to have an opportunity to prepare for release as part of their throughcare and reintegration into society. Since then, there has been little change to existing policy and practice, which is set out in Circular Instruction 43/92, a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library. This offers guidance on the operation of the scheme to governors who are responsible for deciding, in the light of all known available information about a particular offender and the risk which he or she may present to public safety, whether it would be right to sanction the privilege of home leave. The operation of the current scheme is currently being reviewed by a working party which is expected to report shortly.

We are currently considering how statistics on offences which are committed by prisoners and other home leave failures can be best collated centrally. I regret to say that at present the information you request is not available.

Security Cameras

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will publish crime figures for those local authorities which have taken steps to install security cameras for the 12 months prior to and after installation;

(2) which local authorities have, or are considering the installation of, security cameras in their town centres, in association with the police.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not available.

Illegal Weapons

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have been arrested in Liverpool in connection with stockpiling of illegal weapons in each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is not available in the form requested.

National Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by the Department; and how many are marked "Not for Public Accounts Committee eyes".

Mr. Howard: There is no marking "Not for PAC eyes".

No central record of files marked "Not for NAO eyes" is maintained. The information could be obtained only by examining individually each of the 1·5 million extant files in my Department, and could therefore only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

The marking "Not for NAO eyes" is used rarely and in accordance with an agreement between the Treasury and the National Audit Office, under which documents relating to the handling of relations between Departments and the NAO and PAC are not automatically available to the NAO while they are current.

Background Radiation

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the locations of the nuclear *(a)* out-stations and *(b)* central control units funded by his Department that monitor background radiation; and what other types of monitoring they are responsible for.

Mr. Yeo: I have been asked to reply. Background radiation in terms of gamma radiation dose rates is monitored by the radioactive incident monitoring network —RIMNET—operated by the Department of the Environment. The system currently has monitoring stations at:

Aberporth
Aldergrove
Aviemore
Benbecula
Boulmer
Brize Norton
Carlisle
Coltishall
Coningsby
Clunie
Dalcross
Dyce
Elmdon
Eskdalemuir
Exeter
Finningley
Gatwick
Heathrow
Hurn
Herstmonceux
Jersey
Kirkwall
Leeming
Lerwick
Leuchars
Lossiemouth
Lyneham
Macrihanish
Manchester
Manston
Marham
Mumbles Head
Newcastle
Oban
Ronaldsway
Shawbury
Stansted
Stornoway
St. Mawgan
Tiree
Valley
Watnall
Wick
Wyton

System upgrade work, nearing completion, will increase the total number of RIMNET monitoring stations to 92. Its control centre is located at the Department's headquarters in Marsham street, London.

ENVIRONMENT

Bathing Water Quality

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will announce the results of the current year's bathing water quality monitoring; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 1 December to my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington), *Official Report,* columns 558-59.

Water Charges

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether council tax bands will be used as the basis of assessment for water charges after the year 2000; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: It is for each water company to decide the basis on which it charges customers subject to the Director General of Water Services' powers in section 2 of the Water Industry Act 1991 to control discriminatory pricing. After 31 March 2000 companies may not use rateable value. During the passage of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, we gave a commitment to confine use of information on the council tax banding of individual properties to use for council tax purposes.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the water regulator about the charging for water by property bands standardised bills similar to the system used for the council tax.

Mr. Yeo: The basis of charging for water is a matter for the water companies. It is among the topics discussed at meetings between the Department and the Director General of Water Services.

Packaging Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to discuss with the Chancellor of the Exchequer opportunities to introduce financial incentives in support of mandatory targets established for industry to meet in reducing packaging waste and to promote recycling of packaging wastes.

Mr. Yeo: The Government believe that it should not be necessary to impose mandatory targets to achieve their objectives of reducing packaging waste and securing increased levels of recovery and recycling. In our producer responsibility initiative, we have given industry the task of devising the most cost-effective means of recovering between 50 and 75 per cent. of packaging waste by the year 2000. We expect industry to provide us by Christmas with a plan for achieving those targets.

We have indicated that, wherever possible, we will use economic instruments to secure our environmental objectives rather than regulation. Producer responsibility is one such economic instrument. Another possibiility which we are considering is the idea of a landfill levy, which could provide an incentive to reduce waste and encourage higher levels of recovery, including recycling.

Wedholme Flow

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the area, as a percentage of the peatland site of special scientific interest, of Wedholme Flow, covered by the agreement between English Nature and Fisons, where the commercial extraction of peat will be allowed to continue; and what assessment he has made of the effect on the level of biodiversity.

Mr. Yeo: One hundred and sixty hectares, some 21 per cent. of the Wedholme flow SSSI, will continue to be worked for peat extraction. In addition to the remaining uncut areas, English Nature has been actively managing 103 hectares of previously worked land since early in 1992. Site management staff report that recolonisation of cut-over areas is proceeding rapidly, following restoration of water levels. Biodiversity levels appear to be increasing.

Combined Heat and Power, Wales

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many combined heat and power plants are in operation in Wales; how many of these are of the combined-cycle type; and what proportion of delivered energy is provided by the plants.

Mr. Yeo: Latest estimates suggest there are now 59 combined heat and power—CHP—sites in Wales with a total installed capacity of approximately 190 MWe. Of these, none is believed to be of the combined-cycle type. It is estimated that, in 1992, on-site electricity generation from CHP plants in Wales was approximately 1,000 GWh. In addition to this, sales of electricity to consumers in Wales totalled 16,400 GWh. Therefore, over 5 per cent of electricity used in Wales is provided by CHP.

On a national level, CHP meets about 4 per cent. of United Kingdom electricity demand.

Recycled Materials

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is currently taking to establish new markets for recycled materials.

Mr. Yeo: The Government are encouraging the development of new markets by providing industry with an incentive to make greater use of recycled materials. Our producer responsibility initiative, launched in July, provides such an incentive by, for example, giving industry the responsibility for meeting targets for the recovery of packaging waste and bearing the costs of meeting those targets. We have made it clear that the industry's plan, which we expect to receive shortly, must include a willingness to increase demand for recycled material where it meets the appropriate standards.

The Government are also encouraging the development of new markets for recycled materials through the environmental technology innovation scheme, run jointly by my Department and the Department of Trade and Industry, and the DTI's environmental management options scheme and Euroenviron scheme. Grants awarded under these schemes include £835,120 to Anaplast to develop innovative technology for recycling mixed plastics and another of £638,218 to Bird Commercial Metals for a project which examines the potential markets for materials recovered from scrapped vehicles.

Volumetric Meters

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many domestic properties in each region had a volumetric meter installed on 1 October.

Mr. Yeo: The Director General of Water Services has information on the extent of metering for water.

Biodiversity

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to hold a review of policies to conserve biodiversity following the publication of the 1990 countryside survey.

Mr. Yeo: Countryside survey 1990 reports on the 12-year period leading up to 1990. Since 1990 the Government have set in place a range of positive policy measures in the countryside. The United Kingdom has also strongly advocated the integration of environmental considerations in the reform of the common agricultural policy.

In June 1992 the Prime Minister and over 150 other Heads of State or Government signed the convention on biological diversity at Rio de Janeiro. In response to the convention, the United Kingdom biodiversity action plan will be published in January. The results from countryside survey 1990 have played a part in setting priorities for that plan.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will investigate the reasons for the biodiversity losses recorded in the 1990 countryside survey.

Mr. Yeo: My Department is undertaking further scientific work to understand causes of changes reported by countryside survey. Examples are: in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, a project in Somerset levels to examine the effect of various fertiliser levels on plant diversity; in collaboration with the Economic and Social Research Council, a project at Wye college on the socio-economic factors that underlie the reported changes; and a project using a modelling approach to predict the effects of climate and policy changes on some of our rarer habitats.

Car Boot Sales

Mr. Spring: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what powers are available to local authorities to control car boot sales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988—GDO—gives a general grant of planning permission for the temporary use of land for car boot sales for up to 14 days in any calendar year. More frequent use requires planning permission to which local authorities may attach conditions to protect amenity.

Local authorities may make a direction under article 4 of the GDO to withdraw this permitted development. Where this is done, a specific planning application would be needed for any temporary market.

Section 37 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 enables local authorities to require a month's notice of a car boot sale. This gives local authorities time to make any necessary provision to avoid disturbance or to make an article 4 direction; where it appears that there has been a breach of planning control —for example, where the 14-day period has been exceeded —the local authority may serve an enforcement notice requiring the breach to be remedied; at any time before an enforcement notice takes effect the local authority can serve a "stop notice" which has the effect of prohibiting any person on whom it is served from carrying out or continuing any specified operations on the land. Failure to comply with a "stop notice" is punishable in a magistrates court with a fine of up to £20,000.

Local authorities have a wide range of other powers to help them. These include powers under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to control noise and litter, powers under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to regulate parking and powers under consumer protection legislation.

Asbestos

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has concerning the total annual consumption by the United Kingdom construction industry of *(a)* corrugated roofing material and *(b)* man-made slates; and what is the total estimated value of that consumption;

(2) if he will give a breakdown for each of the last 10 years for which figures are available of the percentage of *(a)* corrugated roofing materials and *(b)* man-made slates, used by the United Kingdom construction industry, and which were in each case made from (i) non-asbestos materials and (ii) materials including asbestos;

(3) what information he has about the reasons for the increasing percentage of total corrugated roofing materials and man-made slates which are manufactured from asbestos products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Information in the detail requested is not collected by the Department.

Government Car Pool

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the annual cost of the Government car pool; what are the categories of expenditure; and how many cars and how many staff are in the pool.

Mr. Gummer: The Government car service currently has 25 pool cars and 27 pool drivers, which include back-up for Ministers' drivers. The annual cost of the GCS pool service is estimated at some £750,000, staff costs account for about 75 per cent. and vehicle costs about 15 per cent. of the total annual cost.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration has been given to sites, other than Gosport, for the construction by Nirex of a low and intermediate-level radioactive waste repository.

Mr. Yeo: In the 1980s, Nirex investigated the use of a disused anhydrite mine at Billingham in Cleveland for the deep disposal of long-lived intermediate-level radioactive waste and sites at Bradwell, Elstow, Fulbeck and South Killingholme for the near-surface disposal of low-level radioactive waste.

Investigations at Billingham ceased in 1985, when ICI, the owners of the mine, decided not to make it available to Nirex. Investigation of the other sites ended in 1987, when Nirex concluded that the economic advantages of separate near-surface disposal of low-level waste were not as great as had been thought and that it would be preferable to develop a multi-purpose deep site for low and intermediate-level waste.

Dounreay in Caithness and a site near Sellafield in west Cumbria, neighbouring the village of Gosforth, have both been considered as possible sites for the multi-purpose repository. At present, Nirex is concentrating its investigations on Sellafield.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the earliest date he expects that a waste repository for heat-generating nuclear waste will be operational in the United Kingdom; and which sites have been considered for such a repository.

Mr. Yeo: High-level radioactive waste is treated and stored at the surface for a period of at least 50 years, which will allow heat generated by the decay of radioactivity to reduce. Decisions about the subsequent management of the waste will be taken in due course.

Environmental Organisations

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the expected outturn of expenditure in the current financial year on *(a)* the National Rivers Authority, *(b)* Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and *(c)* the Countryside Commission; and what is the budgeted figure for HMIP for 1994-95.

Mr. Yeo: The expected expenditure outturn for 1993-94 is £444 million for the National Rivers Authority, £27·4 million for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and £44 million for the Countryside Commission. The budget for HMIP for 1994-95 is £29.4 million.

Water Leaks

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of water supply was lost in each region through leakage through the water distribution system and what percentage from customer supply pipelines.

Mr. Yeo: The information requested can be found on page 27 of "The Cost of Water Delivered and Sewage Collected 1992-93", published in October 1993 by the Office of Water Services, a copy of which is in the Library.

NAO and PAC

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by the Department; and how many are marked "Not for Public Accounts Committee eyes".

Mr. Gummer: The only category of file not available for National Audit Office view are those which relate to relations between the Department and the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee. This is fully in accordance with the standing agreement between the Treasury and the National Audit Office. This applies to 214 files out of 1·4 million.

Housing Action Trusts

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will give the previous experience in the housing field of the current chairman of the Liverpool housing action trust; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what criteria are used in the selection of chairman of housing action trusts; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Housing action trust chairmen are chosen for the personal qualities and experience they can bring to the job, within the framework set out in schedule 7 to the Housing Act 1988. I am pleased with the progress the housing action trust has made under her leadership since it started earlier this year.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the public expenditure figures for housing action trusts from 1991-92 onwards, at 1992-93 prices.

Sir George Young: At 1992-93 prices, public expenditure on housing action trusts was £10·5 million in 1991-92 and £26·5 million in 1992-93.

The public expenditure baseline for the current and the three subsequent years are, on the basis of the latest available GDP deflator:

	million
1993-94	84·1
1994-95	82·1
1995-96	80·8
1996-97	78·8

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the present posts held by the chairwoman of Liverpool housing action trust and the total salaries received.

Sir George Young: The chairman of the Liverpool housing action trust holds one other post within my right hon. Friend's area of responsibility, namely a board member of the Merseyside development corporation. Board membership of the MDC attracts an annual remuneration of £5,030. Details of earnings relating to the HAT chairmanship were given in my response to the hon. Gentleman on 2 November 1993, *Official Report,* column *101.*

Urban Development Corporation

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the public expenditure figures for urban development corporations from 1981-82 in 1992-93 prices in the same form as his answer of 3 November, *Official Report,* columns *208-9.*

Sir George Young: Grant in aid paid to urban development corporations in England from 1981-82 to 1992-93 in 1992-93 prices, is set out in the table:

Year	*£ million (at 1992-93 prices)*
1981-82	68·5
1982-83	106·6
1983-84	156·0
1984-85	138·3
1985-86	121·6
1986-87	128·4
1987-88	[1]218·4
1988-89	323·7
1989-90	568·5
1990-91	670·7
1991-92	622·5
1992-93	515·8

[1] The figures include provision for the docklands light railway from 1987-88 onwards.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the sites in England receiving imported toxic waste; and what was the level of toxic waste disposed of at each site for the year 1992-93.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* The amount of hazardous waste imported for disposal[1] at facilities in England in 1992-93 was as follows:

Consignee	*Totals (Tonnes)*
Biffa Waste Services Ltd., Bray, Berkshire	240·9
Cleanaway Ltd., Ellesmere Port, Cheshire	21·9
Cleanaway Ltd., Preston, Lancashire	13·0
Collier Industrial Waste Ltd., Trafford Park, Manchester	1,075·3
DP Effluent Treatment Ltd., Runcorn, Cheshire	122·7
Grosvenor Power Services, Carrington, Manchester	84·9
Grundon Waste Ltd., Colnbrook, Buckinghamshire	342·2
Lanstar Ltd., Salford, Manchester	93·8
Lanstar Waste Treatment, Cadishead, Manchester	9,083·5
Leigh Environmental Ltd., Birmingham	5,977·0
North London Waste Authority, Edmonton, London	4,517·6
Polymeric Treatment Ltd., Walsall, West Midlands	3,344·9
Progressive Waste Ltd., Trafford Park, Manchester	235·6
Rechem Ltd., Southampton	5,989·4
RF Winder Electrical Ltd., Stanningley, Leeds	7·2
Triton Transformers, Newark on Trent, Nottinghamshire	303·1
Whelan Environmental Services, Birmingham	474·6
Grand Total	31,927·6

[1] *Source:* Consignment notes under the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988.

Housing

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total number of local authority housing tenancies available within *(a)* England, *(b)* each housing authority in England and *(c)* Yorkshire and Humberside for each year since 1980.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* The information derived from local authorities' annual housing investment programme returns is given.

Local authority dwellings either occupied or available for letting; at 1 April each year

	England (thousands)	*Yorkshire and Humberside (thousands)*
1980	4,667	582
1981	4,815	588
1982	4,719	580
1983	4,576	559
1984	4,477	550
1985	4,425	544
1986	4,356	537
1987	4,325	531
1988	4,242	520
1989	4,098	505
1990	3,959	485
1991	3,835	473
1992	3,787	467
1993	3,706	460

Notes:

1. The information up to 1986 excludes local authority dwellings situated outside the authority's own area.
2. The information up to 1982 does not include vacant local authority dwellings that are available for letting.
3. The figures exclude nominations to housing associations.

I have also today placed in the Library a table giving corresponding figures for each local authority in England.

Desertification

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the next meeting of the intergovernmental negotiating committee for a convention to combat desertification is planned; when the draft resolution on desertification and regional instrument for Africa is expected to be finalised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply.

The next meeting of the intergovernmental negotiating committee—INC—will be in New York from 17 to 28 January 1994. The United Nations General Assembly has directed that the convention is to be completed by June 1994. The INC has agreed that a regional instrument for Africa will also be completed by that date.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Private Medical Insurance

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much per person granted tax relief it costs to administer tax relief on private medical insurance.

Mr. Dorrell: The annual cost to the Exchequer of administering the tax relief on premiums under private medical insurance contracts averages 42p for each person granted tax relief.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what tax relief, rebates or allowances are received by companies offering private medical insurance to their staff.

Mr. Dorrell: The general rule when calculating the trading profits of a business is that a deduction is allowed for expenses incurred wholly and exclusively for business purposes. If an employer incurs expenditure in offering private medical insurance to employees, the expenses would generally qualify as a deduction under this rule as part of the remuneration package.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the cost to the Treasury of tax relief on private medical insurance in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991, *(c)* 1992 and *(d)* 1993;

(2) what would be the total saving to the Exchequer of scrapping tax relief on private medical insurance.

Mr. Dorrell: The estimated costs in each year since 1990-91 are given in the table:

Year	*Cost of tax relief on private medical insurance for those aged 60 or more (£ million)*
1990-91	40
1991-92	60
1992-93	70
1993-94	80

The estimated saving to the Exchequer if tax relief on premiums paid in 1994-95 was abolished is £85 million including administrative costs.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether private medical insurance premia will be liable to tax.

Sir John Cope: Under the proposals announced by my right hon. and learned Friend in his Budget statement, private medical insurance premia will be liable to insurance premium tax. Premia in respect of long-term insurance as defined in the Insurance Companies Act 1982 —which includes permanent health insurance and life assurance—will be exempt.

Black Economy

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to tackle the black economy.

Mr. Dorrell: Details may be found in the chapter entitled "Compliance" in the annual report of the board of Inland Revenue—copies of which were laid before Parliament on 29 September 1993.

Car Boot Sales

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if Inland Revenue officials routinely inspect the tax returns of those who trade frequently at car boot sales;

(2) what is his estimate of the amount of revenue collected in respect of business done at car boot sales;

(3) how many sellers at car boot sales are assessed for tax on their trading income.

Mr. Dorrell: The Inland Revenue does not record data which relate specifically to car boot sales.

Press and Publicity Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many press and publicity officers are currently employed in his Department; and how many were employed in *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* 1979.

Mr. Nelson: Nine press and publicity officers are currently employed in my Department.

Information for the years 1979-85 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was capital spending as a proportion of gross domestic product for each year since 1970.

Mr. Nelson: The latest estimates of gross domestic fixed capital formation and gross domestic product at current and constant market prices are available on the CSO database which may be accessed by the House of Commons Library. The relevant database identifiers are DECR and CAOB at current prices and DECU and CAOO at constant 1990 prices.

Overseas Visits

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many visits abroad the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My predecessor and I have made the following visits abroad this year:

Date	*Destination*	*Purpose*	*Cost of Chancellor's participation*
18 January	Brussels	ECOFIN	£55
13 to 16 April	Tokyo	Meeting of G7 Foreign and Finance Ministers	£7,759
19 April	Luxembourg	ECOFIN	£296
28 April to 1 May	Washington	G7 Finance Ministers' and Spring meetings of IMF/IBRD	£4,703
21 to 23 May	Billund, Denmark	Informal ECOFIN	£709
6 to 7 June	Luxembourg	ECOFIN	£529+
5 to 9 July	Tokyo	G7 Summit	£4,346
12 July	Brussels	ECOFIN	£176
18 to 19 July	Germany	Meetings with Finance Minister; Bundesbank; and meetings with and speech to businessmen	£1,072
1 to 2 August	Brussels	ECOFIN	£70
12 to 13 September	Brussels	ECOFIN	£272
24 to 29 September	Washington	G7 Finance Ministers and annual meetings of IMF/IBRD	£0
8 to 10 October	Genval, Belgium	Informal ECOFIN	£700
24 to 25 October	Luxembourg	ECOFIN	£464
21 to 22 November	Brussels	ECOFIN	£189

The cost estimates provided take account of travel and subsistence and are net of refunds paid by the EC and the International Monetary Fund.

In each case, the purpose of the visit was to promote and defend British interests in discussions with overseas Governments.

Financial Services

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what criteria are used in the selection of members of the board of the Securities and Investments Board who are to represent the interests of the public under the terms of the Financial Services Act 1986;

(2) when he expects to announce the appointment of new members of the board of the Securities and Investments Board;

(3) what assessment he has made of the proper balance on the board of the Securities and Investments Board between members representing the interests of persons carrying on investment business and the interests of the public.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the appointment to the board on 25 November of Lord Alexander of Weedon, QC, Mrs. Rosalind Gilmore, Mr. John Kennedy, Dr. Oonagh McDonald and Lord Stewartby and on 2 December of Mr. Andrew Winckler who has been appointed head of SIB's supervision division. My right hon. and learned Friend and the Governor of the Bank of England have taken this opportunity to restructure the board in line with the recommendations in Andrew Large's review of financial services regulation published last May "Making the Two Tier System Work". All board members are appointed in a personal capacity and do not serve as representatives of particular interests or associations.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) when he expects the Personal Investment Authority to take over the responsibilities of current self-regulatory organisations;

(2) what action he is taking to rationalise the number of regulatory bodies governing the financial services industry;

(3) what action he is taking to ensure the swift and successful setting up of the Personal Investment Authority.

Mr. Nelson: I understand that the PIA intends to apply to SIB for recognition in the next few months.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he is taking to monitor the performance of the investment funds associated with endowment mortgages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury has no role in monitoring the performance of investment funds.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to instruct the relevant regulatory bodies to introduce a statutory qualification for *(a)* tied insurance salespeople and *(b)* independent financial advisers.

Mr. Nelson: The Securities and Investments Board, the regulatory body which is the designated agency under the Financial Services Act 1986, recently approved new training and competence requirements.

Air Passenger Duty

Mr. McDonald: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many of the regular scheduled passenger flights to the Scottish islands he estimates will be exempted from the air passenger duty from 1 October 1994; and if he will make it his policy to provide a general exemption for all regular scheduled passenger flights to and from the Scottish islands, and within the Scottish islands, regardless of the number of passengers that can be carried.

Sir John Cope: Based on October 1993 timetables, it is estimated that about a quarter of flights to the Scottish islands from the mainland and about three quarters of inter-island flights will be exempt from air passenger duty. The exemption relates to criteria for Civil Airports Authority airline licensing requirements. It would be difficult to justify relieving all flights in one particular area but not elsewhere.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the Central Statistical Office will assess the costs and benefits of collecting, analysing and publishing a full geographical breakdown of invisible trade, country by country, on the same basis as that which is published on visible trade.

Mr. Nelson: The Central Statistical Office is currently reviewing with its data suppliers the need for, and the cost of, collecting more geographical detail on United Kingdom invisible trade. For some components of invisible trade, very detailed information is already available and published, for example, travel credits and debits. For other components, for example, financial services, such information would be expensive to collect and would impose a high burden on reporting businesses. In some cases, notably investment income, there are difficult conceptual problems—it is sometimes not clear who the foreign counterpart is for some types of transaction.

Given these difficulties the Central Statistical Office has no current plans to collect a full geographical breakdown of invisible trade country by country. The Central Statistical Office, however, keeps such matters under review.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his future plans for publishing detailed statistics of visible United Kingdom trade with each of the present and future individual member states of the EC.

Mr. Nelson: Regular publication of statistics of trade with individual members of the European Union has now restarted following the introduction of a new statistical system on 1 January. Detailed monthly data are available through marketing agents appointed by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise. Summaries are published monthly in Business Monitor MM20A "Overseas Trade Statistics of the UK with the World". Details at commodity code level are published quarterly in Business Monitor MQ20, "Overseas Trade Statistics of the UK with countries within the EC". The Central Statistical Office will shortly begin publishing seasonally adjusted estimates of trade with individual members of the European Union—without any commodity detail—in its first releases and on their database, access to which is available through the Library of the House.

Data are available for countries which are not members of the European Union from a similar range of publication and sources.

NAO and PAC

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many files marked "Not for NAO eyes" are held by the Department; and how many are marked "Not for PAC eyes".

Mr. Byers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by his Department.

Mr. Nelson *holding answer 3 December 1993]:* Of the Treasury's 93,168 files dating from January 1987, 211 bear the marking "Not for NAO eyes".

This marking is used in accordance with an agreement between the Treasury and the National Audit Office, under which documents relating to the handling of relations between Departments and the NAO and PAC are not automatically available to the NAO while they are current.

There is no marking "Not for PAC eyes".

TRANSPORT

London Underground (Power Failures)

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated cost to London Underground of the power failure on 24 November, including loss of income and the refund of fares, as well as costs directly attributable to the restoration of power supplies and the evacuation of passengers.

Mr. Norris: London Underground Ltd. currently estimates that the total costs which it will have incurred as a result of the power failure on 24 November, including loss of revenue, are likely to be around £2 million.

Press and Publicity

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many press and publicity officers are currenty employed in his Department; and how many were employed in *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* 1979.

Mr. Norris: The number of press and publicity officers currently employed in the Department of Transport and employed in 1985 is as follows:

	Number
Currently employed	21
Employed in 1985	17

Before 1984-85 the information division was a common service of the Department of Transport, Environment and Property Services Agency and information concerning the number of press and publicity officers working for the Department of Transport is not available.

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has incorporated the code of practice for information security management, published by the British Standards Institution, into relevant contracts with information technology suppliers.

Mr. Norris: The security requirements for information technology systems and services used by Central Government Departments are stated in the HMG IT security policy document. This document is supported by use of the CCTA risk analysis and management method —CRAMM—and baseline security for IT systems—BSITS—risk analysis methods and by supporting advice and guidance published by the HMG IT security authorities. These are regularly reviewed to ensure best practice, have been developed specifically for use within government and have been in operation for some time. The code of practice for information security management was developed by and established for use by commercial organisations and does not specifically address the requirements for the protection of official information.

EC Transport Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what matters were discussed; what proposals were put forward by the United Kingdom; what decisions were taken; and what were the voting records of each member state at the European Transport Council on 29 to 30 November in Brussels.

Mr. MacGregor: My noble Friend Lord Caithness and I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council reached political agreement on a directive giving the force of Community law to provisions on crew training standards agreed in the International Maritime Organisation—IMO—and requiring enhanced standards of communication on board passenger ships and tankers. The Council also agreed the main points of a draft directive establishing common rules and standards for classification societies. My noble Friend emphasised the importance for maritime safety of setting both clear rules and demanding standards for these societies, and secured safeguards which will assist high quality societies such as *Lloyd's Register* to provide services throughout the Community. In response to concerns expressed by a number of member states, including the United Kingdom, the Commission undertook to make a statement for the minutes, making it clear that neither directive would affect the active participation of individual member states in the IMO.

The Commission reported on its intentions for EUROS, the proposed Community shipping register. Significant difficulties remain. The Commission will be bringing forward new proposals in which proposed financial measures are likely to be restricted to employment, training and fleet modernisation.

The Council agreed draft conclusions supporting a Commission fact-finding mission to west and central Africa to examine the existing system of unilaterally imposed cargo restrictions. The Commission is expected to bring forward, for future consideration by the Council, a new draft mandate for negotiations with the Governments of the countries concerned.

The Commission undertook to present, by the middle of 1994, a report on key issues arising in the field of maritime competition policy. A draft Council resolution on this issue was therefore not pursued.

The Council approved conclusions on the Commission's communication on road safety which pay due regard to the principle of subsidiarity. It also adopted a decision setting up a Community road safety database on which the United Kingdom and one other member state abstained. My noble Friend made it clear that the United Kingdom was not opposed to the principle of a Community road safety database, but was abstaining on the decision since we did not believe that the proposed Community data base would provide added value to existing national systems and would duplicate work being done in other international forums such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

My noble Friend referred to the recent coach and minibus accidents in the United Kingdom and to national concern about the current lack of compulsion to fit seat belts in such vehicles. He explained that the United Kingdom was evaluating the lessons to be learned from the recent accidents to see what action might be taken. The Council agreed, in principle, that 1995 should be the year of young drivers.

The Council reached political agreement on a directive establishing the general principles for the investigation of air accidents. It received an interim report on the work of the committee looking at the aviation industry, which considered that some airlines were facing problems, but that any reversal of the single market in aviation adopted during the United Kingdom presidency should be resisted. My noble Friend recommended that there should be no going back on this "third package", which should be quickly implemented in full. He made clear the United Kingdom's view that state aids distorted competition and cushioned their recipients from economic reality. The Council failed to agree a set of conclusions, but the presidency issued its own.

The Council reached political agreement on a draft directive which, from 1996, will harmonise the end-date of summer time at the end of October. This, in effect, will bring 10 member states into line with the current practice in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. The United Kingdom expressed support for the substance of the directive, but entered a minutes statement to make it clear that, on grounds of subsidiarity, we would have preferred a recommendation to a directive.

The Commission reported on its work on transport links with Greece. The Council will return to this matter at a subsequent meeting.

A proposed mandate for aviation and road haulage negotiations with Switzerland was discussed. This will now be prepared for formal adoption by the Council in April at the latest, and if possible before.

The Commission said that it would await the new Parliament before bringing forward a longer term legislative programme associated with the Transport White Paper, on which the Council agreed conclusions in June. The Commission also reported that proposals on the licensing of railway undertakings and access to railway infrastructure were nearing completion. The Council discussed transport and disabled people, transport intermediaries and inland waterways. The Commission agreed to a request by a number of member states, including the United Kingdom, to report on the transport of live animals. The Council was informed that Germany, Denmark and the Benelux countries had completed their work on a regional user charge to be imposed on lorries.

The transport ministers of six central and eastern European countries joined the Council for a meeting over lunch.

Only one formal vote was taken, on the adoption of a Community road safety database. As noted above, the United Kingdom abstained.

Buses (Disabled Access)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of new buses brought into service have access for disabled people.

Mr. Freeman: Over 90 per cent. of all new buses bought in the United Kingdom are now complying completely, or in part, with the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee specification to help large numbers of elderly and ambulant disabled people travel by bus. This specification, which covers a wide range of simple low-cost measures including lower steps, better handrails and the use of colour contrasts, is being revised and tightened up and will be reissued shortly.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now make it his policy to ensure that all new buses brought into service have access for disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have no plans for this at the present time. We are, however, working closely with the European Commission on a draft construction directive for buses, which may provide for future generations of new buses to be more accessible. In the meantime, we are funding a low floor bus demonstration project in North Tyneside to encourage greater use of such vehicles. This is being monitored and the results will be made available to all operators. A similar trial involving 68 buses is being undertaken in London.

Charter for Bus Services

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for a charter for bus services; what standards he considers should appertain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: We are beginning to consider with London Transport the quality-of-service objectives to apply to its bus services from April 1994. The standards embodied by those objectives will be a key element of the charter for bus passengers in London, which it is planned to publish next spring.

Train Doors (Safety)

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when British Rail last undertook a comprehensive check of door locks on trains; how many were found to be defective; how much it has cost to rectify; how many are all now certified as safe; and how many incidents there have been of doors swinging open unexpectedly in the last 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail undertakes comprehensive checks of coach door locks in a continuous cycle of maintenance and repair. If a lock is found to be defective, immediate action is taken to rectify it. Information relating to the number and cost of defective locks identified through the maintenance procedure is not collected centrally by BR. The average number of locks changed annually during normal maintenance is approximately 2,300 at an average cost, with labour, of £200 per lock.

There is no record of the number of incidents of doors opening unexpectedly during the last 10 years. The Health and Safety Executive's annual "Report on Railway Safety" shows how often people fall out of trains, how many doors were found irregularly open and how many collisions there have been with open doors on adjacent tracks. Further information is contained in the report on an investigation by the HSE, "Passenger Falls from Train Doors". Copies of both reports are in the House Library.

London Buses

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will explain the basis on which the sum to be made available to London Transport out of the anticipated receipts from the sale of the London Buses Subsidiary Companies was derived.

Mr. Norris: Our advisers have made an estimate of the London Buses Ltd. privatisation proceeds which has been taken into account in the calculation of London Transport's grant settlement. For the present, that estimate must remain commercially confidential.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority to publish its fifth annual report.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority published its fifth annual report today. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library.

Departmental Files

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 29 November, *Official Report*, column *348*, if the total number of files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" include those held by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency and the Driver, Vehicle and Operators and Information Technology agency; and how many such files are held by agencies accountable to his Department.

Mr. Norris: Yes. Seventy of the total are held by the Department's six executive agencies.

Non-departmental Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state, for each of the executive non-departmental bodies sponsored by his Department, whether the public has a statutory right to attend all board or committee meetings and to inspect *(a)* the minutes of meetings, *(b)* the annual reports and *(c)* the annual accounts.

Mr. Norris: There is no statutory right for the public to attend board or committee meetings of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by the Department or to inspect minutes of meetings. The Traffic Director for London is required by statute to submit an annual report and statement of accounts, a copy of which my right hon. Friend is required to lay before each House of Parliament. Copies are available on request from the Traffic Director. My right hon. Friend is responsible for producing the general lighthouse fund accounts. The fund's accounts consolidate the accounts of the three general lighthouse authorities; the Corporation of Trinity House, the Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses and the Commissioners of Irish Lights. These accounts are laid before Parliament and are published by HMSO.

Fishing Industry

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* fatalities and *(b)* injuries were suffered in the fishing industry in 1987, 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* For United Kingdom fishing vessels the figures are:

	Number of deaths	*Number of reported injuries*
1987	16	94
1990	30	98
1991	32	133
1992	16	117

For United Kingdom fish farms the figures relate to the fiscal year and are:

	Number of deaths	*Number of reported injuries*
1987-88	Nil	5
1990-91	2	32
1991-92	2	21
1992-93	1	29

A2

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) on what date emergency telephones will be installed from Swanscombe to the Danson interchange on the A2; how many there will be; and at what distance apart;

(2) what consultations he plans with local authorities on the exact positions of emergency telephones along the A2 between Swanscombe and the Danson interchange.

Mr. Key: Tenders for the installation of emergency telephones on the A2 in Kent, from the M2—Three Crutches—westwards to the county boundary, were invited on 24 November. It is hoped to be able to start the work in mid-January, but full commissioning will not be possible until about a year later. The contract will provide for 14 telephones alongside each of the carriageways, 28 in total, spaced approximately one mile—1·6 km—apart.

In line with usual practice, local authorities are not being consulted on the positioning of the telephones, which is determined by the Department's spacing specification and roadside conditions.

We have no present plans to install emergency telephones along the length of the A2 within the London borough of Bexley between the county boundary and the Danson interchange.

PRIME MINISTER

Information Systems

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Prime Minister in how many Departments the management information systems for Ministers—MINIS—has been in force since November 1990 and over what periods; and what were the setting up times and costs in each case.

The Prime Minister: The Department of the Environment adopted MINIS—the management information systems for Ministers—in 1979. The Department of Trade and Industry introduced MINIS in June 1992. MINIS was described as a good example for Departments to look at when the financial management initiative was launched in 1982 and elements have subsequently been incorporated into other Departments' top management systems. Estimates of the costs of running and developing individual departmental top management systems since November 1990 are not available.

Security Services

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister what is the delineation of the responsibility of each security service organisation for counter-proliferation; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Countering the threat from proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a high priority task for the Secret Intelligence Service, Government Communications Headquarters and the Security Service and the resources of the agencies devoted to that task have been increased. I do not propose to go into any further detail about their work.

Official Residences

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 30 November, if he will list the functions held at *(a)* No. 10 Downing street and *(b)* Chequers since November 1990, where the cost of refreshments was paid for by a political party; how many guests attended; how much expenditure was reimbursed in each case; and what charge was made for the hire of facilities.

The Prime Minister: Thirty-nine occasions have been held at 10 Downing street or Chequers where the cost of refreshments was paid for by the Conservative party. As under previous Administrations, no charge was made for the hire of facilities. Expenditure is billed directly to the organisation concerned and no central records kept.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 29 November, *Official Report,* column *325,* regarding fuel costs of official residences, if he will provide the names of the chairs of trustees for *(a)* Chequers, *(b)* Dorneywood and *(c)* Chevening.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 2 December]:* The Lord Privy Seal is the chairman of the board of trustees of both Chequers and Chevening. In the case of Dorneywood, the chairman is elected on an "ad hoc" basis at every meeting. The Lord Privy Seal is a member of the board of trustees and, in practice, it is customary for him to chair meetings if he is present.

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement about the operation of his Department's sensitive documents unit; how many staff are employed in its operation; and approximately how many documents per annum come within its purview.

The Prime Minister: The Prime Minister's records are reviewed for any continuing sensitivy 29 years after their creation. Approximately 42 linear feet of records are reviewed each year, by a part-time member of my staff, in accordance with the guidelines contained in chapter 9 of the "Open Government" White Paper—Cm 2290. About 4 per cent. of the records reviewed are retained and these are subject to regular re-review.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to discuss Irish responses to the consultation on THORP at his next meeting with his Irish counterpart.

The Prime Minister: No.

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what procedures are in place to ensure that special advisers attached to Ministers have no pecuniary or other interests that may conflict with their duties;

(2) if he will list the ways in which the rules applying to *(a)* the acceptance of outside appointments after resignation or retirement and *(b)* political activities by special advisers attached to Ministers differ from those applying to other civil servants.

The Prime Minister: Special advisers are subject to the same rules on conflict of interest as other civil servants. If a conflict arises in relation to their duties they must declare the interest. The business appointment rules on the acceptance of appointments after resignation or retirement do not apply to special advisers. Arrangements are made to ensure they do not have access to the kind of information, and they are not involved in the type of business, that would be likely to create suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment. Advisers are allowed more freedom of political activity than other civil servants to the extent that, with the approval of their Minister, they may attend party functions, including the party conference as an observer, may maintain contacts with party members and may take part in policy reviews conducted by the party.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total amount paid in salaries to special advisers attached to Ministers in each year since 1988 in *(a)* cash and *(b)* current prices.

The Prime Minister: The information requested is as follows:

As at	*Paybill*[1] *£ million*	*1993-94 prices*[2] *£ million*
June 1993	1·37	1·37
September 1992	1·3	1·34
September 1991	1·1	1·18
July 1990	0·95	1·08
June 1989	0·93	1·15
September 1988	0·74	0·97

[1] Not including earnings-related national insurance contribution and other personnel overheads.

[2] Calculated using the GDP deflator.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list *(a)* the annual salaries paid to special advisers attached to Ministers in bands of £10,000 and *(b)* the number of advisers whose salary falls within each band.

The Prime Minister: The information requested is as follows:

Salary band £	*Number of special advisers*[1]
0— 10,000	2
10— 20,000	1
20— 30,000	10
30— 40,000	5
40— 50,000	8
50— 60,000	6
60— 70,000	—
70— 80,000	—
80— 90,000	2
90—100,000	1

[1] As at 1 November 1993.

Civil Servants

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of people employed, *(b)* the total number of black people and *(c)* the total number of Asians.

The Prime Minister: For recruitment purposes, my Office is part of the Cabinet Office. The figures for that Department, excluding its executive agencies and the CCTA—Government Centre for Information Systems—are set out. Ethnic monitoring in the civil service is carried out on a voluntary basis. Figures for Asian and black staff therefore only include those who have chosen so to describe themselves.

Equivalent Grade	*Total*	*Black*	*Asian*
1	3	0	0
2	17	0	0
3	19	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	41	0	0
6	27	1	0
7	109	0·5	0
AT/HEO(D)	16	0	0
SEO	49	0	0
HEO	85·5	0	0
EO	180·5	5	4·5
AO	243	26	9
AA	151	15	6·5
Total	941	47·5	20

Full time equivalent staff in post figures as at 2 December 1993.

Departmental Files

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by the Department; and how many are marked "Not for Public Accounts Committee eyes."

The Prime Minister: No files marked "Not for NAO eyes" are held by my Department. There is no such classification as "Not for PAC eyes".

Mr. Byers: To ask the Prime Minister how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by his Department.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* None.

Year of the Family

Miss Lestor: To ask the Prime Minister what action is proposed by Her Majesty's Government to celebrate the UN Year of the Family 1994; and which Minister is responsible for its co-ordination and implementation.

The Prime Minister: Family policy bears on the responsibilities of a number of Government Departments, who in 1994 and beyond will be taking appropriate steps within their remits to strengthen our commitment to the family. We also support the United Kingdom Association for the International Year of the Family, which will be organising and overseeing activities within the United Kingdom during the year.

During the International Year of the Family, domestic and international issues touching on the family will continue to be led and co-ordinated in the usual way, depending on the key departmental interest. However, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security will act as a liaison point for the co-ordination and exchange of information about and during the year.

Redundancies and Closures

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will list all hon. Members whom he has personally met concerning redundancies or closures in their constituencies, the dates of each of the meetings and the precise nature and numbers of redundancies involved;

(2) what is his policy concerning meetings with hon. Members about redundancies or closures in their constituencies;

(3) if he will now meet the Ayrshire hon. Members to discuss redundancies at Jetstream and the long-term threat to the plant.

The Prime Minister: I understand that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry met a group of hon. Members to discuss Jetstream on 25 November.

Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry and I often discuss such matters with right hon. and hon. Members.

Ex-service Men

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has received calling for the setting up of a department of veterans' affairs to cover the needs of ex-service men; what consideration he is giving to dealing with such requests positively; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 2 December]:* I have received a number of letters from right hon. and hon. Members and members of the public on this matter, but I do not believe that the establishment of a separate department for ex-service affairs would result in a better service for ex-service men and women. The facilities of the health service and social security system are available to all and provision for veterans is integrated with that for the population as a whole; a new department would simply add another tier of administration.

We recognise, however, that some ex-service personnel may encounter difficulties on returning to civilian life. We are therefore committed to the provision of comprehensive resettlement advice and support. We also recognise the particular needs of disabled ex-service personnel; we have not only preserved the preferential provisions of the war pensions scheme, but have also done much to enhance it.

Royal Marsden Hospital

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister when he received the petition opposing the closure of the Royal Marsden hospital and its institute of cancer research; and what response he has made.

The Prime Minister: The petition was received in my office on Thursday 25 November and has been passed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health for consideration.

EDUCATION

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils have attended Wolverhampton grammar school under the assisted places scheme since the scheme's inception; what was the cost to the state of those places; and if he will give the usual place of residence of pupils attending the school under the APS listed by parliamentary constituency and local government ward.

Mr. Forth: Nearly 460 pupils have benefited from assisted places at Wolverhampton grammar school since the scheme was established in 1981. In 1992-93 there were 256 assisted pupils and the cost to public funds was £760,000. Schools participating in the scheme are not required to supply data concerning pupils' residence and the Department does not hold any such information centrally.

Classroom Discipline

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he will take to encourage schools to insist the pupils treat the teaching staff with respect and call them by their surnames.

Mr. Forth: Head teachers are responsible for maintaining discipline within their schools and for encouraging pupils to have respect for others. How best to achieve that is a matter for local determination.

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to offer guidelines on classroom discipline.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend plans to issue a circular of guidance on behaviour and discipline in spring 1994. We will be consulting widely on the terms of that guidance.

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about the operation of his Department's sensitive documents unit; how many staff are employed in its operation; and approximately how many documents per annum come within its purview.

Mr. Boswell: The Department does not have a sensitive documents unit.

Children (School Hours)

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the extent of variations of hours children spend in schools; whether there are regional differences or differences for grant-maintained schools; and what analysis has been carried out of the correlation with performance.

Mr. Robin Squire: Provisional data for January 1993 for maintained schools in England show that, in primary education, 3 per cent. of pupils are receiving less than 21 hours' teaching a week whereas at the other end of the range 4 per cent. are receiving 26 hours or more. In secondary education, 2 per cent. of pupils are receiving less than 23 hours a week compared to 26 hours or more received by the 5 per cent. at the other end of the range. On average, pupils in primary education received 23·2 hours per week compared with 24·3 hours per week for pupils in secondary education. These figures refer to time during which children are actually being taught rather than time spent on school premises.

There appear to be no significant differences between local education authorities maintained and self-governing—GM—schools. There is some variation between regions: between an average of 22·9 hours per week in East Anglia and 23·5 hours per week in the north in primary education, and between an average of 24·1 hours per week in Yorkshire and Humberside and 24·5 hours per week in East Anglia and the south-west in secondary education.

Initial work carried out in the Department indicates on average a small but statistically significant positive correlation between the length of the taught week and educational performance as measured by public examinations and national tests.

Student Unions

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many representations he has received on making membership of student unions voluntary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: Since the Government's plans for the reform of student unions were announced on 1 July, my right hon. Friend has received some 3,000 representations about the voluntary principle for student unions which our proposed reforms are intended to implement.

EC Students

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the costs of education in England and Wales for EC students met by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each local education authority; and what are the numbers of such students from each EC country, and in each level of institute of education.

Mr. Boswell: Students from other EC member states attending designated courses of higher education in the United Kingdom qualify for an award covering their course fees up to a specified maximum, where they satisfy basic eligibility conditions similar to those for students who live in the United Kingdom. In 1991-92 there were some 11,100 such award holders studying in England and Wales. In that year, mandatory awards expenditure by local authorities in England and Wales on students from other EC member states totalled £22·8 million; local authorities are fully reimbursed for this expenditure by the Department. In the same year, additional expenditure by the Department on awards to students from other EC member states attending part of a higher education course at an institution in England and Wales totalled £1·5 million. Copies of Department for Education statistical bulletins 21/93 and 22/93, which give details of students from abroad and student awards in England and Wales, are available in the Library.

Other provision for students from other EC member states studying in England and Wales, which flows from the grant made annually to institutions by the higher education funding councils, is in the region of £80 million. Reciprocal rights apply to British nationals studying elsewhere in the EC.

Departmental Files

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by the Department; and how many are marked "Not for Public Accounts Committee eyes".

Mr. Forth: The Department has 39 files—out of a total of over 500,000—marked "Not for NAO eyes".

This marking is used in accordance with the agreement between the Treasury and the National Audit Office under which documents relating to the handling of relations between departments and the NAO and PAC are not automatically available to the NAO while they remain current.

There is no such marking as "Not for PAC eyes".

Opt-out Ballots

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from the Electoral Reform Society regarding documents published by his Department and sent out with opt-out ballot papers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Electoral Reform Society's company, Electoral Reform (Ballot Services) Ltd., wrote to the Department on 1 December about a leaflet sent to parents with their ballot papers. A reply will be sent shortly.

Sixth Forms

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action he intends to take following his statement at the annual conference of the Girls Schools Association on 25 November about the role of school sixth forms.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend intends shortly to publish, following consultation with the Further Education Funding Council and others, a framework of criteria in the light of which he will make future decisions on statutory proposals for new school sixth forms.

University Grants Committee

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the total gross public spending for each year from 1983-84 to 1988-89, in 1992-93 prices, for the University Grants Committee.

Mr. Boswell: Figures for total capital and recurrent grant are shown below:

	£ million, 1992-93 prices
1983-84	2,168
1984-85	2,119
1985-86	2,068
1986-87	2,080
1987-88	2,175
1988-89	2,203

The figures do not include publicly funded tuition fees.

Grant-maintained Schools

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been, in 1992-93 prices, the total gross public spending for each year from 1991-92, and the projected expenditure for each year up to 1995-96 for grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: Total spending to date on self-governing—grant-maintained—schools has been as follows:

	1991-92 outturn £ million	*1992-93 outturn £ million*
Exchequer grant	22	50
Annual maintenance grant	167	435

The Government's spending plans for 1993-94 to 1995-96, at 1992-1993 prices, provide for total Exchequer grant as follows:

1993-94 £ million	*1994-95 £ million*	*1995-96 £ million*
150	226	398

Provisional outturn spending on annual maintenance grant for 1993-94, at 1992-93 prices, is £950 million. Depending on the number and size of grant-maintained schools, total annual maintenance grant for 1994-95 and 1995-96 is projected to be around:

1994-95 £ billion	*1995-96 £ billionl*
2	4

Note: Figures for exchequer grant include special purpose grants; capital grant; cost of GM ballots; the Grant Maintained Schools Centre; and the projected cost of the Funding Agency for Schools. They exclude other spending by local authorities, who remain responsible for some services to GM pupils, and DFE running costs.

City Technology Colleges

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been, in 1992-93 prices, the total gross public spending for each year from 1987-88, and the projected expenditure for each year to 1995-96 for city technology colleges.

Mr. Robin Squire: Total spending on city technology colleges by the Department since 1987-88 and projected expenditure to 1995-96 are shown in the following table. This includes both capital and recurrent expenditure.

DFE Expenditure

Financial Year	*At 1992-93 prices £ million*	*Cash £ million*
1987-88	2	1
1988-89	18	14
1989-90	36	30
1990-91	64	58
1991-92	58	56
1992-93	50	50
1993-94 (estimated outturn)	48	50
1994-95 (plans)	48	52
1995-96 (plans)	51	56

Funding Councils

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the total gross public spending for each year from 1989-90, in 1992-93 prices, for *(a)* the Universities Funding Council and *(b)* the Polytechnic and Colleges Funding Council.

Mr. Boswell: Figures for total capital and recurrent grant to the funding councils are shown:

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£ million, 1992-93 prices

	UFC	PCFC
1989-90	2,209	1,324
1990-91	2,027	1,215
1991-92	1,850	1,031
1992-93	1,804	1,036

The decline in grant from 1990-91 onwards relates to the transfer of funds to tuition fees reimbursed through mandatory awards. Recurrent funding for higher education taking account of tuition fees increased by more than 10 per cent. in real terms over the period.

Student Loan Scheme

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a table showing the number of those in arrears on repayment of the student loan scheme by *(a)* educational institution and *(b)* county/borough of residence.

Mr. Boswell: This is a matter for the Student Loans Company. I will ask the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what procedures are in force for his Department to be notified of any approach to British Nuclear Fuels plc from any utility with a contract with British Nuclear Fuels plc for the use of THORP, to cancel or vary the contract or its terms.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is in regular contact with British Nuclear Fuels plc on a wide range of issues.

Leases

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce legislation as part of his deregulative initiatives to make illegal anti-competitive abuses in commercial leases which allow only upward review of rents.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The measure described does not appear to be deregulatory and does not fall within the scope of the deregulation initiative. The Department of the Environment has, however, issued a consultation paper on certain aspects of commercial property leasing arrangements, including upward-only rent reviews. An announcement of the outcome of that exercise will be made in due course.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who appoints the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; who are the present members; what are their qualifications by examinations; what posts they currently hold; and when they were appointed.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Biographical details of members of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission are compiled by the commission for publication in its annual review. I will write to the hon. Gentleman enclosing those biographical details, and relevant dates of appointment. Qualifications by examinations are not a factor in determining the suitability of potential MMC members and, as such, details of the current members' qualifications are not held. Collation of such details could be made only at disproportionate cost.

Car Parking

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to establish an advisory panel to advise him on restrictive practices and monopolistic power in the provision of car parking in Britain.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I announced to the House on 14 April, *Official Report*, column 842-50, that when parliamentary time permits, proposals will be introduced to strengthen existing United Kingdom legislation concerning anti-competitive and exploitative behaviour following the Green Paper on abuse of market power. At the same time, a prohibition on restrictive trade practices will be introduced. As part of this package, the Fair Trading Act 1973 and the Competition Act 1980 will be extended to cover some limited situations where specific property rights are exercised in a way which damages competition. I am currently considering the property rights to which competition law should apply and the extension of the Fair Trading Act 1973 to temporary rights of access such as car parks is one option under consideration.

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the operation of his Department's sensitive documents unit; how many staff are employed in its operation; and approximately how many documents per annum come within its purview.

Mr. Eggar: My Department's sensitive documents unit arranges for the circulation of such documents to those officials cleared to see them. Its procedures are kept under review and amended from time to time. Two officials are employed in the unit full time and one half time. At present, it handles some 9,000 documents a year.

Inconel 600

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many nuclear reactors in the United Kingdom have parts which contain the nickel-based alloy, Inconel 600; what assessment his Department has made as to its safety; what representations he has received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I understand that Inconel 600 is used chiefly in Sizewell B, but the material is also found in minor components in certain other nuclear stations. Any implications for such plant arising from the use of a material are taken into account by the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate—NII. The performance of materials—such as Inconel 600—is an integral part of the safety case assessment which is carried out before reactors are started up and which continues throughout their operation. Such safety cases are reviewed periodically and amended as necessary in light of new information. For its part, Nuclear Electric is undertaking a programme of inspections at Sizewell B which will ensure early warning of any problems arising from the use of Inconel 600 and enable remedial action to be promptly implemented. Moreover, the NII would not allow any nuclear power station to commence or continue in operation if they were not satisfied that it was safe to do so. I have received two letters from hon. Members forwarding representations from their constituents about this matter.

Budget Setting

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give the date on which the budgets for each of his Department's laboratories and agencies were finalised for 1993-94.

Mr. Heseltine: Budgets for 1993-94 were set on 5 January 1993 for the following:
Accounts Services Agency
Radiocommunications Agency
Laboratory of the Government Chemist
National Physical Laboratory
National Engineering Laboratory
Warren Spring Laboratory
Patent Office
Companies House
and on 1 April 1993 for the following:
National Weights and Measures Laboratory
Insolvency Service

Nuclear Industry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what was the mass of spent fuel discharged from each Magnox reactor operated by Nuclear Electric in each financial year since 1983-84;

(2) what commitment has been given by Nuclear Electric in relation to the reprocessing of spent fuel from pressurised water reactors.

Mr. Eggar: These are operational matters for Nuclear Electric plc.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what facilities exist in the United Kingdom for the conversion of plutonimum into californium.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Japan (Atomic Energy Agreement)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when Her Majesty's Government last sought assurance from the Japanese Government in regard to the commitments entered into under article III(a) of the United Kingdom/Japan agreement for co-operation in the peaceful uses of atomic energy (Cm 3853).

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's Government last sought assurance from the Japanese Government in July 1992.

Nuclear Safeguards

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many occasions since 1990 Her Majesty's Government have informed the appropriate safeguards authorities of its putting into effect clause 14 of the United Kingdom-EURATOM-International Atomic Agency trilateral safeguards agreement.

Mr. Eggar: In accordance with the arrangements under article 14 of the United Kingdom-Euratom-IAEA tripartite safeguards agreement, 46 advanced notifications of withdrawal of nuclear material from safeguards have been made since 1 January 1990.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the latest undiscounted cost estimate for the dumping of projected United Kingdom low level and intermediate level radioactive waste arising in the Nirex repository; the unit cost for the dumping of that waste; and the latest date for fully opening the repository for low level and intermediate level radioactive waste.

Mr. Eggar: These are management matters for UK Nirex Ltd.

Departmental Files

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by the Department; and how many are marked "Not for Public Accounts Committee eyes."

Mr. Eggar: No central record is kept by my Department of files marked "not for National Audit Office eyes". For each National Audit Office study, a number of divisions in different locations may be involved and each may possess in its registries a file with a number of parts —that is, individual jackets. The information requested is therefore not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The marking "not for National Audit Office eyes" is used in accordance with an agreement between the Treasury and the National Audit Office, under which documents relating to the handling of relations between Departments and the National Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee are not automatically available to the National Audit Office while they are current.

There is no marking "not for Public Accounts Committee eyes".

Eco-labelling

Mr. Burden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the letter sent to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology on 20 October by the Body Shop in connection with EC eco-labelling and animal welfare; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: I have been asked to reply.

My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in another place has replied to the letter from the Body Shop. Copies of her reply of 2 December have been placed in the Library of the House.

Fireworks

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of fireworks sold in Britain was manufactured in Britain in each year since 1980.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have been asked to reply

The information requested is not available.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Bomb-proofing

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what has been the cost, by location, of bomb-proofing the Department's premises.

Mr. John M. Taylor: On security grounds, I do not propose to give this information.

Departmental Files

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by the Department; and how many are marked "Not for Public Accounts Committee eyes".

Mr. John M. Taylor: There are 45 files in the Lord Chancellor's Department—out of a total of 90,974—marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes". These refer to individual file parts. For each National Audit Office study, a number of divisions may be involved and each may possess a file with a number of parts.

The marking "Not for National Audit Office eyes" is used in accordance with an agreement between the Treasury and the National Audit Office, under which documents relating to the handling of relations between Departments and the National Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee are not automatically available to the National Audit Office while they are current.

There is no marking "Not for Public Accounts Committee eyes".

Divorce Law

Mr. Milligan: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans Her Majesty's Government have to bring forward reform to the law of divorce in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor has today laid before Parliament a consultation document, "Looking to the Future: Mediation and the Ground for Divorce", which canvasses a number of options for divorce law reform and the greater use of family mediation. The Lord Chancellor hopes that the document will stimulate a wide-ranging and informed debate about this important subject.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Security Services

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to seek power to issue a post-hoc warrant to cover any interference with property or wireless telegraph by a member or members of the security services.

Mr. Hurd: None.

International Organisations

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total cost of United Kingdom subscriptions to international organisations in each of the last five years at constant prices.

Mr. Goodlad: The total cost to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office—including the Overseas Development Administration—of United Kingdom subscriptions to international organisations at 1992-93 prices was:

	£ million
1988-89	830
1989-90	791
1990-91	758
1991-92	993
1992-93	1,035

Intelligence and Security Committee

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration was given to including a Member of the European Parliament on the intelligence and security committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The Intelligence Services Bill provides for the members of the intelligence and security committee to be appointed by the Prime Minister after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition. Each Committee member shall be a member of either the House of Commons or the House of Lords, and none shall be a Minister of the Crown. There are no other restrictions on who the Prime Minister may appoint.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters, in regard to the implications for the environment, he intends to raise at the meeting of the European Union Foreign Affairs Council special meeting on the general agreement on tariffs and trade.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The special Foreign Affairs Council on 2 December did not discuss the implications for the environment of the general agreement on tariffs and trade. The existing GATT system allows for trade-restrictive measures to protect the environment, under certain conditions. The proposed Uruguay round agreement would strengthen the ability of the international trading system to respond to environmental concerns.

Turkey

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government will take on the eviction by the Turkish security forces of the villagers of Hassana in south-eastern Turkey; and if he will take steps to encourage the Turkish authorities to ensure that the villagers have sufficient food, clothing, warmth and shelter.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have made clear to the Turkish Government our concern about the conflict in south-east Turkey, and will continue to do so. It is appalling that innocent civilians should be caught up in the violence, and vital that human rights should be properly respected.

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the operation of his Department's sensitive documents unit; how many staff are employed in its operation; and approximately how many documents per annum come within its purview.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Foreign and Commonwealth Office records are reviewed for any continuing sensitivity 29 or 30 years after their creation, by a team of up to nine part-time senior retired members of the diplomatic service, supervised and supported by seven permanent officials in the library and records department. Approximately 650 ft of records have been reviewed this year, in accordance with the guidelines contained in chapter 9 of the "Open Government" White paper—Cm. 2290—of July 1993.

United Kingdom Overseas Visitors (Financial Assistance)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations his Department has received *(a)* directly and *(b)* via consulates from United Kingdom citizens in respect of requests for financial assistance to help them get out of immediate difficulties abroad.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are strict criteria which have to be met before financial assistance from the public purse can be authorised. The post must be satisfied that the applicant is destitute, has no funds in the United Kingdom, that his predicament is not of his own making, and that he cannot make use of a cheque card and cannot arrange for the rapid transfer of funds through commercial channels from relatives or friends. We occasionally receive representations, either directly or referred by Members of Parliament, from the public on posts abroad who have refused them financial assistance.

United Nations Committee (Administrative and Budgetary Questions)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the vote on 15 November to re-elect the United Nations advisory committee on administrative and budgetary questions; and how the decision will affect the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom expert on the committee failed to gain re-election at the vote in the UN in New York on 15 November. The three candidates contesting the two vacant seats, received the following votes: Ms Eriksson Fogh—Sweden—132, Ms Shenwick—United States of America—102, Mr. Stitt—United Kingdom—91.

The result was a disappointment. But the United Kingdom expert remains in New York dealing with UN financial questions and is our representative on the fifth committee of the General Assembly. It is the fifth committee that has the authority to take decisions on UN financial issues and is the body to which ACABQ reports.

Departmental Files

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by the Department; and how many are marked "Not for Public Accounts Committee eyes".

Mr. Goodlad: The information requested is not readily available. To provide it would require consultations with all overseas posts. This could only be done at disproportionate cost. The marking "Not for NAO eyes" is used in accordance with an agreement between the Treasury and the National Audit Office, under which documents relating to the handling of relations between Departments and the NAO and PAC are not automatically available to the NAO while they are current. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office's internal audit unit regularly checks to ensure that the marking is not abused.

There is no marking "Not for PAC eyes".

World Summit on Children

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to publish the Government's action statement arising from the World Summit on Children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom published in July 1992 Command Paper No. 1984 entitled "Report on the United Kingdom Implementation of the Goals agreed by the World Summit on Children". A copy was placed in the Library of the House.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers; and how many vehicles are involved.

Mr. Newton: The Privy Council Office meets the cost of a car and driver for each of its two Ministers. The total cost in 1992-93 was £132,692.

Departmental Files

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by the Department; and how many are marked "Not for Public Accounts Committee eyes".

Mr. Newton: The Privy Council Office holds no files with such markings.

WALES

Welsh Energy Project

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what recent discussions he has had with the chairman and energy experts at the Welsh Development Agency on the Welsh energy project;

(2) if he will make a statement on the information gathered, conclusions reached and policy proposals developed by the Welsh energy project.

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Mr. Redwood: I have had no discussions with the Welsh Development Agency about the Welsh energy project. This is an operational matter and I have therefore asked the chief executive of the agency to write to the hon. Gentleman and for a copy of his response to be placed in the Library of the House.

A470

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to prioritise the road improvement scheme to the A470 Blaenau Ffestiniog to Betws-y-Coed road; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend is considering the scope to bring forward some of the more important schemes in the forward road programme. The draft orders for the first stage of the Lledr Valley improvement, between Cancoed and Minffordd, were published on 30 November.

Schools

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much capital grant funding has been allocated to the schools in Wales which have decided to opt out; how much this is per school; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There are two types of capital grant available to grant-maintained schools: a formula allocation for the purchase of equipment or small-scale capital works; and project allocations for specific capital work.

In 1993-94 11 grant-maintained schools have received £211,346 under the formula allocation, giving an average per school of £19,213. As regards specific project allocations, seven schools have had projects approved in principle and have been invited to submit firm estimates and tenders. The total outline estimate costs of the projects which have been approved in principle come to some £5·434 million.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many schools to date have opted out; and if he will make a statement on the progress of the opt-out scheme for schools in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: At 1 September this year there were 11 grant-maintained schools. A further three schools have been approved to become grant-maintained from 1 January 1994. Applications from a further two schools are currently under consideration and a number of other schools are in the process of balloting parents.

Aberconwy

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the efforts the Welsh Office has made to secure, via the Department of Trade and Industry, objective 5(b) status for the Aberconwy borough.

Mr. Redwood: Aberconwy is on the list of eligible objective 5(b) areas submitted by the Government to the European Commission which will make known its decisions in due course.

Forest Enterprise

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received on public access rights and the privatisation of Forest Enterprise; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend and I have received 55 representations on these matters since the Forestry Review Group was established on 30 March 1993.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Ainger: To [illegible] the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the total expenditure by the Welsh Development Agency on rural areas and initiatives in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93; and what is the projected expenditure in 1993-94;

(2) what are the total receipts to date of sales of Welsh Development Agency property in the current financial year;

(3) what proportion of the Welsh Development Agency's budget was allocated to rural areas and initiatives in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93; and what is the projected proportion in 1993-94;

(4) which properties owned by the Welsh Development Agency have been sold in the current financial year; and which other properties are on the market;

(5) how many members of staff of the Welsh Development Agency are employed on implementing the agency's rural policies;

(6) what was the total annual rents charged on those properties sold by the Welsh Development Agency in the current year.

Mr. Redwood: I have arranged for the chief executive of the agency to write to the hon. Gentleman and for a copy of his response to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from individuals and organisations in Wales on the rural policy of the Welsh Development Agency in the current financial year.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the geographic boundaries of the Development Board for Rural Wales and the Welsh Development Agency were last reviewed.

Mr. Redwood: The position was reviewed at the time of the 1991 financial, management and policy review of the board.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which geographical areas in Wales are covered by the rural division of the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Redwood: The agency is responsible for all rural areas in Wales except for the county of Powys and the districts of Ceredigion in Dyfed and Meirionnydd in Gwynedd.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when his Department last carried out a review of the rural policies of the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Redwood: The rural policies of the agency are a matter for the agency. They are kept under continual review.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultation his Department has had with local authorities, employer representative organisations and the Welsh Trades Union Congress over the future role of rural policy within the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Redwood: None. [illegible] agency's programmes for rural areas are compatible with overall rural policy in Wales. In drawing up its programmes, the agency consults widely.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much, in cash and percentage terms, of the Welsh Development Agency's total income was derived from *(a)* grant in aid, *(b)* capital receipts and *(c)* current income in 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94; and what are the projected figures for 1994-95.

Mr. Redwood: The figures are as follows:

	1991-92	*1992-93*	*1993-94 (plans)*
(a) Grant in aid			
Cash (£ million)	87·067	74·866	59·550
Per cent.	54·0	44·9	34·7
(b) Capital receipts			
Cash (£ million)	38·280	59·050	83·900
Per cent.	23·7	35·4	48·9
(c) Current income			
Cash (£ million)	31·406	31·999	25·950
Per cent.	19·4	19·2	15·1

I will shortly be announcing the agency's budget for 1994-95.

Departmental Files

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by the Department; and how many are marked "Not for Public Accounts Committee eyes".

Mr. Redwood: There are 97 files in my Department marked "Not for NAO eyes". These figures refer to individual jackets—file parts. For each NAO study a number of divisions may be involved and each may possess a file with a number of parts.

The marking "Not for NAO eyes" is used in accordance with an agreement between the Treasury and the National Audit Office, under which documents relating to the handling of relations between Departments and the NAO and PAC are not automatically available to the NAO while they are current.

There is no marking "Not for PAC eyes".

Berse Horticultural Scheme

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future of the Berse horticultural scheme, Wrexham.

Mr. Redwood: The future of the scheme is a matter for NACRO—New Careers Training—and North East Wales TEC.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many times departmental ministers and officials have visited the Berse horticultural scheme.

Mr. Redwood: There have been no visits by Welsh Office Ministers or officials to this scheme.

Less-favoured Areas

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the impact of the Budget Statement upon prospects for 1994 in the less-favoured areas of Wales.

Mr. Redwood: I announced last week that direct Government support during 1994-95 for agriculture in Wales will be £233·9 million. This means an extra £18·6 million, 8·6 per cent., for Welsh agriculture, compared to planned provision for the current financial year. Despite the need to keep a firm control on public spending, this demonstrates the Government's continuing commitment to the agriculture industry in Wales. The agriculture industry in Wales is currently in a much healthier state, helped in part by much lower interest rates and very low inflation. These factors benefit hill farmers as much as other parts of the economy.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the grant-maintained schools and those schools seeking grant-maintained status in each of the less-favoured areas of Wales, giving the amount of extra cash grants for each of the grant-maintained schools; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The only formal designation of less-favoured areas is under European Community directives concerned with farming. There is no connection with education expenditure. However, in such areas in Wales there are six grant-maintained schools. They are:

Cwmcarn Comprehensive, Gwent
Bishop Vaughan Catholic Comprehensive, West Glamorgan
Brynmawr Comprehensive, Gwent
Caergeiliog Primary, Gwynedd
Llanerfyl Church in Wales Primary, Powys; and
Ysgol Derwen, Clwyd

In addition, St. Albans comprehensive in Pontypool, Gwent which has been approved for grant-maintained status from 1 January 1994, lies in a less-favoured area.

The funding of grant-maintained schools reflects the level of resources that a school would have received had it remained with its former local education authority. All grant-maintained schools, irrespective of whether they are in a less-favoured area, are eligible for transitional grants, special purpose grants, and capital grants over and above their annual maintenance grant.

School Pupils

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will introduce modular approach testing in future examinations for GCSE pupils.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have no immediate plans to do so. Fair markings of GCSE grades are best maintained by a terminal examination and adherence to the specified limits on GCSE coursework.

Cockle Dredging

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the number of fishing vessels that have been granted an authorisation covering the October to December period to suction-dredge for cockles in *(a)* the North Wales and North West England Sea Fisheries Committee area and *(b)* elsewhere in Wales, if he will specify the catch limits and other harvesting conditions imposed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Such matters are the responsibility of sea fisheries committees. I understand that the North Western and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee has issued 10 authorisations to suction dredge for cockles on Lavan sands for a limited period and that these are the only authorisations which have been issued in Wales.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had and what representations he has received in relation to the issuing of authorisations for cockle fishing by suction dredging in Traeth Lafan in Conwy bay.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I have received one letter from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to use his powers under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to issue an order banning the suction dredging of cockles in the Traeth Lafan area of the Conwy bay site of special scientific interest and special protection area.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None.

Non-departmental Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will show for each of the executive non-departmental bodies sponsored by his Department, whether the public has a statutory right to attend all board or committee meetings and to inspect *(a)* the minutes of meetings, *(b)* the annual reports and *(c)* the annual accounts.

Mr. Redwood: There is no statutory right for the public to attend meetings, or to see minutes of meetings, for any of these bodies. The ordinances of the National Library provide for every meeting of the court of the Library to be public, unless a resolution to the contrary is carried by the members present, in respect of the full meeting or of specific items or portions of the business.

The annual reports and accounts of the following executive non-departmental bodies are in the Library of the House and are publicly available.

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation
Countryside Council for Wales
Curriculum Council for Wales
Development Board for Rural Wales
Further Education Funding Council
Higher Education Funding Council
Housing for Wales
Land Authority for Wales
National Library of Wales
National Museum of Wales
Sports Council for Wales
Wales Tourist Board
Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting
Welsh Development Agency

The Wales Youth Agency is a company limited by guarantee and its annual report and accounts for 1992-93 are deposited at Companies House, Cardiff; from 1993-94 its report and accounts will be placed in the Library of the House. The Royal Commission for Ancient and Historical Monuments is funded directly from the Welsh Office vote and its expenditure is accounted for in the annual Welsh Office appropriation accounts.

Housing

Dr. Wright: To [illegible] the Secretary of State for Wales what has been, in 1992-93 prices, the gross public investment in Wales in the provision of housing, both new build and renovated, by *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* housing associations for each year since 1979-80; and what is the projected investment for both categories up to 1995-96.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I will write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as this information is available, and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

EMPLOYMENT

Career Development Scheme

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applications for loans under the career development scheme have been made in 1993-94 for each region and for Great Britain as a whole; how many have been rejected; how many women have been awarded loans; how many training for work-employment training participants have been awarded loans endorsed by their training and enterprise council or local enterprise company; what have been the successful course completion rates in each region; how much has been awarded in total for each region; how much has been recovered; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Information by region on the number of loans approved under the career development loan scheme, numbers of applications rejected, number of loans approved for women, value of loans approved and the successful course completion rate are shown in the tables. The information given is for the period April 1993 to the end of October 1993.

Details of the number of training for work and employment training participants and of the amount of money repaid are not available.

Further information on career development loans can be found in the 1992-93 annual report, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Region	*Number of loans approved*	*Rejected applications*	*Number of loans for women*
Northern	202	101	65
Greater Manchester	119	102	39
North West	331	140	125
Yorkshire and Humberside	467	188	185
West Midlands	432	139	154
East Midlands	407	120	145
Eastern	490	190	163
South East	843	334	331
London	1,509	961	576
South West	506	127	181
Wales	234	58	75
Scotland	659	296	220
Great Britain	6,199	2,756	2,259

Region	*Value of loans (£)*	*Course completion rate (Per cent.)*
Northern	456,838	57
Greater Manchester	280,651	46
North West	837,531	53
Yorkshire and Humberside	971,190	81
West Midlands	1,152,446	78
East Midlands	982,577	71
Eastern	1,305,605	73
South East	1,983,421	77
London	4,125,676	81
South West	1,172,845	68
Wales	559,665	79
Scotland	1,392,886	68
Great Britain	15,221,330	73

Training for Work

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will remove the upper age limit for unemployed persons participating in training for work programmes.

Miss Widdecombe: I am pleased to tell the hon. Member that the upper age limit for training for work participants will be raised to 63 years from April 1994.

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has incorporated the code of practice for information security management, published by the British Standards Institution, into relevant contracts with information technology suppliers.

Miss Widdecombe: The security requirements for information technology—IT—systems and services used by central Government Departments are stated in Her Majesty's Government IT security policy document. This document is supported by use of the Central Communications Telecommunications Agency risk analysis and management methods—CRAMM—and the baseline security for IT systems—[illegible]ITS—risk analysis methods, by the Communications Electronic Security Group—CESG—memorandum No. 10 where appropriate, and by supporting advice and guidance published by the HMG IT security authorities.

These are reviewed regularly to ensure best practice, have been developed specifically for use within government and have been in operation for some time.

The code of practice for information security management was developed by, and established for use by, commercial organisations and does not specifically address the requirements for the protection of official information.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the operation of his Department's sensitive documents unit; how many staff are employed in its operation; and approximately how many documents per annum come within its purview.

Miss Widdecombe: We do not have a sensitive file unit.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give figures for the total adult unemployment in Warley, West on 1 January for each of the past five years.

Miss Widdecombe: The number of unemployed claimants aged 18 years and over in the Warley, West constituency from 1989 onwards, in January of each year, was 3,374, 2,484, 2,862, 4,252 and 4,878.

Youth Training Scheme

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many participants of the former youth training scheme found full-time employment as a result of joining the scheme; and what percentage of total entry this represents.

Miss Widdecombe: It is estimated that of all those who left the former youth training scheme in its last full year of operation—April 1989 to March 1990—in Great Britain, 63 per cent. went into full-time employment.

Access to Work

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from individuals and organisations about proposals to change access to work, especially to oblige employers to contribute 50 per cent. of the cost of purchasing services such as personal readers and special aids to employment for people employed for more than six months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: *[holding answer 30 November 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my noble Friend Lord Henley have been in correspondence with and met a number of disability and employer organisations about details of access to work, which will help more disabled people, in a broader range of work, to obtain or retain jobs. My right hon. Friend will make an announcement when he has reached decisions on the details of the scheme.

Departmental Files

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by the Department; and how many are marked "Not for Public Accounts Committee eyes".

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not held centrally and we regret that the information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

There is no marking "Not for Public Accounts Committee eyes".

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by his Department.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* The information is not held centrally and we regret that the information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

DEFENCE

RAF Brawdy

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what financial compensation the RAF is to receive in return for RAF Brawdy being used by the Army from 1994 instead of being available for RAF use or sale.

Mr. Hanley: The Army currently plans to use RAF Brawdy as temporary accommodation until 1996. Should occupation extend beyond this, an appropriate financial transfer will be made to the RAF to offset the land receipts assumed in the Air Force budget.

Bomb-proofing

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost, by location, of bomb-proofing the Department's premises.

Mr. Hanley: On security grounds, I do not propose to give this information.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. [illegible]ghes) of 23 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *318*, if he will set out the basis for his statement that it would take considerable expense and difficulty for plutonium arising from the thermal oxide reprocessing plant to be used in nuclear weapons.

Mr. Aitken: For reasons of national security it would be inappropriate for me to comment further on how to construct a nuclear device, or on the usefulness of various materials in making a nuclear device.

Aldermaston

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies of the geology and hydrogeology of the atomic weapons establishment Aldermaston site have been carried out; and if he will place a copy of the results in the Library.

Mr. Aitken: Studies looking at various aspects of AWE operations are carried out periodically including recent surveys to support studies on water management systems at Aldermaston. Such studies are initiated locally and the reports written for internal management use. It would be inappropriate to place such documents in the Library.

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers; and how many vehicles are involved.

Mr. Hanley: The annual total cost of the car service for Defence Department Ministers is some £175,000.

Five vehicles are provided in London, including a reserve vehicle held in readiness for the Secretary of State. An arrangement exists for the use of a car supplied by the Scottish Office when the Secretary of State for Defence is in Scotland and the cost of this is reflected in the sum quoted.

Press and Publicity Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many press and publicity officers are currently employed in his Department; and how many were employed in *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* 1979.

Mr. Hanley: The number of personnel and civilians currently employed in complemented PR and PR support posts in London and commands and districts at home and overseas is 175. The comparable figure for 1985-86 is 249·5. A figure for 1979 is not available.

Health and Safety

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all certificates of exemption which he has issued under the provisions of regulation 14 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has not granted any certificates of exemption under the provisions of regulation 14 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992.

Western European Union

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how his Department was represented at the 39th ordinary session of the Western European Union in Paris from 29 November to 2 December; what proposals were put forward by the United Kingdom; what decisions were taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The last session of the WEU Assembly, which took place in Paris from 29 November to 2 December 1993, was attended by the Deputy United Kingdom Permanent Representative to NATO and other officials of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. There was no MOD representation on this occasion. A number of reports were presented, either singly or jointly, by United Kingdom Parliamentarians, on behalf of several of the Assembly's committees. Copies of those reports can be obtained from the WEU Assembly in Paris. Recommendations embodied in individual reports will be considered by the WEU Council in due course.

International Military Services

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what subcontractors International Military Services Ltd. employed to carry out its functions, and act on its behalf and at which locations;

(2) if he will give the objectives, yearly profits and years of business operation of IMS Iran Ltd.

Mr. Aitken: As International Military Services is a private limited company, the information requested relates to the trading operations of the company, is of a commercially confidential nature and is not the responsibility of my Department. The company publishes its accounts for public scrutiny in accordance with the requirements of company law.

Ferranti

Mr. Bryan Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what arrangements he is making to ensure the continued supply and maintenance of essential defence equipment provided by Ferranti;

(2) what steps he is taking to ensure that orders placed with Ferranti will be supplied according to contract.

Mr. Aitken: Officials of my Department have held preliminary discussions with the receivers of Ferranti International, to see what can be done to minimise any disruption to the completion of our contracts. These discussions will continue. Longer-term arrangements for the supply and maintenance of equipment procured from Ferranti will be considered in the light of progress of the receivership.

Mr. Bryan Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implication of the entry into receivership of Ferranti for the ability of the United Kingdom armed forces to acquire equipment from domestic suppliers.

Mr. Aitken: For the immediate future, the receivers of Ferranti International have said that they wish to restore trading to near-normality as soon as possible. In the longer term, any effects on the availability of domestic suppliers of equipment for the armed forces will depend on the outcome of the receivership.

Non-departmental Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will show, for each of the executive non-departmental bodies sponsored by his Department, whether the public has a statutory right to attend all board or committee meetings and to inspect *(a)* the minutes of meetings, *(b)* the annual reports and *(c)* the annual accounts.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested in respect of MOD executive non-departmental public bodies—NDPB's—is as follows:

(a) and *(b)* the public does not have a statutory right to attend board meetings or committee meetings or to inspect the minutes of meetings of any of MOD's executive NDPBs.

(c) there is a statutory right for the public to inspect the annual accounts for all the service museums and for the annual report and accounts in respect of the Services Sound and Vision Corporation.

These documents are held by the Charities Commission and at Companies House respectively. In the case of the Oil and Pipelines Agency, the agency's annual report and accounts are laid before each House of Parliament.

Mr. David Hart

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, (1) pursuant to his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) of 23 November, *Official Report,* column *42,* if he will arrange for the Chief of the Air Staff to give a briefing to an employee of the hon. Member for South Shields;

(2) pursuant to his answer to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) of 23 November, *Official Report,* column *42,* and his answer to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) of 29 November, *Official Report,* column *377,* on what basis Mr. David Hart was given a briefing by the Chief of the Air Staff on a visit to RAF Strike Command on 27 May.

Mr. Hanley: Briefings on the RAF are given from time to time to Members of Parliament, academics and members of the media who have shown a special interest in defence matters. It was on this basis that Mr. Hart was given a briefing at Headquarters Strike Command on 27 May. I would be happy, similarly, to arrange a briefing for the hon. Member.

Departmental Files

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by the Department; and how many are marked "Not for Public Accounts Committee eyes".

Mr. Hanley: The precise number of files held by my Department marked "Not for NAO eyes" could be established only at disproportionate cost.

The marking "Not for NAO eyes" is used in accordance with an agreement between the Treasury and the National Audit Office, under which documents relating to the handling of relations between Department and the NAO and the PAC are not automatically available to the NAO while they are current.

There is no marking "Not for PAC eyes."

RAF Greenham Common

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the *(a)* representations and *(b)* proposals he has received in respect of RAF station Greenham Common; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* Since the beginning of 1993 my Department has received representations and proposals concerning: the removal of the airfield perimeter fencing on Crookham common and its reinstatement as a common with public access; the establishment of a monument to the cold war; the preparation of a planning brief by the district council for the reuse of surplus property, which envisages the creation of open space on Greenham common; the long-term reuse of the former American school; and the short-term use of the various facilities. All of these are being considered.

Our managing agents—Vail-Williams of Reading—have received over 200 inquiries and proposals for short-term lettings of the various facilities.

These inquiries include the following uses:

Equestrian facilities
Temporary film studios
Open storage for vehicles
Indoor storage
Offices
Leisure activities

The district council has consented to the principle of short-term lettings—subject to resolution of any planning issues—and planning applications have been made covering these proposals.

The district council has now produced a draft planning brief for public consultation; once adopted this should assist with the planning and future use of the surplus property.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Technology Foresight

36. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the earliest date by which the technology foresight process will have an influence on the allocation of funds by the research councils.

Mr. David Davis: The first results of the technology foresight programme will become available in early 1995. The Director General of the Research Councils, and individual councils, will be able to take the results into account thereafter.

HMSO

37. **Dr. Liam Fox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what savings have been made as a result of HMSO's market testing programme.

Mr. David Davis: The results of HMSO's market testing programme to date will save £2·4 million a year on a continuing basis.

Scientific Research

38. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of money spent on scientific research is not defence related.

Mr. David Davis: In 1993-94, 57 per cent. of net Government expenditure on research and development will be spent on research objectives that are not related to defence.

Competing for Quality

40. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment his Department has made of the cost-effectiveness of the Competing for Quality programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Davis: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster gave provisional results, including the estimated £100 million savings generated, in his statement on 4 November. More detailed figures will be published in the citizens charter second report early next year.

Departmental Progress

41. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement summarising the progress made by his Department in the current year.

Mr. David Davis: Substantial progress has been made. In its first full year, the Office of Public Service and Science has:

published key statements on public service reform through its White Papers on the citizens charter and open government;
completed a market testing programme which had led to savings of £100 million across the civil service by 30 September;
set out, in the White Paper "Realising Our Potential" the first Government-wide policy statement for over 20 years on science, engineering and technology.

And within the next few days the Department will:

run the second International Conference on "Service for the Citizen" which will underline the United Kingdom's role as one of the world's leading practitioners of public service reform; and
publish a further White Paper, the 1993 review of next steps agencies in government.

Citizens Charter

42. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to introduce new charters.

Mr. David Davis: The last week has seen the publication of the courts charter for Northern Ireland. This brings the total number of charters to 38. The Benefits Agency will also be publishing an updated and improved version of its customer charter in the near future and there are a number of new charters planned for 1994. This is a part of the citizens charter's dynamic programme to raise the standard of all public services.

Magistrates Courts

43. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received about changes to magistrates court arrangements in Stockport and Tameside.

Mr. David Davis: I have been asked to reply.

The Chancellor of the Duchy's responsibilities are for the appointment and removal of magistrates in Stockport and Tameside. He has not received any representations about changes to magistrates courts' arrangements in these two areas. Management of the courts is the responsibility of the Lord Chancellor's Department.

Passengers Charter

44. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations the citizens charter unit in his Department has received from the Central Transport Consultative Committee on the subject of the passengers charter.

Mr. David Davis: The citizens charter unit has received a number of representations from the Central Transport Consultative Committee on all aspects of the passengers charter, with particular reference to BR's standards and compensation arrangements. We appreciate the value of the CTCC's observations in ensuring that the passengers charter really does meet passengers' needs.

Open Government

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made with the open government initiative.

Mr. David Davis: Preparations for implementing the code of practice on open government are going ahead in the light of consultation responses. Proposals for legislation on access to personal records and health and safety information are being developed. Over 6,500 public records have already been released under the openness initiative.

Civil Service

Mr. Paice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what intentions he has to reform recruitment to senior posts within the civil service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Davis: I refer my hon. Friend to the written answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on 22 November, columns *7-8*.

NAO and PAC

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by the Department; and how many are marked "Not for Public Accounts Committee eyes".

Mr. David Davis: The marking "Not for National Audit Office eyes" is used in accordance with an agreement between the Treasury and the National Audit Office under which documents relating to the handling of relations between Departments, the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee are not automatically available to the National Audit Office while they are current. A total of 122 Cabinet Office and OPSS files are so designated.

There is no marking "Not for Public Accounts Committee eyes".

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mr. Tony Lundy

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Attorney-General when a decision will be made by the Director of Public Prosecutions concerning the allegations made against ex-Detective Superintendent Tony Lundy formerly of the Metropolitan police; when the matter was referred to her; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions was first made aware of the present investigation during the summer of 1991. On 5 May 1992, leading and junior counsel were instructed to examine the reports, statements and documents then available from the South Yorkshire police, who were investigating this matter under the supervision of the Police Complaints Authority.

Between May 1992 and November 1993 further instructions were sent to counsel and they advised in consultation on a number of occasions. Counsel were preparing to submit their written advice to the Director in November 1993. However, fresh developments have required the police to open a new line of inquiry which they are pursuing as a matter of urgency. Until the results of this further inquiry are available, it is not possible to state when a final decision will be made.

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Attorney-General what is the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers; and how many vehicles are involved.

The Attorney-General: The total cost to the Department of the Government car service for Ministers for the financial year 1992-93 was £129,700. Two vehicles were involved.

NAO and PAC

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Attorney-General how many files marked not for National Audit Office eyes are held by the Department; and how many are marked not for Public Accounts Committee eyes.

The Attorney-General: There are 19 files in the Departments for which I am responsible marked "Not for NAO eyes".

The marking "Not for NAO eyes" is used in accordance with an agreement between the Treasury and the National Audit Office, under which documents relating to the handling of relations between Departments and the NAO and PAC are not automatically available to the NAO while they are current.

There is no marking "Not for PAC eyes".

Executive Agencies

Mr. Burns: To ask the Attorney-General what plans he has to establish any of his Departments as executive agencies.

The Attorney-General: Consideration is to be given to the question whether it would be appropriate for three of my departments, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Serious Fraud Office, and the Treasury Solicitor's Department, to become agencies in Government under the next steps programme. I shall be setting in hand studies of the appropriateness of agency status in each case and will reach a decision in the light of this further work.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Weil's Disease

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by regional health board for the last five years, and this year to date the number of people who have been infected by Weil's disease.

Mr. Ancram: Weil's disease is the more serious form of leptospirosis in humans but is not in itself notifiable. Leptospirosis has only been notifiable since April 1990 and the number of cases is as follows:

Notified cases of leptospirosis

	Eastern	*Northern*	*Southern*	*Western*	*Total*
1990	1	[illegible]	—	—	2
1991	1	1	—	1	3
1992	—	1	—	—	1
1993 (to 6 November)	1	1	1	—	3
Total	3	4	[illegible]	1	9

Strip Searching

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many female prisoners in Northern Ireland have been subjected to forcible strip searching since March 1992.

Sir John Wheeler: No female prisoners in Northern Ireland have been forcibly searched since 2 March 1992; on that date, 21 female prisoners had to be restrained in order to comply with a search.

Agricultural Wages Board

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many submissions he has received to the consultation on the future of the Agricultural Wages Board in Northern Ireland; and how many of those were in favour of the abolition of the board.

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* Ten responses were received to the consultation paper on the future of the Agricultural Wages Board in Northern Ireland. None was in favour of the abolition of the board.

HEALTH

Medical Devices Directorate

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many safety warnings have been issued by the Medical Devices Directorate relating to *(a)* pacemakers and *(b)* artificial heart valves since the directorate was established.

Mr. Sackville: The Medical Devices Directorate of the Department of Health has issued 17 pacemaker technical notes and one hazard circular relating to pacemakers, and one safety warning letter related to heart valves, since it was established in August 1990.

Tilade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will order an investigation into the prescribing of Tilade and the way it has been promoted.

Mr. Sackville: Recent allegations in the press regarding the methods used by the manufacturer to promote the prescribing of Tilade are currently under investigation by the Prescription Medicines Code of Practice Authority under its guidelines on the promotion of medicines, copies of which are available in the Library. The production of Tilade is monitored routinely by the medicines inspectorate, as is the manufacture of all licensed medicinal products, we have no knowledge of any concerns which would justify a special investigation.

Prescriptions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many pharmacies in *(a)* Barnsley, *(b)* Doncaster, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* Sheffield dispose fewer than 1,700 prescriptions per month.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is in the table.

Family Health Services Authority	*Total number of pharmacies*	*Number dispensing less than 1,700 prescriptions per month*	*Percentage*
Barnsley	42	3	7
Doncaster	49	2	4
Rotherham	41	3	7
Sheffield	110	9	8

1. The source of the data is the table C20 from the Prescription Pricing Authority and includes pharmacies that operated throughout the 1992-93 financial year with closures excluded and new openers annualised.

2. The figures are based on the FHSA areas of Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield.

Funding Allocations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of patients her Department assumes have private health assurance when adjusting funding allocations; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Assumptions about the incidence of private health insurance do not feature in our weighted capitation formula for allocating resources to regional health authorities.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the target percentage for registered disabled employees within the national health service; and what is the actual percentage of registered disabled employees.

Mr. Sackville: Although not bound by the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944, the Department which includes the national health service management executive has accepted the provision that 3 per cent. of employees should be registered disabled.

At 1 December 1993, 1·4 per cent. of the Department's work force were registered disabled. In addition, there are other people with disabilities, who are not registered disabled.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much her Department spends annually on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising and *(c)* press advertising; and what were the corresponding figures for 1985 and 1979.

Mr. Sackville: Information for the years 1979 and 1985 is not available in the form requested. Annual spend for the past five financial years is as follows:

	£ million
1988-89	
Television	1·662
Radio	0·205
Press	1·196
1989-90	
Television	3·549
Radio	0·127
Press	2·739
1990-91	
Television	1·900
Radio	0·005
Press	2·258
1991-92	
Television	4·489
Radio	0·015
Press	3·104
1992-93	
Television	2·773
Radio	0·020
Press	1·976

"London, Making the Best Better"

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the future of University College hospital in the light of the discussion of medical research contained in "London, Making the Best Better".

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government's policy is not only to maintain but to enhance the quality of medical education and research. Any changes to the configuration of services within University College London hospitals will be considered with this objective in mind.

Northumbria Ambulance Service

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing for each month from January 1992 the number of emergency calls responded to by the Northumbria ambulance service and the number and percentage responded to within *(a)* 14, *(b)* 20, *(c)* 25, *(d)* 30, *(e)* 40, *(f)* 50 and *(g)* more minutes.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. Information on response times within eight and within 19 minutes for the financial year 1992-93 for Northumbria ambulance service national health service trust is as follows:

Per cent.

Total number of emergency calls resulting in ambulance arriving at scene of incidents	*Response within 8 minutes*	*Response within 19 minutes*
77,602	68	99

Whipps Cross Hospital

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make resources available for facilities at Whipps Cross hospital for permanent pacemaker implantation and cardiac catheterisation work to be undertaken.

Mr. Sackville: I understand that Forest healthcare trust is investigating with Redbridge and Waltham Forest health authority the possibility of developing local cardiology services at Whipps Cross hospital. The hon. Member may wish to contact the trust chairman, Lord Jenkin of Roding, for details.

Herbs

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all those organisations from which she has recently received representations calling for restrictions on the availability of herbs and herbal produce.

Mr. Sackville: We have received no such representations.

Civil Servants

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each civil service grade in her Department *(a)* the total number of people employed, *(b)* the total number of black people and *(c)* the total number of Asians.

Mr. Sackvill: The answer is:

Grade	*Total Staff*[1]	*Total Black*[2]	*Total Asian*[3]
1	2	0	0
2	4	0	0
3	26	0	0

Grade	*Total Staff*[1]	*Total Black*[2]	*Total Asian*[2]
4	27	0	0
5	212	[4]—	8
6	112	[4]—	[4]—
7	557	[4]—	11
SEO	343	[4]—	12
HEO	678	7	18
EO	882	42	71
AO	955	112	71
AA	521	100	26
AT	13	0	0
HEO(D)	27	0	0
SGB1	57	[4]—	0
SGB2	146	6	[4]—
SPES	59	[4]—	[4]—
PES	338	59	10
Total[3]	4,959	333	234

[1] Based on figures obtained from the Department's personnel computer system as at 2 December 1993. The figures exclude special hospitals, youth treatment centres, secondees into the Department, staff on loan and casual staff of all grades.

[2] Based on the response to the Department's ethnic origin survey. An asterisk means the number is five or less and the exact information has not been given to preserve anonymity.

[3] Totals include numbers excluded to preserve anonymity—see note 2.

[4] Due to small numbers, under the Department's code of practice, this data cannot be reproduced for reasons of confidentiality.

Dentists

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on remuneration for general dental practitioners in 1993-94.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government announced on 6 April 1993 that general dental practitioners were to receive the full 1·5 per cent. pay increase allowed under the Government's policy of restraint in public sector pay. This meant that dentists' target average net income—TANI—increased to £36,352. The dental rates study group met in the spring to consider how this increase in TANI could be paid, and agreed that the increase would be achieved by leaving in place the present scale of fees for dentists.

The group also agreed that should it appear that this fee scale was under or over-delivering TANI either the Government or the dental profession could ask that the group meet again. At a meeting of the dental rates study group held on 1 December, the group recommended that there should be an increase in the fees payable to dentists of, on average, 2·9 per cent. from January 1994. The Government have accepted this recommendation. This is to implement the pay increase of 1·5 per cent. already agreed, and does not alter the pay target of £36,352.

Death Rates

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to reduce regional variations in actual death rates.

Mr. Sackville: Concentrating effective action on reducing avoidable deaths in the five key areas of coronary heart disease and stroke, cancers, mental illness, sexual health, and accidents is a central plank of "The Health of the Nation" strategy. Within this strategy, the Government's approach to variations in health is set out in paragraphs 4.15 and 4.16 of the Green Paper—Cm 1523—and paragraph 2.5 of the White Paper—Cm 1986—copies of which are available in the Library.

In the 17 months since the strategy was launched, there has already been encouraging evidence of activity, both within the national health service and more widely. Responding to geographical and other variations in death rates from specific causes is one of the important elements of local strategies, both in the implementation of "The Health of the Nation" and in other fields of health policy—notably, perinatal and infant mortality.

Community Care Grant

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received regarding the requirement for local authorities to spend 85 per cent. of special transitional community care grant in the independent sector.

Mr. Bowis: The current requirement is for at least 85 per cent. of the social security transfer element of the special transitional grant to be used on community care services provided by the independent sector. We have received a number of representations from the independent sector, local authorities and others, all of which have been considered carefully. Details of the grant conditions for 1994-95 will be announced shortly.

AIDS

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give a breakdown by age of the total number of known cases of *(a)* HIV infection, *(b)* AIDS cases and *(c)* AIDS deaths which have to date been registered by her Department among (i) males and (ii) females.

Mr. Sackville: The information for England and Wales is shown in the table based on reports to the public health laboratory service. The table gives age at testing for HIV infection, age at diagnosis of AIDS and age at death.

England and Wales—Cumulative to June 1993

Age Groups (years)	*Male data cumulative to June 1993*						*Female data cumulative to June 1993*					
	Deaths in AIDS cases		*AIDS*		*HIV*[1]		*Deaths in AIDS cases*		*AIDS*		*HIV*[1]	
	No.	*Per cent.*	*No.*	*Per cent.*	*No.*	*Per cent.*	*No.*	*Per cent.*	*No.*	*Per cent.*	*No.*	*Per cent.*
0-14	33	1	65	1	303	2	21	9	46	9	87	4
15-24	111	3	282	4	2,501	16	22	10	68	14	582	29
25-34	1,314	31	2,519	37	6,845	44	100	44	235	48	1,022	51
35-44	1,618	38	2,444	36	3,875	25	54	24	95	19	226	11
45-54	817	19	1,045	15	1,432	9	21	9	31	6	61	3
55+	339	8	389	6	462	3	11	5	13	3	29	1
Total 100 per cent.	4,232	—	6,744	—	15,418	—	229	—	488	—	2,007	—
Not known	22	—	12	—	423	—	—	—	2	—	58	—

[1] 42 HIV infection reports, age and sex not recorded, are not included.

Infant Formulae

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to meet representatives of the Royal College of Midwives to discuss the arrangements for the implementation of the European directive on the marketing of infant formulae.

Mr. Sackville: Draft regulations to implement this directive are the subject of a consultation document issued on 3 December by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, which is being sent to the Royal College of Midwives, among others.

Departmental Files

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by the Department; and how many are marked "Not for Public Accounts Committee eyes".

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) on 3 December. There is no marking "Not for PAC eyes".

NHS Supplies Authority

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of establishing the headquarters for the NHS Supplies Authority in Reading including (i) relocation of staff, (ii) furnishing of offices and (iii) landscaping.

Mr. Sackville: The cost of relocating National Health Service Supplies Authority staff to Reading was approximately £230,000. The accommodation was acquired as furnished by the previous tenants, so that only small items of furniture were purchased, at a cost of about £200. No landscaping costs have been incurred.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place a copy of the NHS Supplies Authority catalogue in the Library.

Mr. Sackville: The National Health Service Supplies Authority has catalogues for each of its six operating divisions. We are arranging for the copies to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the top 50 suppliers to the NHS as identified by the NHS Supplies Authority, the value of the contract and the goods provided.

Mr. Sackville: The top 50 suppliers whose importance is such that the National Health Service Supplies Authority manages them on a national basis are:

Supplier and Product	*Annual spend 1992-93 £ million*
AAH—Medical and pharmaceutical distribution	190
BT—Telephone services	120
British Gas—Gas supply	60
Glaxo—Pharmaceuticals	39
Digital—IT hardware/software	36
ICL—IT hardware/software	35
Baxter—Medical and pharmaceutical	33
Hewlett-Packard—Medical equipment, IT hardware and software	32
Ethicon—Sutures	25
Olympus Keymed—Medical equipment	25
Molnlycke—Incontinence disposables	24
IGE—Medical equipment	24
Siemens—Medical equipment	24
Abbott—Medical and pharmaceutical	21
Wellcome—Pharmaceuticals	21
Philips—Medical equipment	20
Cow and Gate—Baby feeds	20
Johnson and Johnson—Medical consumables	18
Shell—Oil	18
Smith and Nephew—Medical consumables	18
BOC—Medical gases	16
SMA Wyeth—Baby feeds	15
Howmedica—Medical consumables	14
Fresenius—Pharmaceuticals	14
London International Group (LRC)—Medical consumables	14
3M—Medical consumables	13
British Coal—Coal	13
Batchfords—Patients appliances	12
British Car Contracts—Vehicles	12
Camp—Orthotics	12
Esso—Oil	12
Ford Contract Motoring—Vehicles	12
Kodak—X-Ray film/equipment	12
Steeper—Patients appliances	12
Vernon Carus—Medical consumables	12
Dupont—X-Ray film/equipment	11
McDonnell Douglas—IT hardware/software	11
BP—Oil	10
IBM—IT hardware/software	10
HMSO—Stationery and printing	9
Intial Contract services—Hotel services	9
Becton Dickinson—Medical consumables	8
Jamont—Hand towels	8
Remploy—Patients appliances	8
The Buying Agency—Catering equipment	8
Toshiba—X-Ray film/equipment	8
Biomet—Medical consumables	6
Charringtons—Oil	6
Davis and Geck—Medical consumables	6
Kimberley Clark—Toilet tissue	6

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the annual salary costs of *(a)* the six divisional directors of purchasing, *(b)* the staff in the divisional offices and *(c)* the members of the national purchasing unit of the NHS Supplies Authority.

Mr. Sackville: The 1993-94 total salary costs—including national insurance and superannuation contributions, overtime and allowances—are as follows:

a.	*six divisional directors of purchasing*	*£285,000*
b.	*all divisional staff, including warehouse staff*	*£35·8 million*
c.	*all national purchasing unit staff*	*£1·2 million*

NHS Supplies

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for health what were the salary costs of NHS employees engaged in supplies work at *(a)* regional, *(b)* district and *(c)* unit level for 1990-91.

Mr. Sackville: The nearest available information relates to January and February 1992. At that time, there were around 5,000 supplies staff employed by over 70 different employing authorities. The staff costs were approximately £64 million a year, including national insurance, superannuation, overtime and allowances.

NHS Expenditure

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been, in 1992-93 prices, total gross public spending for each year since 1991-92; and what is the projected expenditure for each year to 1995-96 for NHS trusts.

Mr. Sackville: The information for 1991-92 to 1993-94 is shown in the table. Forward estimates of these figures are not prepared.

Year	*Public expenditure: NHS trusts*[1] *£ million*
1991-92	2,632
1992-93	6,635
1993-94	[2]13,052

[1] This figure comprises NHS trust income from NHS purchasers of health care plus external finance. All figures are at 1992-93 prices.

[2] Forecast outturn.

Regional Offices

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a map showing the new boundaries for the eight regional health authorities which are to replace the existing 14; and whether the proposed reorganisation of the NHS management executive will maintain these regional offices.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department is currently consulting on proposals to determine new national health service regions and establish new regional health authorities. The proposed boundaries of the eight new regions are described in the consultation document, copies of which have been sent to all hon. Members and are available in the Library. It is proposed that the regional health authorities would share common boundaries with the new regional offices which are to be created as part of the national health service management executive.

Anorexia Nervosa

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what data has been collected by her Department in relation to the prevalence of anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa.

Mr. Bowis: The Department does not collect information on prevalence of conditions. Arrangements for assessing and meeting the needs of sufferers from anorexia and bulimia nervosa are matters for health authorities locally.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what official guidance her Department has issued to general practitioners or health authorities regarding the recognition of, and treatment for, anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa.

Mr. Bowis: Health authorities have been advised in the mental illness key area handbook to consider the need to provide access to specialist in-patient facilities for eating disorders on a sub-regional basis and making available family and cognitive therapy as part of their purchasing decisions. No specific further advice has been issued by the Department to general practitioners.

Senior Nurse Managers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many senior nurse manager posts there were in each region in each year since 1989.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Nursing Staff

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nurses, who achieved their basic qualifications in the northern region before 30 September in each year since 1987, were in post in the national health service one year later.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many qualified nursing staff were employed in each region in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Qualified nurses in each regional health authority September 1979 to 1992, England: Whole-time equivalents

Region	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Northern	14,580	14,880	15,170	15,320	15,720	16,040	16,590
Yorkshire	15,180	15,740	16,250	16,610	16,810	17,290	17,880
Trent	18,180	18,190	18,830	19,480	19,800	20,400	21,370
East Anglian	7,220	7,430	7,580	7,810	8,020	8,420	8,820
North West Thames	15,390	15,590	16,490	16,830	16,250	16,850	16,870
North East Thames	16,690	16,490	16,420	18,550	19,180	19,210	19,580
South East Thames	16,560	17,090	17,040	17,530	17,780	17,770	18,030
South West Thames	13,730	13,990	13,970	13,650	14,160	14,160	14,260
Wessex	11,080	11,330	11,250	11,750	12,140	12,430	12,810
Oxford	8,580	9,000	9,070	9,160	9,320	9,870	10,110
South Western	13,200	14,110	14,550	14,450	14,560	14,680	15,220
West Midlands	19,850	20,790	21,360	21,970	22,560	23,020	23,820
Mersey	11,860	12,130	12,120	12,240	12,540	12,570	12,930
North Western	18,140	19,270	19,440	20,400	21,010	21,810	22,470
SHAs	2,790	2,930	2,990	3,300	3,480	3,200	3,360
ENGLAND	205,670	212,500	216,880	219,300	223,320	227,720	234,130

Qualified nurses in each regional health authority September 1979 to 1992, England: Whole-time equivalents (cont.)

Region	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Northern	16,910	17,280	17,410	17,260	16,950	16,880	17,140
Yorkshire	18,060	18,530	18,700	18,670	18,540	18,480	18,160
Trent	21,830	22,540	22,840	22,720	23,090	23,290	23,610
East Anglian	8,970	9,280	9,550	9,720	9,760	9,810	9,820
North West Thames	16,740	16,040	16,060	15,850	15,590	16,280	15,770
North East Thames	19,560	19,850	20,000	19,570	19,800	20,050	20,020
South East Thames	18,430	18,520	18,880	19,070	18,740	16,620	17,360
South West Thames	14,060	13,860	14,090	14,150	13,760	14,120	14,960
Wessex	12,990	13,190	13,660	13,660	13,970	14,130	14,140
Oxford	10,250	10,540	10,690	10,680	11,030	11,320	11,620
South Western	15,460	15,770	15,730	15,870	16,320	16,130	16,770
West Midlands	24,380	25,090	24,770	25,140	25,460	25,210	26,470
Mersey	13,040	12,910	13,130	13,260	12,930	12,620	12,720
North Western	22,810	22,770	22,960	23,160	22,920	23,230	23,120
SHAs	3,310	3,240	3,450	3,390	3,390	5,050	4,850
ENGLAND	236,770	239,360	241,920	242,190	242,340	243,250	246,570

Notes:

Figures are independently rounded to the nearest 10 wte.

Figures exclude agency staff.

SHAs figures for 1991 and 1992 include the special hospital services authority.

Community Day Care Services

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to require local authorities to charge for community day care services.

Mr. Bowis: Local authorities already have discretion to charge for day and domiciliary services and there are no plans to change this.

Hammersmith and Charing Cross Hospitals

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the report prepared by Price Waterhouse to inform the London Implementation Group on the future of Hammersmith and Charing Cross hospitals.

Dr. Mawhinney: No work has been carried out by Price Waterhouse for the London Implementation Group on this subject.

Young People (Containment)

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what powers exist for her to impose a curfew, in selected and known areas, on young persons aged under 16 years after 10.30 pm; and if she will make as statement;

(2) what powers exist to contain, restrain or apprehend persons aged under 16 who are clearly not under parental control and who might be judged at risk or in need; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no such powers. If a young person needs to be apprehended this would be a matter for the police. Under the Children Act 1989 an emergency protection order can be sought from the court if it is satisfied there is reasonable cause to believe the child would suffer significant harm.

NHS Staff

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average annual cost of employing *(a)* a senior manager, *(b)* a consultant, *(c)* a senior house officer, *(d)* a qualified nurse, *(e)* an ambulance driver, *(f)* a porter, *(g)* a medical laboratory, scientific officer and *(h)* a cleaner in the national health service for each year since 1986-87 at (i) cash prices and (ii) 1986-87 prices.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 23 June, at columns *181-82*. Final figures for 1992-93 are not yet available.

RHAs (Capital Assets)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the total capital assets of the regional health authorities both in cash terms and in terms of development potential.

Dr. Mawhinney: The total capital assets of regional health authorities in England in cash terms were, at 31 March 1993, £766,507,176.

The 1992 revaluation of the national health service estate provided regional health authorities with estimates of the development potential of their land and buildings. These figures are not available centrally.

Health Service Reform

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what will happen to the realised and potential capital assets of the regional health authorities upon *(a)* a merger and *(b)* abolition.

Dr. Mawhinney: Proceeds from the sale of capital assets released through the merger or abolition of regional health authorities will be used for the benefit of patients.

Cars

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each year since 1990 the expenditure on cars for *(a)* regions, *(b)* districts and *(c)* trusts.

Mr. Sackville: The following information has been taken from the financial returns of regional health authorities, district health authorities and national health service trusts.

Expenditure on staff cars—leased and contract hire charges

	1991-92 £	1992-93 £
Regional Health Authorities	3,966,651	5,385,946
District Health Authorities	44,369,828	41,069, 621
NHS Trusts	5,363,110	24,010,267
Total	53,699,589	70,465,834

Notes:

1. Information for 1990-91 is not separately identifiable.
2. The data supplied for 1992-93 are provisional only.
3. The figures include the direct leasing/contract costs only.

Community Care

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to publish guidelines on charging for community care.

Mr. Bowis: Guidance was issued in December 1992 about residential care and nursing homes. Further guidance was issued in May this year and more will be issued shortly.

Repetitive Strain Injury

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the policy of her Department regarding the status of repetitive strain injury as a medically identifiable condition.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) on 4 November, at column *451.*

NHS Managers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many senior managers in the national health service there were on each spinal point 1 to 30; what was the flat salary on each point; what was the annual cost of employment per whole-time equivalent on each point in each year since the introduction of these grades; and what was the number of unit general managers in groups 1, 2, 3 and 4 and the number of district general managers in groups 1, 2 and 3, the salary range in each group and the annual cost of employment per whole-time equivalent in each group in each year since the introduction of these grades.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply the Under-Secretary of State—my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville)—gave him on 27 July at columns *835-39.*

NHS Administration

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the administrative costs in each of the national health service regions in each year since 1987-88 in *(a)* cash prices, *(b)* 1987-88 prices and *(c)* as a percentage of total expenditure.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the NHS budget was spent on administrative costs in each year since 1986.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* The percentage of total revenue expenditure for the national health service in England spent on pay and pay-related costs of all staff at headquarters level, and their office costs and overheads, together with the total costs of the Dental Practice Board and the Prescription Pricing Authority is shown in the table.

Administration as a percentage of Total Revenue Expenditure for the National Health Service in England

	Per cent. expenditure on administration
1986-87	3·7
1987-88	3·8
1988-89	3·4
1989-90	4·0
1990-91	4·6
1991-92	3·6
1992-93	3·4

Source:

Summarised accounts of the district health authorities, special health authorities, regional health authorities, family health services authorities, the Prescription Pricing Authority and the Dental Practice Board for England.

Notes:

1. The figures for 1992-93 do not include the Prescription Pricing Authority or Dental Practice Board as this information is not available.
2. The figures for 1992-93 are provisional.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide a table showing the number of hospital beds available by specialty in each region in each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Sackville: The available information has been published and copies of the national and regional summaries are available in the Library. The data for the years 1979 to 1986 are contained in the publication "Hospital Statistics—Form SH3", which records bed availability at individual specialty level. The data for the years 1987-88 to 1991-92 are contained in the "Summary of Bed Availability—Form KHO3". These data are classified by broad ward category, recognising the more flexible use of bed facilities. The summaries for 1992-93 are to be published shortly and copies will be placed in the Library.

Hospital Managers

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what bonuses are payable to hospital managers; and whether the successful completion of a hospital closure is a matter for bonus payments.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* National health service general and senior managers are entitled to performance-related pay linked to individual success in achieving their authorities' objectives. NHS trusts determine the remuneration of their executive directors.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Fuel Poverty Assistance

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken by the Overseas Development Administration to provide fuel poverty assistance to states of the former Yugoslavia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Albania, Georgia and Iraq.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We provide humanitarian aid to all the countries mentioned, including Albania, in ways which take account of their overall needs and the responses of other donors. Our contributions specifically designed to help meet the energy requirements of refugees and other displaced people this winter are as follows:

£ million

	Bilateral	*UK Share of EC*
Former Yugoslavia	10·7	n/a
Iraq	3	3·1
Georgia		4·7
Azerbaijan		6·2
Armenia		6·6
	13·7	20·6

Structural Adjustment Programmes

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much bilateral aid money has been spent in support of structural adjustment programmes in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested is set out in the table.

	£ million
1983	43·1
1984	32·3
1985	45·8
1986	60·3
1987-88	101·3
1988-89	118·3
1989-90	155·9
1990-91	145·7
1991-92	114·7
1992-93	133·1

The figures given for the first four years are on a calendar year basis. Thereafter, the amounts are presented for financial years.

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the EC's technical assistance in the Commonwealth independent states programme for nuclear safety; and what is the United Kingdom's contribution.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the three years from the start of the TACIS programme in 1991, a total of 236 mecu—around £180 million—has been committed for work on nuclear safety in the former Soviet Union. The work has covered three main areas; plant operational safety, design safety and support to the regulatory authorities.

For 1993, the total budget for nuclear safety is 103 mecu or £80 million—which is allocated as follows:

	Mecu	*£ million*
Russia	48	37
Ukraine	32	25
Regional	8	6
EBRD (contribution to Multi-lateral fund)	15	12
Total	103	80

The regional programme will mainly cover Russia, Ukraine and Belarus with limited assistance being provided to Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Comparable figures for earlier years are not readily available.

The UK currently contributes around 16·5 per cent. to the total cost of the assistance provided by TACIS.

Environment Conference (Addis Ababa)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information the Overseas Development Administration has received on the outcome of the African ministerial conference on the environment, held in Addis Ababa, on 26 to 27 November, in regard to the effect of decisions upon aid programmes sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are seeking to obtain a report of the meeting and will consider its implications.

Dependencies (Aid)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the annual aid allocated for each year since 1979 to *(a)* Anguilla, *(b)* Bermuda, *(c)* British Antarctic Territory, *(d)* British Virgin islands, *(e)* the Cayman islands, *(f)* Diego Garcia, *(g)* the Falklands Islands, *(h)* Gibraltar, *(i)* Hong Kong, *(j)* Montserrat, *(k)* Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie and Oeno islands, *(l)* St. Helena, *(m)* St. Helena dependencies, *(n)* South Georgia and South Sandwich islands and *(o)* the Turks and Caicos islands; what was the population of each dependency in 1979; and what it is today.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information is as follows:

Total gross bilateral aid to British dependencies 1979—1992-93[1] [2]

£000

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Anguilla	1,060	991	1,296	1,059	1,426	1,026	1,086	1,589	1,536	1,550	1,784	1,728	820	2,225	2,080
Bermuda	15	28	12	—	33	17	17	30	68	59	32	16	17	2	12
British Virgin Islands	781	1,232	1,241	1,471	1,161	718	1,172	831	566	2,489	2,211	4,399	1,214	1,857	1,213
Cayman Islands	283	443	199	34	2	—	470	1,649	—	309	2,593	1,126	4,183	1,774	119
Falkland Islands[3]	915	1,015	1,058	4,025	9,053	6,016	10,700	10,252	8,165	6,735	3,389	2,487	1,430	1,286	58
Gibraltar	3,214	4,948	4,010	1,898	2,352	8,163	22,452	14,299	9,029	6,932	8,685	343	970	1,078	1,676
Hong Kong	185	376	245	199	203	125	312	195	217	249	216	217	312	404	359

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Montserrat	528	1,209	1,127	1,823	1,041	1,268	1,223	2,015	1,309	1,866	2,164	5,382	4,139	2,969	3,271
Pitcairn Islands	—	47	—	—	4	41	187	137	22	106	—	4	52	41	56
St. Helena and Dep	3,935	3,795	4,062	5,834	6,533	7,471	9,354	9,202	12,241	11,057	20,524	24,239	11,759	9,136	9,080
Turks and Caicos Islands	1,015	1,274	3,362	5,716	4,217	3,923	3,588	5,387	5,356	4,258	5,647	4,424	4,981	9,957	8,009

[1] British Aid Statistics are compiled by financial year from 1987-88 onwards.

[2] No aid was given to British Antarctic Territory and Diego Garcia.

[3] Includes South Georgia.

Estimated population of United Kingdom dependent territories

	1979 *(000)*	*1991* *(000)*
Anguilla	7	9
Bermuda	54	60
British Virgin Islands	11	17
Cayman Islands	17	27
Falklands Islands	2	2
Gibraltar	26	27
Hong Kong	4,930	5,859
Montserrat	11	12
St. Helena and dependencies	6	6
Turks and Caicos	7	13

Notes:

The populations of British Antarctic Territory, British Indian Ocean Territory—Diego Garcia—and South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands are zero.

The population of the Pitcairn island group has been stable since 1978 at between 50 and 60.

Sources:

Where possible national census figures and estimates have been quoted. Where these are not available figures have been taken from the UN Demographic Yearbook, the Caribbean development bank and the Commonwealth Yearbook.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for which of the overseas dependency states of EU member states the Development Council has agreed to finance environmental projects.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Development Council does not discuss individual projects. No EC-financed projects concerned solely with the environment are currently under way in the EC overseas countries and territories programme, although a regional environmental project for British Caribbean dependent territories is under consideration.

World Bank

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the United Kingdom executive director of the World bank voted in favour of the document "Expanding Access to World Bank Information" when this matter was discussed by the executive directors of the World bank; and if he will place a copy of the instructions to the executive director in the Library.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply he received from the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad), on 1 December at column 576.

European Development Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters were discussed and what decisions taken at the European Development Council in Brussels on 2 December; and what proposals were put forward by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* My noble Friend Baroness Chalker of Wallasey attended the Development Council at which the main items were the mid-term review of the Lomé convention; follow-up to the 1992 resolution on development co-operation to the year 2000, including the adoption of a resolution on poverty alleviation; and agreement on a resolution on rehabilitation in countries emerging from crisis. All this work forms part of a long-term agreed work programme to which we are making a prominent and positive contribution.

SCOTLAND

Health Service Administration

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to reduce the management costs of health boards and NHS trusts.

Mr. Stewart: The NHS management executive monitors the management costs of health boards and NHS trusts and is finalising revised arrangements appropriate to the new roles of boards and trusts.

Forestry Commission

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the future of the Forestry Commission.

Sir Hector Munro: Around 3,000 individuals and 300 organisations have written to Ministers and to the Secretary and members of the Forestry Review Group, setting out their views on the work of the group.

NHS Trusts

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will issue guidelines to NHS trust hospitals concerning the practice of publicly advertising the private use of such hospitals on behalf of commercial organisations.

Mr. Stewart: No. It is for NHS trusts to decide how to make the best use of capacity over and above that required for NHS purposes. Income from non-NHS services is used to enhance benefits for all patients.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidelines he has issued to NHS trusts concerning the salaries of senior managers and others; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: On 12 November 1992 and 29 January 1993, chairmen of NHS trusts were informed that the increase in salaries of senior managers and other staff in 1992-93 should not exceed 1·5 per cent. Revised arrangements for the pay of general and senior managers have been commended to trusts in NHS circular MEL(1993)114 of 30 August 1993. I have deposited a copy of this circular in the Library.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how the start-up grant for each NHS trust is calculated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* Grants of up to £175,000 have been set aside for new NHS trusts. These are intended for one off expenditure in the run-up to the trusts becoming operational. Additional funds have been specifically secured and earmarked for this purpose.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the turnover of each NHS trust.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* The information available for 1993-94 is as follows:

Trust	*Forecast Income £000*
Aberdeen Royal Hospital	111,165
Caithness and Sutherland	13,549
Dundee Teaching Hospitals	102,346
Grampian Healthcare	130,375
Moray Health Services	21,595
Raigmore Hospital	49,102
West Lothian	61,915
Ayrshire and Arran Community	53,995
Monklands and Bellshill	50,471
North Ayrshire and Arran	68,449
Royal Alexandra Hospital	42,561
Royal Scottish National Hospital	19,777
South Ayr Hospital	43,512
Southern General Hospital	75,568
Stirling Royal Infirmary	38,155
Victoria Infirmary	53,484
Yorkhill	49,696

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what training chairmen and non-executive directors receive on corporate governance following their appointments to NHS trust boards.

Mr. Stewart: Chairmen and non-executive directors attend induction conferences that include corporate governance among the subjects covered. In consultation with boards and trusts, the NHS management executive is developing additional opportunities for training in this and other areas.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the total accumulated receipts of NHS trusts that have achieved a 6 per cent. return on assets.

Mr. Stewart: Information is available only in respect of the two first-wave NHS trusts whose audited accounts have been published. The total receipts for these trusts in 1992-93 was £157,014,000. Both exceeded the 6 per cent. return on their assets.

NHS Staff

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to publish statistics for the numbers of whole-time equivalent staff in the NHS using the same breakdown as that adopted by the Greater Glasgow health board.

Mr. Stewart: Detailed statistics for staff employed by the NHS in Scotland are published each year in "Scottish Health Statistics". The 1993 edition is due for publication next month. The only extra feature of the data published in the 1991-92 annual report of Greater Glasgow health board is a breakdown into community and hospital categories. "Scottish Health Statistics" includes such a breakdown for nursing, medical and dental staff.

The classification of other staff in this way would require extra coding to be undertaken by the health authorities in order to provide the data centrally. A consultation exercise concluded earlier this month revealed that health boards, directly managed units and NHS trusts sought no increase in the level of data they are required to provide.

There are no plans to collect data splitting staff into the hospital and community categories at present.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has issued to national health service employers concerning the payment of unsocial hours allowances for staff.

Mr. Stewart: For staff whose pay and conditions are determined nationally a variety of agreements has been reached for different staff groups as part of their overall pay and conditions of service package. Details of such agreements are contained in handbooks.

NHS Staff

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time NHS employees there were in each health board area in each of the past five years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* The information requested is detailed in the table.

NHS in Scotland employees[1], number in post; by health board and type of contract: at 30 September

	1989		*1990*		*1991*		*1992*		*1993[2]*	
	WT	*PT*	*WT*	*PT*	*WT*	*PT*	*WT*	*PT*	*WT*	*PT*
Argyll and Clyde	5,856	4,897	5,662	4,988	5,655	5,138	5,525	5,037	5,479	5,094
Ayrshire and Arran	4,391	3,588	4,388	3,672	4,574	3,724	4,494	3,788	4,428	3,763
Borders	1,409	1,063	1,373	1,068	1,355	1,103	1,348	1,137	1,338	1,140
Dumfries and Galloway	2,066	2,030	2,036	2,095	2,046	2,149	2,018	2,209	1,968	2,217
Fife	4,469	2,660	4,410	2,776	4,315	2,973	4,123	3,145	3,930	3,145
Forth Valley	4,244	3,005	4,296	3,320	4,199	3,403	4,124	3,649	4,111	3,640
Grampian	8,272	5,043	8,006	5,235	7,961	5,581	7,958	5,906	7,825	5,349
Greater Glasgow	21,833	10,991	20,256	11,090	19,592	11,030	18,844	11,087	18,361	11,016

	1989 WT	1989 PT	1990 WT	1990 PT	1991 WT	1991 PT	1992 WT	1992 PT	1993[2] WT	1993[2] PT
Highland	3,141	2,143	3,150	2,198	3,251	2,235	3,170	2,342	3,072	2,360
Lanarkshire	7,096	4,513	6,817	4,835	6,469	4,735	6,104	4,739	5,983	4,766
Lothian	13,129	7,926	12,343	8,004	11,965	8,191	11,709	8,472	11,424	8,798
Orkney	228	156	236	189	230	207	236	213	237	231
Shetland	290	179	305	170	315	173	259	130	265	134
Tayside	8,549	4,689	8,560	4,763	8,330	4,605	8,152	4,614	7,790	4,577
Western Isles	337	353	347	419	357	414	369	408	393	431

Notes:

[1] Excludes general medical practitioners and general dental practitioners. Includes employees of NHS trusts and health boards.

[2] At 31 March 1993 except medical and dental which are at 30 September 1992.

[3] Whole-time includes consultants with maximum part-time contracts. Part-time includes honorary medical and dental appointments.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost in each of the past five years of salaries paid to NHS employees suspended on full pay.

Mr. Stewart: This information is not available centrally.

Murder

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have been convicted for murder each year since the abolition of capital punishment; if he will present in tabular form the number of years each of these persons served before being released, classifying it by the year of conviction; and if he will indicate those (i) men and (ii) women who are still imprisoned by year of conviction.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the tables.

Male prisoners sentenced to life imprisonment for murder in Scotland since 1 January 1966[1]

		Number of years served by prisoners before release on life licence																		
Year of conviction	*Number of prisoners convicted*	*Less than 7 years*	*7 years+*	*8 years+*	*9 years+*	*10 years+*	*11 years+*	*12 years+*	*13 years+*	*14 years+*	*15 years+*	*16 years+*	*17 years+*	*18 years+*	*19 years+*	*20 years+*	*21 years+*	*22 years+*	*23 years+*	*Number of prisoners still in custody*
1966	19	—	—	3	8	4	2	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1967	23	—	1	5	5	4	1	2	2	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1968	24	—	2	—	3	3	5	3	2	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	0
1969	20	—	—	4	3	4	3	3	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1970	22	—	—	1	6	6	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	4
1971	37	—	—	4	7	17	4	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	2
1972	32	—	1	1	14	7	4	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	1
1973	31	—	—	1	10	7	3	2	1	—	3	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	3
1974	29	—	—	2	7	7	3	2	1	—	2	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	3
1975	36	—	1	2	8	11	3	1	2	2	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8
1976	35	—	1	5	5	5	3	2	6	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8
1977	46	2	1	3	2	5	5	6	2	4	3	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	15
1978	28	1	1	1	2	2	6	5	1	3	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
1979	29	1	—	—	—	6	4	3	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	11
1980	24	—	—	—	2	6	6	3	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6
1981	27	—	—	—	4	3	4	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	15
1982	39	—	—	—	2	3	7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	27
1983	35	—	—	—	2	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	27
1984	36	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	34
1985	25	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	25
1986	27	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	27
1987	27	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	27
1988	28	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	28
1989	27	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	27
1990	22	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	22
1991	22	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	22
1992	41	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	41
1993	35	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	35

[1] Excludes prisoners who died in custody or were transferred out of the Scottish Prison Service, e.g. to England, while still serving their sentence.

Source: Departmental records.

Female prisoners sentenced to life imprisonment for murder in Scotland since 1 January 1966[1]

		Number of years served by prisoners before release on life licence																		
Year of conviction	*Number of prisoners convicted*	*Less than 7 years*	*7 years+*	*8 years+*	*9 years+*	*10 years+*	*11 years+*	*12 years+*	*13 years+*	*14 years+*	*15 years+*	*16 years+*	*17 years+*	*18 years+*	*19 years+*	*20 years+*	*21 years+*	*22 years+*	*23 years+*	*Number of prisoners still in custody*
1966	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1967	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1968	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1969	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1970	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1971	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1972	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1973	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1974	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1975	2	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1976	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1977	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1978	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1979	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1980	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1981	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1982	3	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
1983	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
1984	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1985	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1986	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
1987	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1988	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1989	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1990	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1991	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
1992	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
1993	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2

[1] Excludes prisoners who died in custody or were transferred out of the Scottish Prison Service, e.g. to England, while still serving their sentence.

Source: Departmental records.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the average amount of time apent in prison by *(a)* males and *(b)* females who were sentenced to imprisonment for murder and have since been released during the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* The information is set out in the table.

Year of release	*Male*	*Female*
1984	10 years 4 months	10 years[1]
1985	10 years 6 months	—
1986	10 years 6 months	—
1987	11 years	9 years 7 months[2]
1988	10 years 5 months	—
1989	12 years 4 months	—
1990	11 years 10 months	12 years[1]
1991	13 years 6 months	—
1992	12 years 6 months	10 years[1]
1993	11 years 2 months	11 years[1]

[1] 1 prisoner.

[2] 2 prisoners.

Source: Departmental records.

Life Sentences

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women prisoners were serving a life sentence on 1 December.

Mr. Lang: I have asked Mr. E. Frizzell, the chief executive of the Scottish Prison Service, to arrange for a reply to be given to the hon. Member.

Letter from Mr. E. Frizzell to Dr. Norman A. Godman, dated 6 December 1993:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question about the number of men and women prisoners serving a life sentence on 1 December.

On that date the number of male and female prisoners serving life sentences, detained at Her Majesty's Pleasure (HMP) or detained Without Limit of Time (WLT) in Scotland was as follows:

	Male	*Female*
Life	422	6
HMP	13	0
WLT	23	1
	458	7

Forestry

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the chairman and members of the Forestry Review Group; on what date he expects to receive their report; and whether the group will go out to public consultation.

Sir Hector Monro: The Forestry Review Group consists of the following officials:

Mr. H. H. Mills, Secretary, The Scottish Office Environment Department (Chairman);

Mr. T. R. Cutler, Director General, Forestry Commission;

Mr. D. S. Grundy, Commissioner, Forestry Commission;

Dr. S. Harding, Forestry Commission;

Mr. M. L. Williams, HM Treasury;

Mr. K. Cosgriff, HM Treasury;

Mr. T. J. Osmond, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food;

Mr. L. K. Walford, Welsh Office;

Dr. R. Shaw, Department of the Environment;

Mr. D. Green, Prime Minister's Policy Unit;

Mr. S. Hampson, The Scottish Office Environment Department;

Mr. A. Cameron, The Scottish Office Environment Department;

Mr. G. S. Pearson, The Scottish Office Environment Department (Secretary).

I expect to receive the group's advice in the new year. This advice is, and will remain, confidential to Ministers.

Weil's Disease

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by regional health board for the last five years and the current year to date the number of people who have been infected by Weil's disease.

Mr. Stewart: The number of discharges for patients in NHS hospitals with a diagnosis of Weil's disease from 1988 to August 1993 is shown in the table.

All discharges for patients with Weil's for each Health Board of Treatment for the years 1988-August 1993

Health Board of Treatment	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*Jan-Aug 1993*
Grampian	0	0	3	0	0	0
Greater Glasgow	0	1	0	1	0	0
Highland	2	0	0	0	0	0
Lothian	0	0	0	1	0	0
Tayside	0	1	0	0	0	1
Scotland	2	2	3	2	0	1

Note:

Figures refer to consultant episodes.

Scottish Homes

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of the system 3 poll commissioned by Scottish Homes to ascertain the attitudes of tenants to stock transfers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Homes has conducted a number of surveys in Scotland using system 3. The survey undertaken in the east end of Glasgow was commissioned, following a competitive process, at a cost of £3,800.

New Towns

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in respect of each of the Scottish new towns what is *(a)* the value of assets sold in each of the last five years, *(b)* the value of assets sold to date in the current financial year and *(c)* the financial targets set for the sale of assets in the current financial year.

Mr. Stewart: Information about the value of the assets sold is not available centrally. The actual receipts from the sale of assets are shown in the table.

£ million[1]

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	
						Sold to date	*Target*
Cumbernauld[2]	16·393	16·136	18·686	18·970	15·476	16·177	21·023
East Kilbride	15·865	31·434	24·653	21·293	20·222	29·331	55·616
Glenrothes	10·058	12·009	18·698	14·585	8·880	15·691	25·054
Irvine	9·126	7·294	6·125	5·033	3·677	2·827	5·150
Livingston	8·413	15·841	21·542	13·877	19·227	12·088	15·957

[1] The figures are expressed in cash.

[2] The figures cover receipts from housing, industrial, commercial and land sales.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many employees there were as at 30 November of each of the Scottish new town development corporations.

Mr. Stewart: The information is in the table below:

	Number of permanent staff, including manual workers	*Number of temporary staff, including staff on fixed terms contracts*	*Total*
East Kilbride	394	69	463
Glenrothes	148	26	174
Cumbernauld	348	44	392
Livingston	409	56	465
Irvine	268	15	283

Health Board Contracts

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether the successful bid for the urology contract with the Ayrshire and Arran health board was the cheapest bid made for the contract;

(2) on how many occasions the NHS management executive has intervened in tendering processes for contracts awarded by each health board during the last 18 months;

(3) if he will ask the NHS management executive to look again at the basis on which Ayrshire and Arran health board have awarded the contract for urology services to the South Ayrshire trust;

(4) what consideration was given by the NHS management executive to the urology contract awarded by Ayrshire and Arran health board to the South Ayrshire NHS trust after the executive had ordered a re-run of the tendering process;

(5) whether the purpose-built facilities for urology services within the North Ayrshire and Arran NHS trust will now be used; whether South Ayrshire NHS trust will have to build new facilities for the urology unit; how much the new urology facilities at the South Ayrshire NHS trust will cost; and how much the new urology facilities in the North Ayrshire and Arran NHS trust cost to build; (6) if he will make a statement outlining the procedure adopted by Ayrshire and Arran health board in awarding a contract for urology services to the South Ayrshire NHS trust;

(7) if he will make a statement on the NHS management executive's remit as regards scrutiny of the award of health board contracts;

(8) on whose instructions the NHS management executive ordered a re-run of the tendering process for urology services in Ayrshire and Arran health board; and whether this was supported by Ayrshire and Arran health board.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 23 November 1993]:* The role of the NHS management executive in relation to contracting between health boards and NHS trusts is to ensure fair play and that contracts are awarded so as to improve patient care within available resources.

Following representations, the then chief executive of the NHSME asked Ayrshire and Arran health board to explain the background to its decision to award the area urology contract to the North Ayrshire NHS trust. From the information subsequently provided, it appeared that the tenders had not been prepared on a comparable basis. The health board accepted the NHSME's view that the two trusts should be invited to resubmit bids based upon a detailed specification.

The subsequent decision to award the contract to the South Ayr trust was a matter for the health board as purchaser and did not require further reference to the NHSME. The board's decision does not affect the viability of the day surgery unit at Crosshouse hospital which opened on 4 October 1993 at a cost of almost £1 million. The South Ayrshire NHS trust plans to open new day surgery facilities, estimated to cost £3 million, at the Ayr hospital in January 1995.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to what extent the competing NHS trusts were given access to the original bids of the other NHS trusts bidding for the contract during the re-run of the tendering process for the urology contract in Ayrshire and Arran; and what is the standard practice in this matter.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 23 November 1993]:* Specific guidance on conducting a tendering exercise for healthcare has not been issued centrally, but a paper on openness in the NHS—MEL(1993)38—was issued by the Scottish Office Home and Health Department. This paper set out a framework for those involved in contracting in which it was emphasised that a lack of openness within the negotiation process was damaging to long-term relationships. In the re-run of the tendering process for Ayrshire and Arran urology contract, each trust agreed to allow the other trust sight of its bid under the original tendering exercise.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what plans he has to commission an epidemiological survey into the incidence of myalgic encephalomyelitis; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if myalgic encephalomyelitis is recognised by his Department as a disease; how it is categorised; what special funding he has made available for its treatment; how much his Department is spending on research; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what advice he has issued to health boards on myalgic encephalomyelitis; what further advice he intends to issue; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* Myalgic encephalomyelitis—ME—is widely recognised as a post-viral or chronic fatigue condition, although it is not at present included by the World Health Organisation in the international classification of diseases.

The Department has not issued any guidance to health boards on ME and no special funding has been made available for treatment. There is, as yet, no consensus on the form that treatment should take. The uncertainties associated with the diagnosis of ME would make it difficult to mount an epidemiological survey and the Department has no present plans to mount such a study.

The chief scientist office of the Scottish Office Home and Health Department is not currently funding any research related to ME, but is always prepared to receive and evaluate individual proposals for such research.

Hospices

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his policy regarding the provision of financial assistance to hospices in each of the past five years; when the provision of matching funding to hospices started and ended; how much in both capital and revenue terms was made available to hospices under this scheme; what financial support is now available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* The 13 voluntary sector hospices in Scotland have benefited since 1 April 1990 from the Government's funding initiative under which at least 50 per cent. of their running costs are met from public funds. This initiative, which initially ran for three years, but has been extended until 31 March 1995, is a transitional measure designed to enable the hospices and health boards to work together to construct a sound basis for contractual relationships and future development. Public funding in the current financial year amounts to some £6 million. The initiative does not extend to capital costs.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he has taken to support the campaign for children's hospices in Scotland.

Mr Stewart *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* Since the campaign was first drawn to our attention, the Government have consistently acknowledged the case for the establishment of a national children's hospice in Scotland but have taken the view that the voluntary sector was best placed to take this initiative forward. We have accordingly recognised the Children's Hospice Association Scotland—CHAS—as the national body responsible for the project and have awarded it a grant of £25,000 per annum towards their core administrative costs.

The Government's decision to make a contribution to the running costs of the children's hospice itself was announced on 26 November, *Official Report*, column 272. CHAS is receiving a special grant of £250,000 in each of the current and two subsequent financial years, making a total Government contribution to running costs of £750,000.

Domestic Violence Refuges

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many domestic violence refuges there are in Scotland; what plans he has to increase the total; what assessment he has made of the need for an increase in the number of such units; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* There are 42 women's refuges in Scotland. We believe that local authorities are best placed to assess the local requirements for refuges and to develop services accordingly. However, the Scottish Office is providing grant under sections 9 and 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 to Scottish Women's Aid to enable it to develop services and possible information and advice. The grant for the current year is £115,000.

Witness Protection

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to establish a witness protection scheme in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* My right hon. Friend has no plans to introduce a national witness protection scheme. Provision already exists in law to take action against people who threaten or injure witnesses. Decisions about the level of protection to provide for witnesses in individual cases are an operational matter for the police.

Councillors Allowances

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing what the daily attendance allowance for elected members of local authorities in Scotland *(a)* was and *(b)* would have been in each year since 1974, had the system of payments (i) remained unaltered and (ii) been index linked; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* Details of the allowances paid to individual local authority members are not held centrally.

Prior to 1991, each local authority was required to pay an attendance allowance but had discretion to determine the actual rate paid to elected members within the prescribed maximum specified in the Local Government (Allowances) (Scotland) Regulations 1975, as amended.

Since April 1991, each authority has determined its own arrangements within the requirements of the Local Authorities Etc. (Allowances) (Scotland) Regulations 1991, as amended. The regulations no longer require authorities to pay an attendance allowance.

The prescribed maximum amount of attendance allowance for a period of 24 hours between 16 May 1975 and 31 March 1991 is shown in the table. The table also illustrates, for the period until 1993-94, the effect which application of the annual GDP deflator would have had on the prescribed maximum of £10 payable in 1975.

Prescribed Maximum

With effect from	£
16 May 1975	10·00
30 November 1977	11·00
10 January 1979	12·14
29 December 1979	13·28
14 March 1981	14·00
8 March 1982	14·56
14 May 1983	15·07
12 June 1984	15·52
8 April 1985	16·00
24 April 1986	16·70
1 September 1987	17·55
1 April 1988	18·25
1 April 1989	19·50
1 September 1990	21·00

Uprated by GDP Deflator

Year	£
1976-77	11·35
1977-78	12·90
1978-79	14·30
1979-80	16·69
1980-81	19·75
1981-82	21·66
1982-83	23·20
1983-84	24·27
1984-85	25·50
1985-86	26·89
1986-87	27·76
1987-88	29·29
1988-89	31·42
1989-90	33·48
1990-91	36·16
1991-92	38·57
1992-93	39·92
1993-94	41·02

Disabled People

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what studies his Department is currently funding, supporting or participating in which have direct relevance to people with disabilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* The Scottish Office is currently funding 28 such studies to a total of £1·5 million. This demonstrates the Government's continuing commitment to their policy of encouraging people with disabilities to live independent lives fully integrated into the community. The studies are listed in the table.

Department and Study
Scottish Office Home and Health Department.
Chief Scientist Office.

1. The Development of a computerised compartmental pressure monitoring system for routine clinical use in management of long bone fractures.

2. Observational studies of individuals with profound mental handicap and physical and/or sensory disabilities in White Top Centre, University of Dundee.

3. Distortion characteristics sound quality and speech. Intelligibility for hearing aids.

4. The effect of long-term intermittent self-catherisation on bladder and renal function in the neuropathic bladder.

5. Interactive strategies of users of augmentative communication systems and their partners.

6. The determination of optimum wheel configurations for wheelchair users.

7. Enhancing the communicative competence of adult persons with severe learning difficulties (mental handicap).

8. Communication disorders in patients with dominant hemispheric intracranial neoplasms.

9. Resettlement of severely disabled people in independent living units.

10. Measuring communication needs in children with profound mental handicap.

11. A comparison of neuropsychological and functional outcome following severe and moderate head injury; access to and uptake of rehabilitation services.

12. Objective assessment of central visual function in multiply handicapped children.

13. Measuring disfunction of basic movement control in cerebral palsy.

14. The development of language screening instruments for use with young children who may be language delayed.

15. Sustaining a fractured neck of femur and implications for more efficient use of health resources.

16.—A randomised controlled trial of the effect of an exercise programme on the bone mass of elderly women.

17. Management of sub acute back pain; the validation of a "fear avoidance" questionnaire and an early behavioural intervention.

18. Evaluation of the functional independence measure (fim) as a measure of health care outcome for elderly acute hospital in-patients.

19. Evaluation of whole gut levage treatment of severe constipation.

20. A method of visual field analysis using digital signal processing of visual evoked potentials.

Central Research Unit

21. Information services for people with disabilities, their carers and service providers.

22. Assessment, plannning and resources in supported accommodation for adults with learning difficulties.

23. The costs and quality of care for disabled people in the community care framework.

Health Policy and Public Health Directorate

24. Volunteer Development Scotland project to test ways of involving volunteers with people with severe physical and mental handicaps in long-stay wards.

Scottish Office Education Department

25. Scottish Higher Education Funding Council project to support a database of services and facilities available to disabled students in the higher education sector.

26. Transition to Adulthood for Young People with Special Educational Needs.

27. Health Education in Scottish Schools: Meeting Special Educational Needs.

Scottish Office Environment Department

28. Construction Industry Research and Information Association study on design guidance for improving existing buildings, to which the public are admitted, for disabled people.

Canniesburn Hospital

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will ask Greater Glasgow health board to consider which of its patients could be transferred to general surgical care under the Canniesburn hospital waiting list initiative.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* No. All the patients for whom treatment has been secured under the initiative involving the Bon Secours Health System, Glasgow have been asked by Greater Glasgow health board if they are willing to receive treatment in the private sector. Those who have indicated that they do not wish to be treated in the private sector have already been offered treatment at Canniesburn hospital.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for Greater Glasgow health board the number of patients under the Canniesburn hospital waiting list initative who have agreed to surgery in *(a)* the private sector within the west of Scotland, *(b)* the private sector within Scotland outwith the west of Scotland, *(c)* the private sector in England, *(d)* the NHS in Scotland, excluding the west of Scotland and *(e)* the NHS in England; and if he will also give the cost in each category for (i) the operation and escort and (ii) accommodation.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* There are two waiting list initiatives which Greater Glasgow health board has been leading on behalf of other, predominantly west of Scotland, health boards which are designed to secure treatment for a number of long wait plastic surgery patients.

The first initiative is to secure treatment for 800 patients at Canniesburn hospital where an additional consultant plastic surgeon has been recruited.

The second initiative has taken the form of a contract award, following a full competitive tendering exercise, to the Bon Secours Health System, Glasgow. Under the terms of the contract up to 572 patients are being offered treatment. To date, 23 have indicated that they do not wish to be treated under this initiative. These patients have been offered treatment under the initiative at Canniesburn hospital.

The contract with Bon Secours will cost around £500,000. This covers pre-operative assessment, treatment, accommodation and all necessary follow-up work for a mix of major, intermediate and minor procedures.

Raymond Gilmour

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of consideration of the application by Raymond Gilmour seeking the prerogative of mercy under the terms of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* The petitions submitted on behalf of Mr. Raymond Gilmour on 8 January, 12 March and 27 May this year are the subject of detailed inquiries which are not yet complete. The hon. Member will be informed as soon as a decision has been reached on his constituent's case.

Influenza Vaccine

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when influenza vaccine will be available for all who require it.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 November 1993]:* Vaccine shortage arose as a result of the influenza outbreak occurring earlier than expected and the failure of one manufacturer's product to meet the required standard. Other manufacturers have increased production and the supply position is now improving. Sufficient supplies should be available to meet the needs of those groups identified in the Chief Medical Officer's letter of 8 October as being at risk by early December.

Anaesthetists

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate how often anaesthetists are required to work alone.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* This information is not held centrally.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the staffing levels of anaesthetists in NHS hospitals.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* The number of anaesthetists, whole-time equivalent, employed in NHS hospitals at 30 September 1992, the latest date for which information is available centrally, is shown in the table.

	Numbers
All (whole-time equivalents)	618
Consultant	303
Other career grades	28
Senior Registrar	42
Registrar	89
Senior House Officer	143
Other	13

While some NHS employers have recently experienced difficulty in recruiting anaesthetists, the number of senior registrars is greater than the service's forecast demand for new consultants in the next few years.

Intensive Care

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to ensure that surgeons, gynaecologists and anaesthetists have immediate access to recovery rooms, and high dependency and intensive care units, 24 hours a day.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* It is a matter for health boards as purchasers of care and the relevant unit or trust as the provider to make the necessary arrangements for access to recovery rooms and high dependency and intensive care units.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many, and what percentage, of paediatric intensive care units have nurse staffing of 6·4 whole-time equivalent or more per open bed.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* The detailed information required to respond is not held centrally. What information is held, however, indicates that no paediatric intensive care units in Scotland have 6·4 whole-time equivalent nursing staff per occupied bed.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of nurses in adult intensive care units are RSCN; and what percentage have had paediatric intensive care training.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* The information requested is not held centrally.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to improve intensive care facilities.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* It is a matter for health boards as purchasers of care and units or trusts as providers to ensure an appropriate standard and distribution of intensive care facilities.

Surgery

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to ensure that no urgent operations are delayed until regular operating lists are completed.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* Officials of the Scottish Office Home and Health Department issued detailed guidance in a letter of 31 January 1992 updated in the form of a management executive letter of 18 May 1993. The guidance set out the roles and responsibilities of managers and clinicians in the management of waiting lists and times and delivery of waiting time guarantees. It is for clinicians to assess the relative needs of each individual patient they take on to a waiting list in determining the priority for treatment.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how often emergency operations are being performed at night by doctors in training grades without supervision.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* This information is not held centrally. The training grades of doctors, which range from pre-registration house officer to senior registrar, have access to trained staff at all times.

Perioperative Deaths

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will carry out an inquiry into perioperative deaths similar to that carried out in NHS hospitals in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* Studies of perioperative mortality have been carried out in Scotland for some years. From 1 January 1994 the whole of Scotland will be covered when the Glasgow audit of surgical deaths is merged with the Scottish mortality study to become the Scottish audit of surgical mortality.

This audit is funded by the clinical resource and audit group, part of the Scottish Office Home and Health Department.

Hypothermia

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many men aged 65 years and over and women aged 60 years and over have died from hypothermia in Scotland in each year since 1987.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 26 November 1993]:* The figures requested are shown in the table.

Deaths with any mention of hypothermia on the death certificate 1987-93

Year	*Men aged 65 and over*	*Women aged 60 and over*
1987	52	65
1988	34	72
1989	44	79
1990	47	72
1991	31	50
1992	44	47
1993[1]	23	46

[1] Provisional figures for events registered to 6 November 1993.

Superannuation Contributions

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements have been made for superannuation contributions transferred into trusts; and whether a trust may use any of the money for any other purpose.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* Employees of national health service trusts have the same rights to membership of the statutory national health service superannuation scheme as other NHS employees. Their contribution to the scheme, and those of their employers, are payable to the Exchequer to fund superannuation benefits, and cannot be used for any other purpose.

Health Service Workers

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the results of the survey of health service workers will be published; and if he will make it his policy to ensure that the state of morale among health service workers will be recorded in the published text.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* The results of the survey of approximately 40,500 NHS staff in Scotland were published on 29 November 1993. The report "What Those who Work Within the NHS in Scotland Think 1993" addresses the issue of staff morale.

A copy of the report has been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Nurses (Teaching)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his target for the number of nurse teaching posts; and what estimate he has made of the number of nurse teaching posts which will be lost in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* Glasgow in each year until the target is reached.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* The number of nurse teacher posts is dependent on the number of nurses who require to be trained. Retention of nurses has improved markedly over the last few years. As a result there has been a reduction in the number of student nurses in line with the number of job opportunities available. The effect of this is that the number of teaching posts in colleges of nursing and midwifery is being reduced. The management executive advised health boards in March 1993 of their view that colleges should seek to achieve a student:teacher ratio of 15:1 for preregistration nursing programmes by 1 April 1994. The number of teachers then required will depend on the assessments being carried out by health boards of the number of students required to enter training in 1994-95.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he is giving as to how nursing teachers will be chosen for redundancy; what terms they will be offered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* No guidance will be issued to health boards on the redundancy of nursing teachers. This is a matter for individual health boards as employers to determine in the light of local circumstances.

Local Government Finance

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will specify for each local authority the amount of accumulated capital receipts.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 29 November 1993]:* The arrangements operated in Scotland for the control of local authority capital expenditure differ from those operated in England and Wales. In Scotland local authorities must spend their capital receipts in the same year as they are raised if the receipts are to confer additional spending power. The system in Scotland does not, therefore, lend itself to the accumulation of capital receipts.

Sheriffs

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many sheriffs there are; and how many are women.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 30 November 1993]:* There are 99 sheriffs in post, of whom 92 are men and seven are women. Of 114 temporary sheriffs, 109 are men and five are women.

Private Patients

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many private patients have been using national health service paid beds in Strathclyde for the first 10 months of 1993.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 30 November 1993]:* Only provisional figures for the period January to August 1993 are available. One hundred and thirty-one private patients have been discharged from NHS hospitals in Strathclyde region. This compares with 313,803 NHS patients discharged for the same period.

Judges

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many judges there are; and how many are women.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 30 November 1993]:* There are currently 25 judges of the Court of Session; all are men. In addition, there are eight temporary judges, of whom one is a woman.

Health Service Administration

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he intends to take in order to reduce bureaucracy within NHS hospitals and trusts.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 30 November 1993]:* In negotiating contracts with NHS trusts, health boards are responsible for ensuring value for money. In addition, the NHS management executive is finalising new arrangements for monitoring management costs.

Committee of the Regions

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list his appointments to the European Union's Committee of the Regions by *(a)* name, *(b)* age, *(c)* occupation and *(d)* political affiliation; and what recent representations he has received concerning these appointments.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 30 November 1993]:* Details of Scottish members and alternate members nominated for the Committee of the Regions of the European Communities are as follows:

Member's Name and Council and Political Affiliation	*Current Age*
Charles Gray: Strathclyde Region— Labour	64
Rosemary McKenna: Cumbernauld and Kilsyth District— Labour	52
Brian Meek: Edinburgh District— Conservative	54
Duncan McPherson: Highland Region— Independent	63
Daniel Coffey: Kilmarnock and Loudoun District— SNP	39

Alternative Members Name and Council and Political Affiliation	*Current Age*
Keith Geddes: Lothian Region— Labour	41
Jean McFadden: Glasgow District— Labour	52
Marcus Humphrey: Grampian Region— Conservative	55
Peter Peacock: Highland Region— Independent	41
Clive Sneddon: North East Fife District— Liberal Democrat	48

Occupation was not a consideration in putting these names forward and such details are not centrally held.

My right hon. Friend has received no recent representations concerning these nominations.

Income Statistics

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average per capita income in Greenock and Port Glasgow compared with *(a)* the Scottish average, *(b)* the United Kingdom average and *(c)* the European average in cash and percentage terms for the latest available year.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 30 November 1993]:* Information relating to household income is not available below the level of Scottish regions.

Police (Rapid Response Cars)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many police forces operate rapid response police cars; what is the normal size of such police crews; and what are their main functions and activities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 30 November 1993]:* One Scottish force currently operates armed response vehicles on a full-time basis. Two vehicles, each manned by two firearms officers, operate within the force area on a 24-hour basis. Their primary function is to provide a rapid response to any incident which involves the use, or alleged use, of firearms and to provide initial containment until any necessary additional resources can be mobilised with a view to bringing the situation to a satisfactory conclusion.

Advocates

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many advocates there are in practice at the present moment; and how many are women.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 30 November 1993]:* There are 323 advocates currently in practice, 54 of whom are women.

Health Boards

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many health board employees, in respect of each health board area in Scotland, each year since 1988 were engaged in administration; and what percentage they represented of the total number of persons employed by that health board in each of those years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* The information requested is given, in whole-time equivalent terms, in the table.

Administrative staff in post in NHS in Scotland at 31 March

	1988		*1989*		*1990*		*1991*		*1992*		*1993*	
	wte	*Per cent. of all staff*	*wte*	*Per cent. of all staff*	*wte*	*Per cent. of all staff*	*wte*	*Per cent. of all staff*	*wte*	*Per cent. of all staff*	*wte*	*Per cent. of all staff*
Scotland	2,871·9	2·2	2,996·2	2·4	3,341·4	2·7	3,643·3	3·0	3,853·2	3·1	4,123·5	3·4
Argyll and Clyde	269·3	2·9	294·9	3·2	322·0	3·6	329·2	3·6	351·8	3·8	369·6	4·1
Ayrshire and Arran	142·0	2·1	149·7	2·2	159·6	2·3	177·1	2·6	182·8	2·4	[illegible]	2·8
Borders	41·6	2·0	45·0	2·1	52·5	2·5	54·3	2·6	59·6	2·8	[illegible]	2·9
Dumfries and Galloway	68·6	2·0	73·5	2·1	73·9	2·2	86·4	2·5	87·2	2·5	102·9	3·0
Fife	139·2	2·1	147·2	2·3	165·5	2·5	170·4	2·6	175·6	2·7	188·9	3·0
Forth Valley	114·2	1·8	111·9	1·8	129·8	2·1	142·6	2·3	162·8	2·6	178·3	2·8
Grampian	256·2	2·3	274·4	2·4	301·1	2·7	331·0	2·9	348·7	3·0	385·2	3·4
Greater Glasgow	606·4	1·9	559·6	1·9	631·2	2·3	688·2	2·5	705·4	2·7	767·9	3·0
Highland	97·9	2·1	103·2	2·3	112·9	2·5	126·7	2·7	129·3	2·7	136·4	2·9
Lanarkshire	154·1	1·5	167·4	1·6	177·3	1·3	189·1	1·9	188·4	2·0	206·0	2·2
Lothian	410·3	2·1	467·8	2·5	519·9	2·9	551·8	3·1	561·2	3·2	595·6	3·4
Orkney	7·0	2·1	9·0	2·7	9·0	2·5	8·0	2·1	12·0	3·1	13·5	3·3
Shetland	7·0	1·7	6·0	1·4	7·0	1·6	11·0	2·6	14·3	3·3	17·8	4·8
Tayside	266·6	2·3	260·3	2·7	[1]308·1	2·6	330·5	2·8	348·8	3·1	363·2	3·3
Western Isles	18·1	3·0	18·1	3·1	17·9	3·0	19·3	3·2	20·9	3·4	24·3	3·5
CSA	273·5	6·0	308·2	6·8	353·7	7·8	427·8	9·1	500·3	9·7	513·8	9·7
State Hospital	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4·2	1·0	4·2	1·0

[1] Non-medical and dental staff numbers relate to 30 September 1990.

Notes:

1. Excludes management and clerical grades.
2. Includes the following grades: scale 1 to 17 administrative and clerical staff for 1988-89 and grade 4 to 6 administrative and clerical staff for 1990-93.
3. Staff described as "administrative" include many groups of staff whose nature of work may not be strictly administrative eg computer programmers, system analysts, accountants and information specialists.
4. Calculations of percentages are based on total staff which include medical and dental staff at 30 September and all other staff at 31 March of each year.

Health Boards

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each health board *(a)* the current annual account and *(b)* the present number of managerial employees.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* The revenue allocation for each health board for 1993-94 and the managerial employees engaged by them at 31 March 1993 and detailed in the table.

NHS in Scotland: Revenue allocations and managerial employees

	1993-94 Revenue allocation £ million	*Number[2]*	*Whole-time equivalent[2]*
Scotland	2,809·0	1,509	1,490·7
Argyll and Clyde	232·0	115	113·9
Ayrshire and Arran	186·0	105	104·[illegible]
Borders	58·8	23	22·9
Dumfries and Galloway	82·3	52	50·5
Fife	171·9	81	79·2
Forth Valley	140·7	81	80·4
Grampian	270·7	196	191·2
Greater Glasgow	588·3	294	290·6
Highland	114·0	81	81·0
Lanarkshire	259·8	91	90·4
Lothian	409·3	222	218·8
Orkney	12·3	7	7·0
Shetland	14·5	8	8·0
Tayside	245.0	135	135·0
Western Isles	23·1	18	17·8

[1] Managerial employees include administrative and clerical grades 7 and above, senior and general managers, a small number of staff on protected grades and some professional staff who have transferred to senior manager grades.

[2] At 31 March 1993.

Domiciliary Care

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what proposals he has to implement monitoring measures in relation to the requirement to spend 85 per cent. of the special transitional grant in the independent sector on domiciliary care; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what procedures he has introduced in order to monitor local authority compliance with the requirement to spend 85 per cent. of the special transitional grant for domiciliary care in the independent sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* There is no special transitional grant in Scotland. The necessary statutory powers are not available in Scottish legislation. My noble and learned Friend the Minister of State met representatives of local authorities on 13 August 1993 and made it clear that if necessary the Secretary of State would seek equivalent powers to those available in England and would if necessary ensure the success of our policy of promoting a flourishing mixed economy of care in Scotland. Arrangements for monitoring the community care reforms in Scotland are set out in circular SW 16/1993. A copy is in the House Library.

Registered Homes

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many registered homes have lost their registration in each of the past four years; how many of these were *(a)* private care homes, *(b)* private nursing homes, *(c)* charitable homes or nursing homes and *(d)* other; and under which provisions of the legislation the deregister took place.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* Outturn details for adult residential care homes, including cancellation, are available only for the two financial years ending 31 March 1993. The table also gives details for the period 1 April to 29 November of the current year. Regional and islands council social work authorities have powers to refuse or cancel registration under section 62 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, as amended by the Registered Establishments (Scotland) Act 1987. Cancellation has occurred in only one case, and the others represent homes that have closed or reclassified as no longer requiring registration.

Residential care homes (outturn)	*1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992*	*1 April 1992 to 31 March 1993*	*1 April 1993 to 29 November 1993*
Private	14	6	9
Voluntary sector	11	9	17

Corresponding information on private nursing homes is not held centrally.

Domestic Fires

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many fires occurred in private dwellings in *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* the rest of Scotland in each of the past 10 years; how many fatalities where such fires took place occurred among (i) children aged under 14 years and (ii) other persons; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* Based on reports from local authority fire brigades on fires attended, the numbers of fires and of fatal casualties in dwellings in Strathclyde, in other parts of Scotland and in Scotland as a whole in each of the years 1983-1992 are as set out in the table. An analysis of fatal casualties by age groups is being prepared and I will write to the hon. Member when this information is available.

	Strathclyde		*Other parts of Scotland*		*Total Scotland*	
Year	*Fires*	*Fatal casualties*	*Fires*	*Fatal casualties*	*Fires*	*Fatal casualties*
1983	4,060	62	4,675	74	8,735	136
1984	4,446	67	4,966	61	9,412	128
1985	4,461	80	5,307	64	9,768	144
1986	4,528	70	5,195	62	9,723	132
1987	4,368	77	4,887	61	9,255	138
1988	4,687	65	4,825	81	9,512	146
1989	4,818	48	4,965	40	9,783	88
1990	4,832	64	4,979	51	9,811	115
1991	4,928	62	4,871	55	9,799	117
[1]1992	4,817	38	4,795	44	9,612	82

[1] Provisional figures.

The Government continue to seek reductions in fatalities by means of publicity and education initiatives and, as part of those campaigns, continue to promote the installation and maintenance of smoke alarms.

River Clyde (Dredging)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the annual cost of the dredging of the River Clyde; which organisations and other parties make a contribution to this operation; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the information on the past annual costs incurred by the Clyde port authority in dredging the River Clyde given in my reply to him of 15 April 1993.

It is the Government's policy that port authorities, including Clydeport Ltd., should manage their businesses on a commercial basis; and that the costs of dredging should be met by charges to the users of ports or by other parties who benefit from the dredging.

I understand that Clydeport Ltd. is discussing the cost of dredging the River Clyde with the principal users and beneficiaries of the river at this time. These discussions are commercially confidential.

Prisons

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what new money is to be made available for *(a)* the construction of new prisons and *(b)* the renovation of existing prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* There are no plans for the construction of any new prison establishment in Scotland. However, planning is being taken forward for the provision of a new 50 prisoner place houseblock at HM prison, Greenock.

Subject to planning consent and other necessary approvals, construction work is provisionally scheduled to start in the latter part of 1994-95.

The estates strategy for the service is contained at chapter 9 of, and annex B to, the Scottish Prison Service corporate plan, a copy of which was deposited in the Library in August this year.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

London Convention

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will now publish the official position of Her Majesty's Government in relation to the issues considered at the London convention in early November.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 25 November, at column 118.

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement about the operation of her Department's sensitive documents unit; how many staff are employed in its operation; and approximately how many documents per annum come within its purview.

Mr. Jack: My Department has no such unit. Documents generated by my Department which are given security markings are kept under routine review by the originating units, which must ensure that such documents are declassified or downgraded as necessary.

Hastings Shingle Bank

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will undertake a survey of the Hastings shingle bank to ascertain the impact on it of the aggregate dredging so far and the implications on the fishery of future dredging proposals.

Mr. Jack: The Ministry's directorate of fisheries research is conducting regular studies of the sediments and benthos in the area of the Hastings shingle bank. Although periodic studies of fish stocks in the English channel do not provide conclusive information about specific areas such as the shingle bank, catch statistics in the area appear to lend some support to the concerns expressed by local fishermen about crabs and sole.

A new survey programme will be starting in January using scallop dredgers in order to establish the distribution of overwintering crabs and to assess the significance of the shingle bank to the eastern channel crab fishery. In addition MAFF scientists are setting up a study to monitor the migration of sole across the bank to the shallow inshore waters. This survey work will cover the period of spawning migration next spring.

We will be weighing the implications of this work very carefully in formulating our advice under the Government view procedure.

Live Animals (Transport)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 24 November 1993 to the hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Tyler) *Official Report*, column 65, what explanations he received from the Commission for its differing conclusions on the enforceability of journey limits for livestock as opposed to compulsory feeding and watering times.

Mr. Soames: The proposals for amendments to directive 91/628/EEC on protection of animals during transport were deposited in the Library of the House on 22 September 1993, reference 8441/93. The Commission's explanatory memorandum referred to the conclusions of the Scientific Veterinary Committee, which the Commission accepted, on the question of journey limits. They pointed out in particular that it would be simple to evade a journey limit by using intermediate places of destination.

Badgers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what method is used by her wildlife unit at Royal Air Force station, Aston Down in badger removal operations; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The wildlife unit surveys farms which have had a cattle tuberculosis breakdown for evidence of badgers. Where removal operations are sanctioned, it traps badgers live in cages and humanely destroys them.

Live Animal Exports

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations she has received in the last six months about the export of live animals; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The public response to campaigns from animal welfare organisations on transport of animals results in large numbers of representations to the Government. During the last six months, the Government have received over 23,000 pieces of correspondence and 136 petitions, representing approximately 8,000 signatures, on this issue. Proposals from the Commission to amend directive 91/628 on the welfare of animals during transport were sent to over 500 interested organisations and individuals for comment this summer. We received 86 replies.

In the negotiations, the Government are seeking Community rules which are properly enforceable and will provide strong welfare safeguards for all categories of animals during transport.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when her Department intends to review the current ban on the export of live cattle from the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The export of cattle over six months of age from the United Kingdom to other member states is prohibited under European Commission decision 89/469/EEC. This is because of the position on bovine spongiform encephalopathy. The EC Scientific Veterinary Committee in conducting a scientific evaluation on BSE in September

1993 endorsed the Community control measures on BSE. The position will be kept under review in the light of the improving disease situation.

The position in relation to third-country trade varies depending upon the import policies of the countries concerned. We are working hard to ensure that the relevant authorities of important potential overseas markets are aware of the improving BSE situation in the United Kingdom and that their import policies fully reflect this.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she will be able to provide figures for live animals exported to other EC member states since 1 January; and what will be the sources of her information.

Mr. Soames: Initial data recently released by the Central Statistical Office indicate that the value of exports of live animals to other EC member states for the first half of 1993 amounted to £83·1 million. However, this figure is subject to revision under the new arrangements provided by the INTRASTAT system. No details are yet available for the actual number of animals involved.

Further details can be found in the CSO's "Business Monitor MM20A: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom with the World (including data for countries within the European Community: Intrastat)." A copy of this can be found in the House of Commons Library.

Cereals

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the change in cereal production between 1992 and 1993 expressed as a tonnage and in percentage terms in each European Union country and in the European Union as a whole.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is given in the table. It should be emphasised that 1993 figures in particular are only provisional at this stage.

	Cereal Production ('000s tonnes)		*Change from 1992 to 1993*	
	1992	*1993*	*'000s tonnes*	*as a percentage*
EC Total	168,059·6	163,999·0	–4060·6	–2·42
Belgium	1,998·0	2,048·5	50·5	2·53
Denmark	6,954·3	8,524·0	1,567·7	22·57
Germany	34,758·5	35,717·2	958·7	2·76
Greece	4,946·4	4,950·0	3·6	0·07
Spain	13,867·2	16,838·1	2,970·9	21·42
France	60,449·5	55,376·0	–5,073·5	–8·39
Ireland	2,016·0	1,606·1	–409·9	–20·33
Italy	18,413·2	16,625·0	–1,788·2	–9·71
Luxembourg	152·5	152·2	–0·3	–0·20
Netherlands	1,349·6	1,337·7	–11·9	–0·88
Portugal	1,091·0	1,217·5	126·5	11·59
United Kingdom	22,063·4	19,606·7	–2,456·7	–11·13

Source: Eurostat (October 1993) & MAFF

Agricultural Production

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the value, in each year since 1979 of *(a)* the overall agricultural production in the United Kingdom, *(b)* overall food imports, *(c)* cereal and cereal substitutes imported into the United Kingdom and *(d)* cereal exports; and if she will express each figure as a percentage of the amount needed for self-sufficiency.

Mr. Jack: The table shows figures for agricultural gross product; the total imports to the United Kingdom of food, feed and drink, and the percentage of self-sufficiency of the United Kingdom in food and feed. The value of both imports and exports of cereals is also shown, but it has not been possible to include the element for imports of cereal substitutes in this reply. I shall write to my hon. Friend shortly with further details.

No statistics are available on self-sufficiency in cereal and cereal substitutes, but usage of cereals is known, and statistics on this are included in the final column of the table.

	Food and Agriculture			*Cereals*		
	Agricultural output £ million	*Imports of food, feed and drink*[1] *£ million*	*Level of United Kingdom self-sufficiency in food and feed per cent.*	*Imports of cereals £ million*	*Exports of cereals £ million*	*Production as per cent. of total new supply for use in United Kingdom*
1979	3,801	6,653	53·3	565	80	77
1980	4,238	6,341	59·0	496	274	88
1981	4,775	6,781	61·1	438	476	103
1982	5,362	7,321	61·5	401	531	105
1983	5,118	7,982	61·2	420	466	103
1984	6,108	9,097	62·9	410	711	114
1985	5,402	9,482	57·7	468	539	108
1986	5,801	10,070	56·5	500	882	123
1987	5,868	10,276	56·8	469	524	121
1988	5,701	10,602	53·9	452	352	107
1989	6,577	11,420	58·5	361	579	121
1990	6,918	12,288	56·5	375	633	121

	Food and Agriculture			Cereals		
	Agricultural output £ million	*Imports of food, feed and drink*[1] *£ million*	*Level of United Kingdom self-sufficiency in food and feed per cent.*	*Imports of cereals £ million*	*Exports of cereals £ million*	*Production as per cent. of total new supply for use in United Kingdom*
1991	6,909	12,262	57.9	356	626	119
1992	7,132	13,407	56·5	463	631	115

[1] Food, feed and drink cover Divisions 01-09, 11, 22 and Section 4 of the SITC system details of which can be found in the Central Statistical Office publication "Guide to the classifiction of Overseas Trade Statistics", MA 21.

Mink

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is her estimate of the number of mink presently in the wild in the United Kingdom; and in which regions are they most prevalent.

Mr. Soames: The control of wild mink is the responsibility of occupiers of land the Ministry has not collected details of their numbers or distribution.

However, data published by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology show that wild mink are widespread, with particular concentrations in mid and lowland Scotland and south-west England.

Fur farms

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the minimum statutory size of a cage in which *(a)* Arctic fox and *(b)* mink may be kept on fur farms.

Mr. Soames: There is no legislation governing the minimum cage size for Arctic fox or mink.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give details of the licensing arrangements necessary for the establishment and operation of a mink farm.

Mr. Soames: To qualify for a licence to keep mink, the farmer must comply with the conditions of the Mink (Keeping) regulations 1975 (as amended). These specify that mink must be kept in escape-proof cages or other containers and, except when they are in transit, within an enclosure or building which satisfies the requirements of the regulations. These requirements specify the height of the enclosures, the materials to be used to construct them and the measures which must be taken to prevent escapes. Additionally, every enclosure must have an appropriate number of cage traps, in case mink should escape from their cages.

Before a licence can be renewed, the farm is inspected by ADAS, the Ministry's advisers on wildlife, to ensure the farmer complies with the requirements of the legislation.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many fox farms there are in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Soames: The keeping of fox species is not subject to control in England, Wales and Scotland and information is not, therefore, collected on the number of farms keeping this animal. In Northern Ireland, the keeping of one species of fox, the Arctic fox, is subject to licensing under the Arctic Fox (Importation and Keeping) Regulations 1988. No licences have been issued in Northern Ireland to keep this animal since the regulations came into force.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she takes to ensure the proper qualifications of those involved in the killing of farmed fur-bearing animals; and what records are kept of such persons.

Mr. Soames: In monitoring welfare standards on fur farms, the state veterinary services operates to the guidelines laid down in the relevant recommendation adopted by the Council of Europe. That recommendation specifies that the killing of farmed fur-bearing animals must be carried out by a competent person. It does not require records of such persons to be kept.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the minimum acceptable specifications for the perimeter guard fences of mink farms.

Mr. Soames: The minimum acceptable specifications for the perimeter guard fences of mink farms are set out in schedule 2 to the Mink (Keeping) Regulations 1975, as amended. A copy of the regulations is in the House of Commons library.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions since 1984 an application for a licence for a mink farm has been refused; and what was the reason for each refusal.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is readily available only from 1987 onwards. Since then, no applications for licences to keep mink in a mink farm have been refused.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment she has made of the environmental and welfare needs of farmed fur-bearing animals; and what plans she has to make provision for such needs.

Mr. Soames: The Farm Animal Welfare Council's review of fur farming considered the environmental and welfare needs of farmed mink and fox. It concluded that there was insufficient evidence to make specific recommendations on the keeping of fur-bearing animals and recommended that the industry should carry out further research. Research is being carried out in other countries such as Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands, whose industries are large enough to bear the costs involved. We will be pressing for the best possible welfare standards on a European Community basis.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is her policy on offering free veterinary advice to fur farmers.

Mr. Soames: The state veterinary service provides fur farmers with free advice on animal welfare matters.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions in each year since 1984 her officials or the state veterinary service have visited mink farms for the purpose of *(a)* assessing welfare and *(b)* inspecting slaughter methods.

Mr. Soames: Records of veterinary visits to mink farms dating back to 1984 are not available. There are currently 15 mink farms in Great Britain, each of which is visited by the state veterinary service on an annual basis.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is her Department's policy towards the farming of Arctic foxes within the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: We are seeking the best possible welfare standards for all types of fur farming on a European Community basis.

Infant Formulae

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) by what date she is hoping to implement the provisions of the European directive on the marketing of infant formulae;

(2) if she will make a statement summarising the provisions of the European Community directive on the marketing of infant formulae;

(3) if she will make a statement setting out the arrangements which will be adopted for consultation about the provisions of the European directive on the marketing of infant formulae; and when that consultation will begin.

Mr. Soames: The Commission directive 91/321/EEC on infant formulae and follow-on formulae requires member states to introduce national laws by 1 June 1994. We will be seeking to meet that deadline.

Directive 91/321 lays down compositional and labelling requirements for infant formulae and follow-on formulae. Among these are requirements that the labelling of infant formula contains a statement concerning the superiority of breast feeding, and the use of any term that suggests that infant formula is equivalent or superior to breast milk is prohibited. Pictures of infants and other imagery that might idealise the product are also prohibited. The advertising of infant formula is permitted only in certain professional magazines and can contain only information of a scientific or factual nature. The directive prohibits manufacturers from supplying free or subsidised supplies.

Draft proposals for GB regulations implementing the directive have been prepared and were issued for consultation to interested parties in the normal way on Friday, 3 December 1993.

Departmental Files

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by her Department; and how many are marked "Not for Public Accounts Committee eyes".

Mr. Jack: The marking "Not for NAO eyes" is used in accordance with an agreement between the Treasury and the National Audit Office, under which current documents relating to the handling of relations between Departments and the NAO are not automatically available.

There are unlikely to be a great number of such files, but no central file record is kept in MAFF, and to obtain this information by a departmental inquiry to all the various registries would be very time-consuming and costly.

There is no marking "Not for PAC eyes".

Surplus Beef

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if she will make a statement as to how surplus beef released by the European Commission is being distributed in Nottinghamshire;

(2) if she will outline the mechanisms adopted by the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce for the distribution of surplus beef released by the European Commission into the United Kingdom; and if she will list the local authority areas in which the distribution is being undertaken by *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* voluntary organisations and *(c)* individuals.

Mr. Jack: The distribution of produce to eligible recipients under the EC surplus food scheme is carried out through charitable or non-profit making organisations. This year, 1,055 organisations have been designated by Agriculture Departments in the United Kingdom to distribute 12,200 tonnes of beef released from intervention for processing and canning. The Intervention Board executive agency is currently co-ordinating deliveries of the beef to designated organisations which will then make their own arrangements to distribute the produce locally.

A list of designated organisations, including those in Nottinghamshire, has been placed in the Library of the House.

Non-departmental Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, for each of the executive non-departmental bodies sponsored by her Department, whether the public has a statutory right to attend all board or committee meetings and to inspect *(a)* the minutes of meetings, *(b)* the annual reports and *(c)* the annual accounts.

Mr. Jack: The public do not have a statutory right to attend board or committee meetings of executive non-departmental bodies; nor do they have the right to inspect the minutes of meetings.

In nearly all cases, legislation requires that the annual report and accounts are published and laid before Parliament. The exceptions are the Agricultural Wages Board and the agricultural wages committees, whose reports do not include the accounts because the costs of running the board and committees are met directly from MAFF and Welsh Office funds. Neither the board nor the committees control funds.

The annual reports and annual accounts of the bodies are available to the public, either free or at reasonable cost, except for the AWC and AWB, for which annual accounts are not prepared as noted above.

Ministerial Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers; and how many vehicles are involved.

Mr. Jack: The cost of providing a car service to the Ministers in this Department was £232,931 in the 1992-93 financial year. Four vehicles are involved.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Private Care Homes

12. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received regarding the financial difficulties facing people who have been in private care or nursing homes since before 1 April.

Mr. Scott: We have received several representations recently, both from individuals and representative bodies, about the income support limits for people in residential care and nursing homes.

Child Support Agency

13. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the work of the Child Support Agency since its operation began; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Ministers keep the operations of the Child Support Agency under regular review, as they do the operations of other next steps agencies. The Child Support Agency is still very new, but it has made a determined start on its important task of ensuring that more children receive more maintenance, more reliably.

15. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he last met the chief executive of the Child Support Agency to discuss its assessment of absent parents already making contributions towards the upkeep of their children.

Mr. Burt: I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State regularly meet the chief executive of the Child Support Agency to discuss a wide range of operational matters. The most recent of these meetings was on 16 November.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many representations he has received from hon. Members regarding the working of the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: Since the agency began its operations in April 1993, this Department has received in the region of 3,700 representations from hon. Members, covering a range of views.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress is being made currently with the review of the operation of the Child Support Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Agency was set up to secure more maintenance, more reliably, for more children and that is what it is doing. We believe that the basic principles of the scheme stand up to scrutiny and are supported by the vast majority of people in this country. We have been looking very carefully at the comments and concerns being raised about the Child Support Agency and testing them against the basic structure and principles which are in place and which were endorsed by Members from all parties. If, after examination, we think we can make the scheme better still, we will do so.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what statutory basis the Child Support Agency reveals to a former partner full financial details of the person he or she has divorced together with those of that person's second partner.

Mr. Burt: Regulation 10 of the Child Support (Maintenance Assessment Procedure) Regulations 1992 provides for a maintenance assessment notification, which is sent both to the parent with care and the absent parent, to show the details of protected income calculations which include the income of an absent parent's new partner. The intention is that sufficient information should be provided to both the parent with care and the absent parent to enable them to exercise their statutory right to seek a review or to appeal.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes he plans to the way in which the Child Support Agency is administering the collection of child maintenance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Agency has a range of collection and enforcement powers to ensure that it is able to meet its objective of obtaining maintenance for children. The Government have no plans to change these powers, though they keep all aspects of the Child Support Agency under review.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether clean-break settlements are to be taken into account in the formula used by the Child Support Agency for assessing maintenance payments from absent parents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The maintenance assessment formula already reflects the practical consequences of a capital or property transfer, commonly referred to as a clean break settlement between spouses, by allowing for the current housing costs of the absent parent and taking account of the parent with care's income including that from capital.

28. **Mr. Mudie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to amend the Child Support Act 1991.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Act introduced a new way of assessing maintenance for children and ensuring that this would be paid. It reflects the Government's view that both parents are responsible for supporting their children where they are able to do so, even if their own relationship has broken down. The Government have no plans to amend the Act.

29. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his policy towards replying to letters from hon. Members about child support where the Member has raised a matter of Government policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Letters to Ministers from hon. Members, about child support policy will receive a ministerial reply. Letters about operational matters or individual assessments will, in general, be passed to the chief executive of the Child Support Agency unless substantive policy issues have also been raised.

20. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many absent parents who were already

paying child support under previously agreed arrangements are appealing against the additional payments assessed by the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Agency does not currently collect information in the form requested. To the end of October, under 1 per cent. of assessments made had resulted in appeals.

Work-related Injuries

16. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much of his Department's budget is used in social security payments connected with injuries sustained *(a)* in war and *(b)* at work.

Mr. Scott: In 1991-92, the latest year for which final figures are available, benefit expenditure on war disablement and war widows pensions totalled £842 million. This represented 1·4 per cent. of the Department's total benefit spending of £61,819 million.

In the same year, expenditure on industrial injuries disablement and death benefits totalled £655 million, or 1.1 per cent. of the Department's total spending.

Support for the Elderly

17. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures his Department has taken to maintain support for the elderly.

Mr. Hague: Since 1979, my Department has more than maintained the real value of the basic retirement pension; improved choice and flexibility in pension provision; and targeted additional resources to poorer pensioners. Spending on benefits for the elderly has increased in real terms by 40 per cent. since 1979—to nearly £34·5 billion in 1992-93. Also, as announced in the Budget last week, increases on the income-related benefits over and above the normal uprating will amount to 50p for single pensioners and 70p for couples in April 1994. The basic state pension rate will also be increased by 50p on top of the normal uprating plus an additional 20p for couples as part of the package of help for VAT on domestic fuel.

Pensioners' Incomes

18. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioner households were in the bottom decile of the income distribution in 1979, and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hague: The most recent information is given in the table. The figures are counts of pensioners, not pensioner households, with a pensioner couple counting as two. Figures are given both in terms of before housing costs —BHC—and after housing costs—AHC.

Numbers and percentages of pensioners in the bottom decile, 1979 and 1990-91.

Pensioners in the bottom decile	*1979*		*1990-91*	
	BHC	*AHC*	*BHC*	*AHC*
Numbers (millions)	1·9	1·7	1·2	0·6
As a percentage of all pensioners	22	19	12	6
As a percentage of all in the bottom decile	35	31	21	11

Source:

1979, 1990 and 1991 Family Expenditure Surveys and Households Below Average Income 1979–1990-91. 1990-91 is the years 1990 and 1991 combined.

Notes:

1. Numbers and percentages relate to individuals in benefit units headed by a person over state pension age.
2. Individuals are located on the income distribution according to their equivalised household disposable income.

Pensioners' Incomes

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of *(a)* single pensioners and *b)* pensioner couples had incomes below one half of average household income each year since 1979.

Mr. Hague: An answer covering each year since 1979 could be supplied only at disproportionate cost. The available information is published in tables F1(BHC) and F1(AFC) of "Households Below Average Income 1979-1990/91", copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average gross weekly income of *(a)* single pensioners and *(b)* pensioner couples in the lastest year for which figures are available; and what has been the average growth in income of each group since 1979.

Mr. Hague: In 1990-91, information from the family expenditure survey shows that the average gross weekly income of *(a)* single pensioners was £110·20 and *(b)* pensioner couples was £214·80. This represents an average growth in income since 1979 of *(a)* 42 per cent. for single pensioners and *(b)* 41 per cent. for pensioner couples.

Note 1: Pensioner couples are couples where the husband is over state pension age.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of pensioners received at least 50 per cent. of their income from state benefits in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hague: The percentage of pensioners receiving 50 per cent. or more of their income from state benefits is as follows:

Pensioner couples: 61 per cent.
Single pensioners: 76 per cent.
All pensioners: 70 per cent.

Source: Information from combined 1990 and 1991 Family Expenditure Surveys covering period 1990-91.

Note 1: "Pensioner couples" are couples where the husband is over state pension age.

Note 2: "All pensioners" are single people over state pension age and couples where the husband is over state pension age.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the value of the basic state retirement pension for *(a)* a single pensioner and *(b)* a pensioner couple in 1979 and at each uprating since 1979; and what it would have been if it had been uprated in line with whichever was the higher of average earnings or prices.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table.

Rate of basic retirement pension

	Actual rates		*If increased by the higher of earnings/prices*	
	Single £ per week	*Couple £ per week*	*Single £ per week*	*Couple £ per week*
November 1979	23·30	37·30	—	—
November 1980	27·15	43·45	27·60	44·20
November 1981	29·60	47·35	30·90	49·50
November 1982	32·85	52·55	33·50	53·65
November 1983	34·05	54·50	36·40	58·30
November 1984	35·80	57·30	38·25	61·25
November 1985	38·30	61·30	41·60	66·60
July 1986	38·70	61·95	43·45	69·55
April 1987	39·50	63·25	45·90	73·45
April 1988	41·15	65·90	49·50	79·20
April 1989	43·60	69·80	54·15	86·65
April 1990	46·90	75·10	59·40	95·05
April 1991	52·00	83·25	65·85	105·40
April 1992	54·15	86·70	71·05	113·70
April 1993	56·10	89·80	74·55	119·30

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much the state pension for *(a)* single pensioners and *(b)* pensioner couples would have been in April had the pension been uprated in line with the higher of retail prices index or earnings since 1980.

Mr. Hague: *(a)* £74·55 for single pensioners and *(b)* £119·30 for pensioner couples at April 1993.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his best estimate of the number and proportion of *(a)* single pensioners and *(b)* pensioner couples who have total gross weekly incomes of (i) £0 to £50, (ii) £50 to £100, (iii) £100 to £150, (iv) £150 to £200, (v) £200 to £250, (vi) £250 to £300, (vii) £300 to £350, (viii) £350 to £400, (ix) £400 to £450, (x) £450 to £500 and (xi) £500 and above.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the tables. To allow a reliable number of sample cases to be taken into account certain ranges of the distribution have been merged in order to ensure estimates are based on at least 100 cases. The estimates are liable to error.

Thousands

£ per week	*Up to 100*	*100-150*	*150-200*	*200-250*	*250-350*	*Over 350*
Pensioner couples						
Number	285	9,655	470	309	270	318
Pensioner Couples-Proportions						
Percentage	11	37	18	12	10	12

Thousands

£ per week	*Up to 100*	*100-150*	*150-200*	*200-300*	*Over 300*
Single Pensioners					
Number	3,023	692	296	233	173
Percentage	68	16	7	5	4

Note: Numbers are rounded to the nearest thousand.
Source: Combined 1990 and 1991 Family Expenditure Surveys.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was *(a)* the mean and *(b)* the median income of (i) single pensioners and (ii) pensioner couples, before and after housing costs, in 1990-91.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table.

	Mean net income £ per week		*Median net income £ per week*	
	Single pensioners	*Pensioner couples*	*Single pensioners*	*Pensioner couples*
Before Housing costs	94·80	181·20	75·20	138·60
After Housing costs	82·50	170·90	54·40	123·20

Note: Pensioner couples consist of couples where the husband is over state pension age.
Source: Combined 1990 and 1991 Family Expenditure Surveys covering period 1990-91.

Family Credit

19. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the annual spending on family credit, and what was the spending on family income supplement in 1979.

Mr. Burt: Family credit expenditure is expected to be £965 million in 1993-94. This is 14 times more in real terms than the £24 million spent on family income support in 1978-79.

Housing Benefit

21. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures his Department is taking to encourage local authorities to stop fraudulent claims of housing benefit.

Mr. Burt: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has recently announced improved incentives which will encourage local authorities to increase their efforts against fraud. Local authorities will now be able to share to a greater extent in the savings produced through the detection of fraud. Subsidy reductions, next year, will be targeted at authorities that do little or nothing to uncover fraud.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much was paid in housing benefit *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the London borough of Ealing in each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The available information is in the table.

	Housing benefit paid nationally £ million	*Housing benefit paid in the London borough of Ealing £ million*
1989-90	n/a	36
1990-91	4,941	42
1991-92	6,058	69
1992-93	[1]7,348	Not yet available

[1] Estimated outturn.

Personal Pensions

23. **Mrs. Browning:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the results of his Department's policies to encourage personal pensions.

Mr. Hague: The Government are committed to encouraging choice and flexibility in pension provision, and has already introduced two new options for contracting out of the state earnings-related pension scheme—appropriate personal pensions and contracted-out money purchase occupational pension schemes. It is clear that individuals wish to take advantage of the choices available to make provision for their own retirement—more than 5 million people have used personal pensions to contract out of the state earnings-related scheme since the option was introduced in 1988. A 1 per cent. additional rebate for appropriate personal pension holders aged 30 and over was introduced from April 1993, fulfilling our manifesto commitment and ensuring that personal pension holders continue to find it worth while to maintain their pensions. The Government are considering measures to ensure that personal pensions remain attractive across the age range.

Lone Parents

24. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to give additional support to lone mothers and lone fathers.

Mr. Burt: We have already improved the incentives to work in the social security system so that lone parents are currently £30 a week better off in work and receiving family credit than out of work and on income support.

From October 1994, we will provide additional support for both lone parents and couples through a £40 disregard of child care costs. This will provide a powerful incentive for families to move back into work with family credit and make themselves better off.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to give greater support to single parent families.

Mr. Lilley: We have already improved the incentives to work in the social security system so that lone parents are currently £30 a week better off in work and receiving family credit than out of work and on income support.

From October 1994, we will provide additional support for both lone parents and couples through a £40 disregard of child care costs. This will provide a powerful incentive for families to move back into work with family credit and make themselves better off.

Maxwell Pensions Unit

25. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a further statement on the work of the Maxwell pensions unit.

Mr. Hague: In addition to its continuing work with those engaged in the recovery of pension scheme assets, the unit is providing substantial administrative assistance to the Maxwell Pensioners Trust. The Government fully support the trust's initiative to promote an overall settlement of disputes relating to missing Maxwell scheme assets as an alternative to prolonged and costly litigation.

Benefit Fraud

26. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress his Department has taken to reduce the level of fraudulent claims for social security benefits.

Mr. Scott: We are placing a greater emphasis on fraud prevention by increasing staff training and making more use of information technology. A range of other initiatives currently under way include a one-stop service, research into strengthening identity requirements and better verification details for claims and payments of benefits.

Last year, our investigators caught more than 270,000 people cheating the system, making record savings of £558 million.

Social Security Expenditure

27. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what research he has commissioned into the long-term levels of resources to be devoted to social security expenditure by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The Department has an active research programme, drawing on internal and external research. The results of the most recent research were published in July in the Department's report "The Growth of Social Security", which was intended to stimulate and inform public debate on the social security programme.

Invalidity Benefit

30. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes he proposes to the payment of invalidity benefit.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made to the House on 1 December, *Official Report,* column 1037.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the effect of the assessment he has made of proposed changes in invalidity benefit and pension age on the appeal against the social security commissioners' decision which concerned the IVB rules linked to state pension age.

Mr. Scott: The appeal has been listed for hearing by the Court of Appeal on either 14 or 15 February 1994. The proposals which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 1 December 1993 do not affect the decision to proceed with this appeal.

Pensioners' Benefits

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much more than inflation benefits for poor pensioners have been increased since 1989.

Mr. Hague: The total extra help above normal upratings made available to pensioners on income-related benefits since 1989 is now worth around £1 billion a year.

State Earnings-related Pension Scheme

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number of people *(a)* male and *(b)* female covered by SERPS; and what percentage of the work force this is in each case.

Mr. Hague: The answer is in the table.

	[1]*Number (millions)*	[2]*Percentage of work force*
Total	9·7	43·7
All men	4·5	38·8
All women	5·2	49·1

[1] *Source:* 1 per cent. sample of National Insurance contributors.

[2] *Source:* Labour Force Survey—Employment Gazette. United Kingdom 1990-91 (excluding self-employed persons, Her Majesty's Forces and persons on work related government training schemes).

The figures are based on the number of people who paid class 1 contributions at the not-contracted out rate; excluding those people with appropriate personal pensions.

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many men with earnings above the lower earnings limit were not contracted out of SERPS during the latest year for which figures are available;

(2) how many women with earnings above the lower earnings limit were not contracted out of SERPs during the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hague: In 1990-91, the numbers of *(a)* men, and *(b)* women, in the United Kingdom who paid class 1 national insurance contributions and were not contracted out of SERPS, or were not holders of an appropriate personal pension in place of SERPS, were *(a)* 4·54 million and *(b)* 5·25 million.

Source: 1 per cent. sample of National Insurance contributors.

Disabled Children

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to increase benefits for families of children with disabilities.

Mr. Scott: Families with disabled children have access to a wide range of social security benefits, including, for example, invalid care allowance, disability living allowance and child benefit. On 1 December 1993 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced that all major benefits would be increased in April 1994 fully in line with inflation, with additional help to meet the cost of VAT on fuel for more than 15 million people.

Brain Damage

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many awards have been made under the Vaccine Damage Act 1979 for brain damage sustained in each year between 1976 and 1992; and how many of these awards were for damage following injections of triple and/or pertussis vaccines.

Mr. Hague: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Social Fund Commissioner

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what decision he has made about the appointment of a new social fund commissioner; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I am pleased to announce that Mrs. Rosalind Mackworth has agreed to serve as the Social Fund Commissioner for Great Britain for a further period of 18 months from 1 December 1993. I understand that Mrs. Mackworth has also agreed to act as Social Fund Commissioner for Northern Ireland.

Since taking up the post of Social Fund Commissioner in December 1987, Mrs. Mackworth has been instrumental in establishing the social fund inspectorate as a respected and independent source of review. I am sure that I can rely on Mrs. Mackworth to maintain and even improve upon her excellent record.

Pensions

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he is taking to ensure that those choosing to opt out of the state earnings-related pension are informed of the risks to their pension due to the loss of the guaranteed returns offered by SERPS.

Mr. Hague: Some 15 million people are contracted out of the state earnings-related pension schemes—SERPS. Around 10 million of these are members of their employer's pension scheme and 5 million have a personal pension. Members of salary-related occupational schemes will receive a guaranteed minimum pension—GMP—at state pension age from their employers, provided as a condition of contracting-out of SERPS. There is no risk that an individual's pension entitlement will be lower than that offered within SERPS.

Individuals with a personal pension build up their own fund based on contributions made by themselves, their employer and the Government. The Government's contribution reflects the level of investment required to provide a pension equivalent to a GMP. These contributions and the return on their investment form "protected rights" guaranteeing a minimum value for the fund. An occupational money purchase scheme works in a similar way with the Government's contribution being provided through a rebate in the amount of national insurance contributions payable.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he is taking to monitor the performance of the investment funds associated with the personal pension plans of those who have opted out of SERPS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: It is for individual scheme members, in conjunction with their financial advisers, to monitor the performance of their chosen pension scheme. In order to help them to do so, the trustees of personal pension schemes are required to provide to members, at least once in every period of 12 months, written details of the value of the member's protected rights under the scheme and the value of the member's accrued rights, other than protected rights.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is his estimate of the number of those taking out personal pensions and who *(a)* have and *(b)* have not opted out of SERPS who have allowed their policy to lapse after (i) one year, (ii) two years, (iii) three years, (iv) four years and (v) five years;

(2) what is his estimate of the total sum lost by policy holders who have allowed personal pension plans to lapse *(a)* after one year, *(b)* after two years, *(c)* after three years, *(d)* after four years, *(e)* after five years and *(f)* in total.

Mr. Hague: Personal pensions used for opting out of SERPS do not lapse. Membership continues until cancelled either by the individual concerned or by the trustees or managers of the scheme. Personal pensions not used for opting out of SERPS become paid up when the member ceases to make payments into the scheme. In both cases, those contributions which have already been paid into the schemes continue to be invested to produce benefits for the contributor.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is his estimate of the total sum charged in commission on the personal pension plans of those who have opted out of SERPS and who make additional contributions to their plans for the last year for which figures are available;

(2) what is his estimate of the total sum charged in commission on the personal pension plans of those who have not opted out of SERPS for the last year for which figures are available;

(3) what is his estimate of the total sum of charges other than commission made on the personal pension plans of those who have opted out of SERPS and who make additional contributions to their plans for the last year for which figures are available;

(4) what is his estimate of the total sum of charges other than commission made on the personal pension plans of those who have not opted out of SERPS for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hague: The data requested are not collected. Consideration of the level of charges and commissions associated with personal pensions is a matter for individual investors in their choice of scheme. The Financial Services Act 1986 governs the disclosure to investors of charges and commissions associated with life insurance based products. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has recently directed the Securities and Investments Board to come forward with new rules and proposals to make the costs associated with life insurance based investment products, including most personal pensions, more transparent.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is his estimate of the total sum charged in commission on appropriate pension plans for the last year for which figures are available;

(2) what is his estimate of the total sum of charges other than commission made on appropriate pension plans for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hague: The data requested are not collected.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he is taking to ensure that the state earnings-related pension can operate in such a way as to provide an alternative to private provision for those who wish to make full provision for their retirement.

Mr. Hague: The state earnings-related pension is already one of several alternatives available to individuals choosing how best to make provision for their retirement.

Benefit Statistics

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the saving in the whole range of social security benefits, including exemption from prescription charges and other associated benefits, if everybody was deemed to have earned £100 per week between the ages of 18 to 65 years who was fit and able to work.

Mr. Scott: I shall let my hon. Friend have such information as is available as soon as possible.

Income Support

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people received income support transitional protection in 1988 in *(a)* Newham and *(b)* nationally; how many in each of the same areas received no income support increase due to transitional protection in each successive year; and how many of these had (i) pensioner premia and (ii) disability premium.

Mr. Burt: The figures for those receiving income support transitional addition in Great Britain are in table 1. It is not possible to provide reliable figures for Newham. Those with a transitional addition in May of each year would not have received an increase at the uprating in the April of that year. However, the following increases over and above normal uprating were made available on top of transitional additions:

October 1989—new rate of pensioner premium introduced for those aged 75-79 and special increase in higher pensioner premium—worth £2·50 a week for a single person and £3·50 for a couple.

October 1991—increase in family premium, child personal allowances and under age 25 single personal allowances.

October 1992—all pensioners premiums increased by £2 for a single person and £3 for a couple.

Table 2 shows the numbers receiving a special transitional addition in Great Britain. All will have benefited from upratings as special transitional additions are increased by the normal uprating factor used for income support.

Table 1
Income Support Claimants in Receipt of a Transitional Addition

	May 1988	*May 1989*	*May 1990*	*May 1991*	*May 1992*
Total Cases with TA[1]	1,585,000	497,000	134,000	29,000	10,000
Higher Pensioner Premium	220,000	73,000	15,000	2,000	Under 1000
Enhanced Pensioner Premium	Nil	Nil	14,000	1,000	NIL
Pensioner Premium	491,000	168,000	23,000	2,000	1,000
Disability Premium	63,000	27,000	9,000	3,000	1,000

[1] Transitional Addition

Table 2
Income Support Claimants in Receipt of a Special Transitional Addition

	May 1988	*May 1989*	*May 1990*	*May 1991*	*May 1992*
Total Cases with STA[1]	2,000	2,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Higher Pensioner Premium	1,000	1,000	Under 1,000	Under 1,000	Under 1,000
Enhanced Pensioner Premium	NIL	NIL	NIL	Under 1,000	Under 1,000
Pensioner Premium	Under 1,000	Under 1,000	Under 1,000	Nil	Nil
Disability Premium	Under 1,000	1,000	Under 1,000	Under 1,000	Under 1,000

[1] Special Transitional Addition

1. Source: Income Support Statistical Enquiries 1988-1992
2. Figures given in both tables are rounded to the nearest thousand
3. Enhanced Pensioner Premium was introduced in October 1989

Departmental Files

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by the Department; and how many are marked "Not for Public Accounts Committee eyes".

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) on 3 December 1993. There is no marking "Not for PAC eyes".

Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications have been assessed for the disability allowance for chronic bronchitis and emphysema; and, of those assessed, how many have been successful.

Mr. Scott: As at 28 November 1993, about 9,000 cases had had all necessary employment and medical inquiries completed, and of these about 1,100 will receive an award of industrial injuries disablement benefit.

"Fighting Fraud in 1992-93"

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total cost of producing the report "Fighting Fraud in 1992-93"; how many copies were printed; and how many have been circulated to date.

Mr. Hague: The administration of benefit fraud is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 3 December 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security, asking what was the cost of producing the report Fighting Fraud in 1992/93; how many copies were printed; and how many have been circulated to date.

I am able to tell you that the total cost of producing the report was £3,679·43. A total of 1,800 copies were printed and as at 26 November, 1,446 have been circulated.

I hope that you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report* and a copy will appear in the Library.

Claimants, Doncaster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in the Doncaster area were receiving invalidity benefit for each year ended April in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991, *(c)* 1992, *(d)* 1993 and *(e)* 1993-94 to date.

Mr. Scott: The administration of invalidity benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 3 December 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security, asking how many people in the Doncaster area were receiving Invalidity Benefit for each year ended April in (a) 1990, (b) 1991, (c) 1992, (d) 1993 and (e) 1993-94 to date.

The information is not available in the format requested. This is because separate statistics were not kept for Invalidity Benefit (IVB) claimants until May 1991 and a yearly count of recipients is not maintained. I should also explain that, because Agency District boundaries do not correspond with county or borough boundaries, a small part of the Doncaster area falls within that of the Mexborough Benefit Office within the Agency's Rother and Dearne District.

Statistics covering the small number of Mexborough customers who live in the Doncaster area could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, I have provided details for the area covered by Doncaster District only. The latest available figures show that on the last working day of October 1993, 14,370 people were claiming IVB.

On the last working day of May 1991, the figure was 12,558 and on the last working days of April 1992 and April 1993, 11,662 and 12,953 respectively.

The statistics include some customers who have claimed but are not actually receiving IVB. This is because there are circumstances in which although there is underlying entitlement to IVB, because a higher overlapping benefit is in payment, no IVB is actually paid. These figures were obtained from a 100 per cent. clerical count of cases in the District Office.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Disability Living Allowance

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the increased use of doctors to make assessments for disability living allowance claims.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Ms Kate Hoey, dated 3 December 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security, asking if he will make a statement on the increased use of doctors to make assessments for disability living allowance claims.

Decisions on Disability Living Allowance continue to be made by independent adjudicating officers. Wherever possible, these are based on information provided by the customer on the claim form and on guidance in the Disability Handbook. In some cases other evidence is needed, perhaps in the form of a medical examination. Of course, a person may ask for a medical examination rather than supplying additional supporting information.

It is true that the number of medical examinations has increased this year, reaching a peak in August 1993 when 28% of cases were decided following a report by an Examining Medical Practitioner (EMP). This compares with 20% of cases in April 1993. However, numbers are now decreasing again and in October 1993, 25% of cases were referred to an EMP.

A number of factors have contributed to this increase:

a large proportion of customers are requesting a visit from an EMP in preference to completing the self-assessment part of the claim form.

as Adjudication Officers gain in experience they recognise more readily the cases which would be more effectively dealt with by an EMP's visit. For example, because a customer may be understating their needs.

Self assessment has been widely welcomed. However, we would not want to reduce the element of choice by discouraging anyone from asking for a medical examination if that is what they prefer.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 7 December 1993

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers; and how many vehicles are involved.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's Department provides cars for the Lord Chancellor and myself. The annual cost of providing this service is £119,184 (for the year to November 1993). The cost includes two vehicles maintained on a permanent basis and a limousine as required.

Succession

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is Her Majesty's Government's policy in relation to United Kingdom ratification of the Hague convention on succession.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In March 1990, following the opening of the Hague convention on succession for signature in 1988, the Government issued a consultation paper to obtain views as to whether the United Kingdom should, with a view to ratification, amend its rules as to which law governs succession to a deceased person's estate to bring them into line with the rules in the convention. The response did not indicate a large degree of support for United Kingdom ratification and there was some opposition. The Government therefore decided not to proceed further at present, but the matter is being kept under review. So far only two other member states have signed the convention and there have been no ratifications.

Torture

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to seek a change in the civil law to allow actions in the English courts for compensation for torture inflicted overseas in violation of international law and enforcement of judgment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There are no plans to amend the law in the way referred to. Under the present law there are circumstances in which a victim of wrongful conduct abroad may sue in England: the jurisdictional rules vary according to the country in which the wrongful conduct took place. A judgment of an English court awarding compensation in such a case will be enforceable throughout the United Kingdom and in certain other countries.

ENVIRONMENT

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total budget allocated by his Department in 1992-93 to urban development corporations in *(a)* Teesside, *(b)* Tyne and Wear and *(c)* the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Baldry: The answer is as follows:

(a) £40·3 million grant in aid;
(b) £44·1 million grant in aid;
(c) the 12 English urban development corporations (and the docklands light railway) received grant in aid of £515·8 million.

My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Northern Ireland are responsible for grant in aid paid to the Cardiff Bay and Laganside development corporations respectively.

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has incorporated the code of practice for information security management, published by the British Standards Institution, into relevant contracts with information technology suppliers.

Mr. Gummer: The security requirements for IT systems and services used by central Government Departments are stated in the Government IT security policy document. This documenht is supported by the use of the CCTA risk analysis and management method (CRAMM) and baseline security for IT systems (BSITS) risk analysis methods, and by supporting advice and guidance published by the Government IT security authorities. These have been developed specifically for use within government and are regularly reviewed to ensure best practice. The code of practice for information security management was developed by and established for use by commercial organisations and does not specifically address the requirements for the protection of official information.

Council Tax

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he is considering in connection with the council tax system; and when he expects to make an announcement.

Mr. Baldry: My Department is presently consulting the local authority associations about regulations to give an effect to the scheme of transitional reductions for 1994-95 announced by my right hon. Friend on 2 December, and about some minor changes to the Council Tax (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1992. I have sent copies of the consultation letters to the hon. Member and I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library of the House. A number of suggestions have also been put to us for small changes to the secondary legislation covering council tax exemptions and discounts, and we are considering these.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to help the severely mentally impaired living in the community with their council tax.

Mr. Baldry: Severely mentally impaired people are not counted towards the personal element of the council tax.

A household entirely composed of such people is therefore eligible for a 50 per cent. discount from their council tax bill. This liability may be partly or wholly rebated by council tax benefit, depending on the household's circumstances.

We have received a number of representations in favour of further assistance for this group. We are considering these representations. I will write to the hon. Member when a decision is reached.

Construction Industry

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the cost to builders of building and associated products.

Mr. Baldry: I have received no direct representations.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration his Department will give, in making the final decision concerning THORP, to the current status of the negotiations between BNFL and Nuclear Electric or Scottish Nuclear over spent nuclear fuel contracts for THORP.

Mr. Yeo: All relevant consideration will be taken into account by my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in reaching their decision.

Incinerators

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the incinerators in the north west licensed to incinerate BSE-infected cattle and scrapie-infected sheep; and how many such carcasses were destroyed in each of the last 12 months at each incinerator.

Mr. Yeo: Under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 clinical waste incinerators with a capacity of 1 tonne or more an hour require authorisation by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and those with a lesser capacity require an authorisation from the relevant local authority.

Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has to date authorised no clinical waste incinerators in the north west. From the statistical information collected by my Department, 41 incinerators with a capacity of under 1 tonne an hour were authorised by local authorities in the north west by the end of June 1993. My Department does not hold a central list of these incinerators. However, it is likely that most of these will be incinerators burning clinical waste. Information about each incinerator, including a copy of the application for authorisation, must be included in a public register held by each local authority for the processes for which it is responsible.

Tendering

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to ensure that, when putting contracts out to tender, his Department includes on the tender list companies which have acquired the BS5750 quality assurance standard.

Mr. Baldry: My Department fully recognises the value of BS5750 as a quality assurance standard but it does not make this, as a matter of course, a prerequisite for tendering in order to allow small firms, for which the cost of certification can represent a burden, the opportunity to compete.

Leasehold Enfranchisement

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Government will support the establishment of a leasehold enfranchisement advisory service.

Sir George Young: I am pleased to announce that the Government has approved the application from the Leasehold Reform Co-ordinating Committee for financial assistance to enable the Leasehold Enfranchisement Advisory Service for England and Wales to be established. The Department of the Environment has agreed to make a grant through its special grants programme of £27,575 in 1993-94 and £73,000 in 1994-95. The Welsh Office will also contribute £1,000 in 1994-95. I anticipate that similar amounts will be made available for 1995-96, subject to the satisfactory performance of the service.

In addition, they have received offers of support for the service from private sector organisations worth over £35,000 per annum.

The aim of the agency will be to provide information to the large number of leaseholders whom we anticipate will wish to take advantage of the provisions contained in the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993 which took effect on 1 November. These enable qualifying leaseholders either to purchase jointly the freehold of their flats or to purchase new long leases.

I expect the service to have a very important role to play in advising both landlords and tenants about the necessarily complex procedures involved in exercising these new rights.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if there will be transitional costs arising from local government reorganisation.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* There will be some start-up costs associated with reorganisation, which we expect authorities to keep to an absolute minimum, and which in the longer term can be offset against savings arising locally from the reorganisation.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he has made to ensure that local authorities and council tax payers not involved in local government reorganisations are protected from any transitional costs resulting from areas that are reorganised.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* Transitional reorganisation costs will be incurred only by those authorities in the areas that are reorganised. As my right hon. Friend announced to the House on 2 December, we intend that authorities should be able to meet by borrowing any such costs incurred by them in 1994-95, and that any borrowing should be repaid from savings or sales of assets after reorganisation.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Security Services

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he has given to publishing *(a)* a full or *(b)* an abridged version of the chief of the intelligence services' annual report to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Mr. Hurd: The Intelligence Bill provides for the Prime Minister to lay before Parliament annual reports by both the Intelligence Services Commissioner and the Intelligence Services Committee. We do not intend to publish the annual report of the chief of the Secret Intelligence Service.

Ministers (Foreign Visits)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the Ministers in his Department who since June 1987 have visited *(a)* Saudi Arabia, *(b)* Malaysia, *(c)* Singapore and *(d)* South Africa on official business; and which such visits included party political activities in addition to official duties.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Since June 1987 Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers have made the following visits to *(a)* Saudi Arabia (b) Malaysia *(c)* Singapore and *(d)* South Africa:

Saudi Arabia:
Mr. Mellor, December 1987
Mr. Waldegrave, October 1988
Secretary of State, January 1989
Secretary of State, May-June 1989
Secretary of State, September 1990
Secretary of State, February 1991
Mr. Hogg, February 1992
Secretary of State, September 1993

Malaysia:
Mrs. Chalker, August 1987
Secretary of State, April 1988
Lord Glenarthur, November 1988
Secretary of State, October 1989 (for CHOGM)
Lord Brabazon, January 1990
Mr. Maude, February 1990 (EC/ASEAN Meeting)
Lord Caithness, April 1991
Mr. Hogg, September 1991
Lord Caithness, September 1991
Secretary of State, July 1992
Mr. Goodlad, April 1993

Singapore:
Lord Glenarthur, October 1987
Secretary of State, April 1988
Lord Glenarthur, October 1988
Lord Glenarthur, July 1989
Lord Brabazon, December 1989
Lord Caithness, April 1991
Mr. Goodlad, April 1993
Secretary of State, July 1993

South Africa:
Mrs. Chalker, November 1988
Secretary of State, March 1990
Mr. Waldegrave, September 1990
Mrs. Chalker, February 1991
Secretary of State, July 1991
Mrs. Chalker, January 1992
Secretary of State, September 1992
Baroness Chalker, September 1992
Baroness Chalker, February 1993

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met members of Conservatives Abroad in the course of his visit to South Africa in July 1991. My right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Chalker of Wallasey attended a Conservatives Abroad reception in South Africa in February 1991. There is no record of any other party political activities by FCO Ministers during the course of official visits to the countries concerned since June 1987.

Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the meeting of the CSCE of Ministers in Rome.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs represented the United Kingdom at the Council meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe which took place on 30 November and 1 December in Rome.

The Council decided to develop the CSCE's capabilities in conflict prevention, crisis management and in combating aggressive nationalism. Ministers endorsed arrangements for more comprehensive monitoring and oversight of peacekeeping forces deployed in Georgia. In this and other conflicts oversight and monitoring must ensure that third party military forces are deployed with the consent of the parties, respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of CSCE states, are impartial and multinational in character, have a clear mandate and are integrally linked to a political process. There must be a plan for their orderly withdrawal.

The Council welcomed the resumption of peace talks in Geneva on the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. They urged the parties to take advantage of the initiative represented by the European Union action plan and called for the early, unconditional return of CSCE missions to Kosovo, Sandjak and Vojvodina. The Council emphasised that the CSCE stood ready, in co-operation with others, to rebuild civic society.

I regret that despite intensive negotiations the Council was unable to agree on any new steps to resolve the conflict dealt with by the Conference on Nagorno-Karabakh. Ministers asked the Chairman of the Minsk Conference to explore urgently the possibility of providing new impetus to the peace process.

The Council welcomed the withdrawal of Russian troops from Lithuania and stressed the political significance of speedy withdrawal of those remaining in Estonia and Latvia. The Council called for an early, orderly and complete withdrawal of the Russian 14th Army from Moldova and expressed concern at the lack of progress in finding a political solution to the problems of the Transdniester region. The Council decided to establish a CSCE mission to Tadjikstan to promote respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

The Council reiterated the fundamental importance of respect for human rights and decided to strengthen the CSCE's instruments of conflict prevention and early warning in this context. The Council decided to enhance the role of the High Commissioner on National Minorities and to strengthen the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, for example in its ability to monitor elections.

I regret that the Council was unable to develop into principles on non-proliferation the commitment to indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty agreed at Stockholm in December 1992.

The Secretary General has taken up his appointment as envisaged at the Stockholm Council meeting last year. The Rome Council established a permanent committee in Vienna under the Chairman in Office, to be supported by a unified Secretariat. These arrangements should enable the CSCE to fulfil more effectively its role in setting standards in human rights, resolving conflict, and providing early warning of possible crises. I hope that the CSCE will make an increasingly effective contribution to peace and stability in our region.

Civil Servants

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of people employed, *(b)* the total number of black people and *(c)* the total number of Asians.

Mr. Goodlad: As at 1 April 1993, the number of persons employed in each grade level (ie including equivalent grades) within the Department (including agencies) and the number of those who had classified themselves as being black people and as being Asian were:

	Total staff at grade level	*Total classified as black people*	*Total classified as Asians*
Grades 1-4	167	—	—
Grade 5	370	1	1
Grade 6	123	—	1
Grade 7	865	—	2
Senior executive officer	676	3	4
Higher executive officer	1,511	3	11
Executive officer	2,736	14	28
Adminstrative officer/ Administrative assistant	3,329	105	71
Industrial staff	63	1	2

These figures exclude staff who have classified themselves as being of other ethnic origin. There is no compulsion on staff to report their ethnic origin; the response rate for the staff in this answer is about 80 per cent.

European Terms

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice is given to officials about when to use the terms *(a)* European Union, *(b)* European Community and *(c)* European Economic Community.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs gave to the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) on 2 December at column *680.*

Saudi Arabia

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Saudi Arabian Government about delays in the payment of refunds of pension contributions to the Saudi Arabian General Organisation for Social Insurance due to British subjects.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our embassy in Riyadh is in regular contact with the Saudi Arabian General Organisation for Social Insurance about payment of refunds to British subjects.

Committee of the Regions

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will consult with Welsh representative on the Committee of the Regions before he goes to the European Union summit in Brussels.

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will see the Welsh representatives at a meeting with all United Kingdom nominees to the Committee of the Regions on 8 December.

Tibet

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken to encourage dialogue between China and Tibet on the future of Tibet; and if he will make it his policy to ensure that the option of Tibetan independence is on the agenda of such dialogue.

Mr. Goodlad: We have consistently urged the Chinese authorities to begin talks, without pre-conditions, with the Tibetans, including the Dalai Lama, and to allow Tibetans greater autonomy. It is for the parties concerned to decide the agenda for such talks. Neither we nor our European partners believe that independence is a realistic option.

Kashmir

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the names and nationality of each member of a delegation of the International Commission of Jurists who visited Kashmir in August; if he will arrange for their report to be placed in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The members of the delegation from the International Commission of Jurists who visited Kashmir in August were Sir William Goodhart from the United Kingdom, Professor Vitit Muntarbhorn from Thailand, Dr. Dalmo Dallari from Brazil and Mrs. Florence Butegwa from Uganda. Their report is expected in January. As soon as a copy is available we will arrange for it to be placed in the Library.

Exports

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the Government's policy regarding exports to *(a)* Israel, *(b)* Iran, *(c)* Iraq, *(d)* Syria, *(e)* Kuwait, *(f)* Saudi Arabia, *(g)* Jordan and *(h)* Egypt.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

Apart from Iraq, which is subject to a UN trade embargo and where special arrangements therefore apply, United Kingdom exporters are free, and indeed encouraged, to trade with the countries listed. However, goods covered by the Export of Goods Control Order 1992, as amended, are subject to various restrictions, which will vary from country to country.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Overseas Visits

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many visits abroad the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Portillo: I made a visit to Mexico and Chile from 3-11 July. The purpose of the visit was to strengthen the United Kingdom's relations with the two countries, and to promote trade and investment: several British businessmen accompanied me. Two of the companies represented on the visit have since won major contracts. British Gas was awarded the investment distribution concession for the US$1·1 billion natural gas pipeline between Argentina and Chile. North West Water signed in September a £285 million 10-year contract with the Mexico City authorities for metering, billing and management services.

The cost attributable to my own participation in the visit, which was borne by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, was £5,526.

Taxation

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the proportion of gross domestic product paid in *(a)* income tax and *(b)* income tax plus value added tax, for each country in the European Union.

Mr. Nelson: International comparisons of income tax and VAT receipts are not readily available. However, figures for taxes on personal income and for taxes on general consumption as a share of GDP can be found in tables 10 and 28 of the 1993 edition of Revenue Statistics of OECD member countries, a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what date the United Kingdom is obliged under the terms of relevant European directives and other agreements to cease to zero-rate each of those categories of goods and services which benefit from such zero rating; what levels of value added tax within the United Kingdom would be able or obliged to apply to each of those different categories of goods and services after that date; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The United Kingdom is not obliged under any EC directive or other agreement to cease current zero rates of VAT.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has to harmonise United Kingdom value added tax rates with those which pertain in other European countries; by what date; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: I have no proposals to harmonise value added tax rates in the United Kingdom with those charged in other European countries.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Government's long-term plans for the zero rating for value added tax purposes of the sale of new houses.

Sir John Cope: My right hon. and learned Friend said in his Budget statement that he had no proposals to make any changes to the VAT base.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if *(a)* VAT for goods and services currently zero rated and *(b)* VAT for goods and services currently exempt are included in his definition of the tax base.

Sir John Cope: No.

Private Health Insurance

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the tax yield in a full year of 3 per cent. tax on private health insurance premiums.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* Private health insurance premia are included within the accident and health category of insurance premia. The yield from tax at 3 per cent. on all insurance premia in this category is estimated to be about £100 million in 1995-96.

TRANSPORT

London Underground

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when he will make funds available for London Underground to commence work on line renewal of the Northern line;

(2) when he will make funds available for London Underground to commence work on replacement of escalators at St. Paul's, Notting Hill Gate, Highgate and Marylebone stations;

(3) when he will make funds available for London Underground Ltd. to be able to commence work on the renewal of signalling systems on the Hammersmith, Circle and District lines.

Mr. Norris: London Transport's grant settlement for the three years to 1994-95 was announced on 30 November. Decisions on the timing of individual investment projects are for the management of London Transport and London Underground.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to authorise the construction of the North Greenwich station on the Jubilee line.

Mr. Norris: This will depend on completion of negotiations between London Underground Limited and British Gas on a financial contribution by British Gas to the costs involved.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from London Underground regarding projects considered essential for the delivery of a proper service to its customers.

Mr. Norris: I am regularly briefed by London Underground on many aspects of its investment programme.

Railways Regulator

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who will be the regulator for the railways industry; and when he will officially begin his duties.

Mr. MacGregor: I have appointed Mr. John Swift QC as rail regulator and international rail regulator. Parliamentary approval to new expenditure on administrative and other costs of the regulator will be sought in a new estimate to establish an Office of the Rail Regulator Vote (Class VI, Vote 8). Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £500,000 will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.

M25

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many written representations he has received about the proposed link roads alongside the M25 between junctions 12 and 16; and how many of these came from *(a)* residents of Staines and *(b)* other residents of the Spelthorne constituency.

Mr. Key: Some 4,250 individual letters have been received in response to public consultations on proposals for link roads between junctions 12 and 16 of the M25. Of these, 263 came from addresses in Staines and 114 from Ashford, Ashford Common, Laleham, Poyle, Shepperton, Stanwell, Stanwell Moor and Sunbury. In addition, some 8,500 pre-printed postcards were received during the consultations and other correspondence has been received subsequently but no statistics have been compiled about the origins of these.

Heathrow Report

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many written representations he has received about the proposals contained in the Heathrow and south-west quadrant orbital movements study—HASQUAD—report; and how many of these came from *(a)* residents of Sunbury on Thames and *(b)* other residents of the Spelthorne constituency.

Mr. Norris: To date some 1,700 written representations have been received, of which about 125 were from residents of Sunbury on Thames and about 30 were from other residents of the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be in a position to decide on the future of the proposals contained in the Heathrow and south-west quadrant orbital movements study—HASQUAD—proposals.

Mr. Norris: I hope to make an announcement on the future of the HASQUAD study recommendations at the earliest opportunity, after I have been able to give careful consideration to all the comments received.

Railtrack

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what rate of return on *(a)* existing and *(b)* new investment he is asking Railtrack to achieve.

Mr. Freeman: We are currently discussing with Railtrack the setting of appropriate financial targets including the required rate of return on investment.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total value of assets transferring to the ownership of Railtrack on 1 April 1994.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail, in conjunction with Railtrack and its auditors, is presently working on the identification of the assets to be transferred to Railtrack, and the values to be ascribed to them.

River Thames

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department will promote the increased use of the River Thames for transporting London's waste to points of disposal.

Mr. Norris: The River Thames working group, which I chair, is examining the benefits and potential of maximising all types of traffic on the River Thames, including the transportation of waste. The working group is expected to produce and publish its recommendations next summer.

Quality Assurance Standards

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to ensure that when putting contracts out to tender his Department includes on the tender list companies which have acquired the BS5750 quality assurance standard.

Mr. Key: Most of my Department's contracts are placed with the road construction industry.

Several firms within the industry have already introduced recognised quality management schemes on a voluntary basis but the number to have done so is not yet sufficient to ensure proper competition if such schemes were mandatory.

For that reason it is not yet a departmental requirement that firms invited to tender for roadworks contracts must have such schemes in place.

However, my Department is working towards the gradual introduction of quality management requirements within the framework of BS5750. As a first step, we are proposing to introduce quality plans for individual contracts starting next year.

Nuclear Materials

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department received a request from the Campaign for Freedom of Information for information about the environmental aspects of transporting nuclear materials; when a reply was sent; and if he will make a statement on the time scale.

Mr. Key: A request was received by the Department on 30 September 1993 and acknowledged on 12 October. I expect that a full reply will be sent within the next five days.

British Summer Time

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by year since 1979 the number of children killed as a result of road traffic accidents *(a)* before attending school in the morning and *(b)* after school had ceased in the afternoon when clocks were set at (i) Greenwich mean time and (ii) British summer time.

Mr. Key: I regret that the information requested is not available. Road casualty statistics do not distinguish between school days and holidays.

Motorway Safety

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has as to the consequences of adding additional lanes to existing motorways for the risks of death and serious injury resulting from multiple or other types of accident.

Mr. Key: Available evidence from existing four-lane motorways in Britain does not suggest that accident rates are significantly different on them as compared with three-lane motorways. Motorways are widened to increase capacity and so relieve congestion. If this were not done more vehicles would be forced on to all-purpose roads where the accident rate is significantly higher.

Vehicle Inspectorate

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who is carrying out the current survey of staff attitudes at the Vehicle Inspectorate; and what is the cost.

Mr. Key: The current staff attitude survey is being conducted by Peratee Ltd. at a cost of £6,000 plus VAT. Peratee Ltd. are advising the Vehicle Inspectorate on the adoption of total quality management practice. The survey is part of a wider contract the total cost of which is £59,000 + VAT.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total number of staff employed at the Vehicle Inspectorate for each year since 1990.

Mr. Key: The average number of staff employed by the Vehicle Inspectorate in each of the last three financial years is as follows:

	Number
1990-91	1,653
1991-92	[1]1,879
1992-93	1,861

[1] This includes 255 staff from the Traffic Enforcement Organisation which was integrated into the inspectorate in April 1991.

Staff numbers are expressed as full-time equivalents.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total number of vehicles inspected by the Vehicle Inspectorate for each year since 1990.

Mr. Key: This data has been published in the VI Annual Report and Accounts for 1992-93, a copy of which has been deposited in the House of Commons Library. With the exception of five small schemes, the relevant data are summarised in the table.

Inspections	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Annual tests			
HGV vehicles	778,693	587,252	578,499
HGV trailers	272,117	268,270	266,485
PSVs	85,558	85,907	87,484
HGV notifiable alterations	20,029	15,882	21,498
PSV notifiable alterations	3,102	2,926	2,200
Class IV, V and ambulances	13,397	12,168	13,228
Class VII	—	81,546	44,484
Roadworthiness enforcement			
HGVs inspected at roadside	112,661	117,477	126,370
PSVs inspected at roadside	20,527	21,106	24,895
Private and LGVs inspected at roadside	12,405	35,231	31,176
Operator licensing			
HGV number of vehicles inspected	59,085	60,974	62,093
PSV number of vehicles inspected	6,786	7,288	8,128
Traffic enforcement			
HGVs examined	281,140	266,746	295,124
PSVs examined	32,584	33,778	40,508
Total	1,698,084	1,596,551	1,602,172

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total equipment budget for the Vehicle Inspectorate for each year since 1990.

Mr. Key: The budget for capital expenditure on equipment is summarised below. The budget covers the purchase of testing equipment such as roller brake testers, load simulators and smoke meters. The budget includes spare parts, but does not include staff and other costs involved in maintaining the equipment.

Year	*Budget*
1990-91	1,542,795
1991-92	1,911,100
1992-93	2,110,700

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated saving to the Exchequer of the repeal of the disabled passenger scheme for exemptions from vehicle excise duty.

Mr. Key: There were around 20,000 beneficiaries in the disabled passengers scheme at the date of repeal on 13 October 1993. These disabled people will continue to benefit from exemption from vehicle excise duty (VED) for as long as their disability remains. There were around 4,000 new applications per year at the time of repeal, so the estimated saving to the Exchequer is about £500,000 in the first year.

Trans-European Road Network

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of the final decision by the Council of Ministers on TERN.

Mr. Key: I have today placed in the House Libraries copies of the Council decision on the creation of a trans-European road network.

A41

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the growth in traffic on the A41 at Aston Clinton since the opening of the Berkhamsted-Kings Langley bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: None, but traffic counts indicate an additional 2,700 vehicles per day (average 16-hour weekday) an increase of 13·5 per cent. above figures taken before completion of Berkhamsted-Kings Langley bypass.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement about the design standards proposed or applied to the various sections of the east-west route for which his Department has published proposals or which have already been opened to traffic;

(2) what plans he has to review his Department's traffic forecasts for the east-west route following the inclusion of the route in the trans-European road network; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether he plans to upgrade the design standards of all or any part of the east-west route following its inclusion in the trans-European road network; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave him on 24 November at column *60*. Inclusion in the TERN has no bearing on the standards or volume of traffic on the route.

Driver Identification Numbers

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State, if he will list the smallest number of separate identification numbers that a person with a driving licence can have; and how many persons are employed in the various Departments of state to administer these separate registers, stating the number employed in each case.

Mr. Key: For driving licence purposes the "driver number" is the only identification number required. It is automatically generated by computer when a driving licence is issued and requires no additional staff effort. There is no link between the driver number and any other identification number.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has incorporated the code of practice for information security management, published by the British Standards Institution, into relevant contracts with information technology suppliers.

Sir John Wheeler: The security requirements for IT systems and services used by central Government Departments are stated in the Government IT security policy document. This document is supported by use of the CCTA risk analysis and management method—CRAMM—and baseline security for IT systems—BSITS—risk analysis methods and by supporting advice and guidance published by the Government IT security authorities. These are regularly reviewed to ensure best practice; have been developed specifically for use within Government; and have been in operation for some time. The code of practice for information security management was developed by and established for use by commercial organisations and does not specifically address the requirements for the protection of official information.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the operation of his Department's sensitive documents unit; how many staff are employed in its operation; and approximately how many documents per annum come within its purview.

Sir John Wheeler: There is no sensitive document unit in the Northern Ireland Office or in any of the Northern Ireland Departments.

Mink Farms

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many mink farms have operated in each county in Northern Ireland in each year since 1984; and how many there are at present.

Mr. Ancram: There has only ever been one licensed mink farm in Northern Ireland. It was situated in Co. Down and was in operation during the period from 1984 to 1991. There are no licensed mink farms in Northern Ireland at present.

Overseas Visits

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many visits abroad he has made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds of each visit and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Sir Patrick Mayhew *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* I have made six visits abroad in 1993, to 1 December. The available information requested is:

Date	*Location*	*Purpose*	[1]*Travel*
22 January 1993	Republic of Ireland	Attend inter-governmental conference	£5,708·16
31 March 1993	Republic of Ireland	Attend football international	£3,781·84
1–8 May 1993	USA	Promoting Northern Ireland	£19,570·17
25 May 1993	Republic of Ireland	Attend inter-governmental conference	£5,706·33
26–27 July 1993	Republic of Ireland	Speaking engagements	£3,515·40
11 November 1993	France	Wreath laying ceremony on behalf of Her Majesty's Government at the Somme	£1,360·00
		Total expenditure	£39,277·90

[1] These figures are for travel costs of the Secretary of State and, where applicable, accompanying officials.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Television Franchises

Mr. McWilliam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if the changes of rules for television franchises will exempt Tyne Tees/Yorkshire because of his announced two-franchise limit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Yorkshire-Tyne Tees Holdings plc owns two companies, which each hold a regional ITV licence. If the Broadcasting (Restrictions on the Holding of Licences) (Amendment) Order 1993 is approved, the present limit on the holding of only two licences to provide regional ITV services would remain, although only one London licence could be held. If the holder of another ITV regional licence wanted to own Yorkshire-Tyne Tees Holdings, it would have to make arrangements to keep within the limit of two licences.

Liverpool

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for NationalHeritage what plans he has to visit Liverpool to discuss the museums in the city; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have no plans to visit Liverpool at the present time. Since taking office, however, I have visited both the Walker art gallery and the Liverpool museum, and have also been to the Lady Lever art gallery and the Tate gallery, Liverpool.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how often he has visited Liverpool since he was appointed.

Mr. Brooke: Twice.

Film Industry

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what information he has concerning the extent to which United Kingdom television producers are currently using facilities in the Republic of Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* Successive Governments have refrained from interfering in questions of television programme content and production. This is a matter for the broadcasters concerned, so long as they act within the law.

PRIME MINISTER

Visits

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the official visits by himself and his predecessor to *(a)* Saudi Arabia, *(b)* Malaysia and *(c)* Singapore since June 1987; and which such visits included party political activities in addition to official duties.

The Prime Minister: Official visits were made to Saudi Arabia in January 1991, March 1991 and January 1993; to Malaysia in August 1988, October 1989 (for CHOGM) and September 1993; and to Singapore in August 1988. The official visits made by my right hon. and noble Friend were a matter for her. Since November 1990 each of my visits to the countries concerned have been entirely for official purposes.

No. 10 Downing Street

Mr. Beith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 30 November, *Official Report,* column *419,* which charitable or other non-official organisations or groups have been notified that they may organise events at No. 10 Downing street under the financial arrangements described in his answer.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on 30 November 1993 at columns *418-19.*

Ministers (Severance Pay)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister, if he will list those who have resigned, retired or been dismissed from ministerial office in the past 10 years and the severance pay in (i) cash and (ii) current prices paid to each one.

The Prime Minister: As the Financial Secretary explained on 28 October in his reply to a question from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), the Parliamentary Pensions Act 1984 introduced severance payments for Ministers and other paid office holders in the House of Lords, subject to the conditions set out in the Act. The Ministerial and Other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991 extended the provision to Commons Ministers and other paid office holders in neither House.

Although no composite list is kept, we have identified from our records the following occasions on which severance payments have been authorised since 31 July 1984. In each case the severance payment would have been equal to three months of the relevant ministerial salary, as provided for by the Act.

Severance Payments

Date and ministerial post

11 September 1984
Minister of State for the Environment

26 March 1985
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Environment

3 September 1985
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

11 September 1986
Minister of State, Environment
Minister of State, Scottish Office

15 June 1987
Minister of State, Foreign Office
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Trade and Industry

23 July 1989
Secretary of State, Trade and Industry
Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

24 July 1989
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Energy

25 July 1989
Lord in Waiting

26 July 1989
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office

22 July 1990
Minister of State, Industry

6 September 1990
Minister of State, Scottish Office

3 December 1990
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office

22 May 1991
Chief Whip, House of Lords

31 December 1991
Deputy Chief Whip, House of Lords

11 April 1992
Secretary of State, Defence
Secretary of State, Home Office
Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office
Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Lords

14 April 1992
Minister of State, Defence
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Education and Science
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Education and Science
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Energy
Minister of State, Environment
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Health
Minister of State, Home Office
Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office
Minister for the Arts
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Trade and Industry

14 April 1992
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Transport
Minister of State, Transport
Financial Secretary to the Treasury
Economic Secretary to the Treasury
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Welsh Office

27 April 1992
Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office

5 May 1992
Chairman of Committees, House of Lords
Principal Deputy Chairman of Committees, House of Lords
Deputy Speaker, House of Commons

25 September 1992
Secretary of State, National Heritage

11 December 1992
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Education

26 May 1993
Chancellor of the Exchequer

27 May 1993
Minister of State, Defence
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Trade and Industry
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Office of Public Service and Science
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Transport

6 June 1993
Minister of State, FCO

24 June 1993
Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office

16 September 1993
Chief Whip, House of Lords

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Fire Doors

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee how many additional fire doors have been constructed *(a)* in the Palace of Westminster and *(b)* in the outbuildings in each of the last three years; what circumstances resulted in additional fire doors being built; what were the costs to the Exchequer; and how many additional fire doors are planned for the current year.

Mr. Ray Powell: This is a matter for the Director of Works and I will ask him to write to the hon. Member.

Beds (Staff)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee how many beds are available for use by House of Commons staff; what are the criteria for their use; if he will list the numbers of beds at each location; and what is the annual cost of laundry for staff beds.

Mr. Ray Powell: This is a matter for the Serjeant at Arms. I will ask him to write to the hon. Member.

Library (Asbestos)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what assessment was made of worker safety in respect of the return of staff to the Library in the summer recess while asbestos clearing work was being undertaken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ray Powell: The work to remove asbestos from the Library was carried out by a firm on the approved list for asbestos removal. It was undertaken in accordance with strict guidelines and procedures laid down by the Health and Safety Executive, on the basis of a professional assessment that there would be no danger to staff in the Library.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

LINK Programmes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing for each LINK programme *(a)* its year of commencement, *(b)* its total expenditure, *(c)* its expenditure in each year of operation, *(d)* the number of projects in each programme and *(e)* the planned expenditure for 1993-94.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have been asked to reply.

The table shows Government expenditure for each LINK programme. Figures given for 1993-94 are for the period April to September 1993; the whole year expenditure estimate is £30 million. Government expenditure on LINK programmes is at least matched by industry.

LINK programme and announcement date	*Projects*	*Government spend £k*[1]						
		1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*[2]	*Total*
February 1988								
Molecular electronics	3	15·9	136·4	783·0	477·9	1,029·9	103·4	2,546·5
Advanced semiconductor materials	11	21·1	71·0	594·0	2,147·3	2,515·8	956·2	6,305·4
Industrial measurement systems	34	23·7	377·4	1,317·3	1,673·0	1,749·3	740·3	5,881·0
Eukaryotic genetic engineering	11	36·6	99·0	323·3	524·5	428·6	280·9	1,692·9
Nanotechnology	20	30·0	390·2	656·8	1,441·4	1,844·1	298·3	4,660·8
April 1988								
Biotransformations	13	14·6	140·1	424·4	761·1	429·3	323·1	2,092·6
June 1988								
Personal communications	15	9·5	62·9	669·3	1,089·3	1,459·8	369·5	3,660·3
Selective drug delivery and targeting	6	—	155·0	272·6	355·8	270·0	169·4	1,222·8
Construction maintenance and refurbishment	13	47·0	91·0	99·3	218·2	491·8	182·0	1,129·3
September 1988								
Food processing sciences	33	—	288·0	416·6	1,761·7	1,862·0	826·7	5,155·0
April 1989								
Ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration	9	—	1·4	7·4	297·8	461·9	176·8	945·3
Optoelectronic systems	26	—	4·9	132·4	1,865·3	3,549·1	1,862·1	7,413·8
May 1989								
Design of high speed machinery	23	—	533·6	241·2	573·9	1,634·4	563·5	3,546·6
Structural composites	15	—	74·5	95·1	529·3	933·3	347·0	1,979·2
June 1989								
Protein engineering	14	—	7·0	43·4	267·6	1,344·6	716·6	2,379·2
Biochemical engineering	23	—	5·4	133·3	694·7	1,501·5	837·7	3,172·6
New catalysts and catalytic processes	11	—	11·0	18·8	215·5	770·6	362·3	1,378·2
July 1989								
Power Electronic Devices and Derived Systems	15	—	102·4	423·5	867·1	1,097·2	314·1	2,804·3
September 1989								
Control of Plant Metabolism	3	—	—	10·0	57·4	211·2	83·5	362·1
Molecular Sensors	14	—	20·1	4·8	312·1	452·5	238·7	1,028·2
Technology for Analytical and Physical Measurement	28	—	33·1	109·8	761·5	1,113·1	594·4	2,611·9
April 1990								
Transport Infrastructure and Operations	21	—	—	26·1	246·0	293·5	283·0	848·6
June 1990								
Asymmetric Synthesis	19	—	—	20·4	28·4	263·1	74·7	386·6
Crops for Industrial Use	11	—	—	161·2	290·4	412·4	376·8	1,240·8
October 1990								
Enabling Technologies for Advanced Rotorcraft	2	—	—	—	—	59·0	2·5	61·5
December 1990								
Medical Implants	6	—	—	10·0	151·0	420·0	252·4	833·4
Agro-Food Quality	21	—	—	—	44·0	547·0	480·9	1,071·9
April 1991								
Hydrocarbon Reservoirs	7	—	—	—	90·0	239·5	140·5	470·0
July 1991								
Technologies for Sustainable Farming Systems	12	—	—	—	15·1	192·8	202·7	410·6
September 1991								
Enhanced Engineering Materials	1	—	—	—	28·6	29·2	31·9	89·7
April 1993								
Biological Treatment of Soil and Water	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cell Engineering	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
June 1993								
Personal Communications (Phase II)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
July 1993								
High Performance Interfaces and Protocols	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	440	198·4	2,604·4	6,994·0	17,785·9	27,606·5	12,191·9	67,381·1

[1] Industry's own spend will be at least equal to that of Government.

[2] Spend as at 30 September 1993.

Recycling

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to encourage manufacturers to produce products which make use of recycled materials.

Mr. McLoughlin: In recent years, the main encouragement for manufacturers to use recycled materials in their products has come from customer demand, as members of the public take account of this environmental consideration when making their purchasing decisions. Many Government Departments have helped to encourage demand by themselves specifying recycled content in their purchases of stationery and other supplies. The Department of Trade and Industry is funding a number of projects aimed at identifying new end-uses for secondary raw materials, such as glass, plastics and rubber, and is addressing the issue of product standards to seek to remove any unnecessary discrimination against the use of recycled material.

Advice Centres

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total budget allocated by his Department during 1992-93 to *(a)* Business Advice Gateshead, *(b)* Business Advice Newcastle, *(c)* Business Advice North Tyneside, *(d)* Business Advice South Tyneside, *(e)* Entrust, Newcastle upon Tyne, *(f)* Gateshead Business Team, *(g)* Blaydon Business Centre, *(h)* Marketing Advice Centre, Newcastle and *(i)* Sunderland Business and Enterprise Centre.

Mr. Sainsbury: The figures are as follows:

(a) Nil;
(b) Nil;
(c) Nil:
(d) Nil;
(e) £218,538;
(f) Nil;
(g) Nil;
(h) Nil;
(i) Nil.

My Department was not the primary source of funding for these organisations in 1992-93. The training and enterprise councils (TECs) and local authorities provided core funding for the business advice centres and during this period my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Employment made provision for the TECs in her Estimates.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total budget allocated by his Department during 1992-93 to *(a)* the business advice centres in Cleveland, Cumbria, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear and *(b)* the eight enterprise agencies in County Durham.

Mr. Sainsbury: The figures are as follows:

(a) £105,778
(b) £21,350

My Department was not the primary source of funding for these organisations in 1992-93. The training and enterprise councils (TECS) and local authorities provided core funding for the regional business advice centres and the enterprise agencies operating in County Durham. During this period my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Employment made provision for the TECs in her Estimates.

Development Agencies

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the budget allocated by his Department during 1992-93 to *(a)* the Derwentside Industrial development agency, *(b)* the Shildon and Sedgefield development agency, *(c)* the East Durham Development Company, *(d)* the County Durham development agency, *(e)* the Northern Development Company Ltd., *(f)* the Teesside development corporation, *(g)* the Tyne and Wear development corporation, *(h)* the Tyne and Wear Development Company Ltd. and *(i)* the West Cumbria development agency.

Mr. Sainsbury: The figures are as follows:

(a) nil
(b) nil
(c) £59,855
(d) nil
(e) £1,723,500
(f) nil
(g) nil
(h) nil
(i) nil

My Department is not the primary source of funding for these organisations. The regional and sub-regional development agencies listed are funded through a combination of local authority and, in some cases, private sector contributions. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment makes provision for the urban development corporations in his Estimates.

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has incorporated the code of practice for information security management, published by the British Standards Institution, into relevant contracts with information technology suppliers.

Mr. McLoughlin: Invitations to tender issued by the Department for information technology goods and services include details of any relevant IT security requirements with which the supplier must comply. Those requirements are developed in accordance with cental Government IT security standards and best practice. One factor for consideration can be security within the supplier's own environment. The Department has welcomed the code of practice for information security management as a practical guide to effective information security management and, where a supplier has adopted and implemented the code, this will be evidence that security is taken seriously.

Konver Programme

Mr. Pike: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many local authorities have submitted bids under the Konver programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Fifty-eight.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the allocations under the Konver programme to the United Kingdom and France; if he will make representations to ensure that the United Kingdom obtains a fairer proportion of EC defence diversification moneys; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government expressed concern to the European Commission in May and June 1993 about the latter's method of allocation of 1993 Konver grant. The Commission acknowledged that the method and data used were imperfect. In any future Konver initiative the Commission would take account of data provided by the Government.

Scottish Calibration Centre

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total revenue raised from auction sale of equipment of the Scottish calibration centre.

Mr. McLoughlin: The recent auction of equipment at NEL was not confined solely to the sales equipment from the Scottish Calibration Centre which was closed in September, it involved the disposal of equipment which had become surplus to a wide range of National Engineering Laboratory activities. The total net proceeds from the sale at auction was £180,725 of which £91,850 represented the sale of equipment which had formerly been used in the Scottish calibration centre.

Car Boot Sales

Mr. French: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the annual turnover of car boot sales in the United Kingdom.

Mr. McLoughlin: No information is available on the turnover of car boot sales in the United Kingdom.

Consultants

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what contracts for technical and technological advice and research have been placed with external consultants since 1 April 1992; what was the total cost; and which such research was commissioned from agencies outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. McLoughlin: My Department does not classify consultancy contracts in terms of their activity or the contractors country of origin, and the information requested cannot be provided other than at disproportionate cost.

National Engineering Laboratory

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which sections, teams or project groups have been named for closure at the National Engineering Laboratory since 1 April.

Mr. McLoughlin: The only section team or project group which has been named for closure or closed at NEL since 1 April 1993 was the Scottish calibration centre which was closed on 30 September. The Scottish calibration centre was not a core activity of NEL and employed five staff, two of whom were in scientific grades.

Exports

Mr. Purchase: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what further proposals he has to assist small and medium-sized firms in their export efforts.

Mr. Needham: My Department, jointly with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, provides a wide range of high quality advice and support to United Kingdom exporters, 75 per cent. of our export services are taken by small to medium-sized companies and I plan to increase their awareness and access to these through the establishment of 200 business links throughout England. With DTI support, business links bring together local business support providers—TECs, chambers of commerce, local authorities and local enterprise agencies—in partnerships to meet the needs, including exporting needs, of small and medium sized companies in their area. Additional export help is targetted at small to medium sized companies that are passive or less experienced exporters through 17 export development advisers supported by DTI, based in chambers of commerce throughout the country.

Gas and Electricity

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the relationship between the powers of the Director General of Gas Supply and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission with regard to the setting of the capping price for gas.

Mr. Eggar: Section 24 of the Gas Act 1986 enables the Director General of Gas Supply to refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the question whether any matter relating to the supply of gas by a public gas supplier to tariff customers, including the tariff formula, may operate or be expected to operate against the public interest. If the Monopolies and Mergers Commission finds that the matter operates or may be expected to operate against the public interest, the Director General is required under section 26 of the Gas Act to modify such conditions of the public gas supplier's authorisation as appears to her to be requisite to remedy or prevent the adverse effects found by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the mechanism which he uses to ensure that the disconnection regulators of gas and electricity use their discretion in ways consonant with national energy policy.

Mr. Eggar: Under the Gas Act 1986 and the Electricity Act 1989 the Director General of Gas Supply and the Director General of Electricity Supply each has a duty to protect the interests of consumers. Domestic electricity and gas disconnections are now the lowest on record.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Dafis To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the proposed timetable for decommissioning THORP.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 2 December 1993 at column *736*.

Insolvency Service

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on possible private sector involvement in the Insolvency Service.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: A recent review by Stoy Hayward Consulting examined the work of the Insolvency Service and its official receivers and looked at the scope for involving the private sector to a larger extent in their mechanical, processing tasks. I am currently considering what further work needs to be done and shall announce to the House in due course what the next steps will be.

Plugs and Sockets

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the harmonisation of plug and socket installations to a common European standard; if the European unfused electrical plug is under consideration; what steps will be taken to avoid confusion by the public over differing safety standards; and who is to bear the costs of changing plugs and sockets in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury: No decision has been taken to change the standard for plugs and sockets in the United Kingdom. Although the plug standards which are currently under discussion in CENELEC, the body responsible for electrical standards in Europe, do not incorporate a fuse, there are other means of providing an equivalent level of protection. My Department has commissioned an independent analysis of the costs and benefits for the United Kingdom, and the results of this study will be published in the new year. In assessing whether any change to our present standards might be desirable at some future date full account will be taken both of consumer safety issues and of the cost implications for consumers and industry.

Wearmouth Pit

Mr. Etherington: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many British Coal employees at the Wearmouth pit on 26 November *(a)* work on surface and *(b)* work below ground; and what is the average annual wage, including shift allowance, of employees in each category.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Coal.

Mr. Etherington: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the names of all contractors' companies operating at Wearmouth pit, the number of employees of each individual contractor at the pit and that number as a percentage of the total British Coal work force at Wearmouth pit; and what is the average length of employment contract issued by individual contracting companies at Wearmouth pit.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Coal.

Quality Assurance Standards

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken to ensure that when putting contracts out to tender his Department includes on the tender list companies which have acquired the BS5750 quality assurance standard.

Mr. Eggar: Our buyers are encouraged to include on tender lists companies certificated to BS5750 or its equivalent wherever possible.

Government-funded Research

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table updating the information and showing the changes from table 3.19.1 of the "Annual Review of Government Funded Research" in the light of the recent public expenditure statement.

Mr. Eggar: Revised figures for the Department of Trade and Industry's expenditure on Research and Development will be prepared in light of this year's Public Expenditure Survey and published in the 1994 Forward Look of Science and Technology (which replaces the Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development).

Waste Paper

Mr. Cryer: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the effect of the level of paper waste prices in Germany on United Kingdom waste paper resources.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* The Government are keenly aware of the problems being experienced by the United Kingdom waste paper industry as a result of the German packaging ordinance and the DSD collection scheme. We have raised our concerns bilaterally with the German Government, and at EC level. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, has also written to EC Commissioners, encouraging them to come to an early conclusion on their consideration of the German system's compatibility with EC law.

My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, recently attended a meeting of EC Environment Ministers, called by the German Minister, to discuss the effects of trade flows of secondary raw materials, including paper. The German Government referred there to the expectation that some 800,000 tonnes of waste paper recycling capacity would come on stream in Germany by the end of 1994; they have suggested that the quantity of waste paper exported for recycling will diminish substantially as a consequence. In our view, however, this does not address the fundamental cause of the problem, which is the statutory requirement in Germany to recover and recycle far more waste material than there is demand for.

The announcement on producer responsibility which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Environment and I made in July was intended partly as a response to the difficulties caused by over-collection of some materials under the German DSD scheme. It is intended to provide that United Kingdom collectors and reprocessors are put on a similar basis to their competitors in Germany, and in other EC countries.

For the longer term, we believe that distortions of the kind currently being experienced are best dealt with by setting an overall framework through Community-wide legislation, such as the proposed EC Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive.

Patenting of Human Genes

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his Department's policy towards the European Commission's proposal to ban the patenting of human genes.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* My Department supports the proposal contained in the European Commission's draft Directive on the Legal Protection of Biotechnological Inventions that the human body and parts of the body should not be patentable. Whilst this would exclude genes in the body from patentability, we do accept that it may be appropriate for sequences of nucleotides of specific industrial application, which may derive from human genes, to be patentable provided the normal criteria of novelty and inventive step are met.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether any plutonium has been exported to the United States of America since 1990 under the 1959 amendment to the 1958 United Kingdom-United States mutual atomic energy exchange agreement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* No exports of civil plutonium have been made to the United States since 1990 under the 1958 defence agreement between that country and the United Kingdom. Exports of other plutonium are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Levitt Group

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he now has to appoint inspectors to investigate the activities of Roger Levitt and the collapse of the Levitt group of companies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* The Serious Fraud Office has conducted extensive inquiries into the activities of Mr. Levitt and the Levitt Group. No useful purpose would be served by my Department duplicating these inquiries into the activities of the undischarged bankrupt Roger Levitt and the companies formerly under his control.

Jetstream

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what meetings or correspondence his Department has had with the European Commission or other officials of multinational organisations about the effect of unfair competition on Jetstream;

(2) what representations he has received alleging unfair support to aircraft manufacturers overseas which are in direct competition with Jetstream; what action he has taken; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what visits Ministers or officers of his Department have made or plan to make to the British Aerospace Jetstream plant at Prestwick.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answers 6 December 1993]:* My Department has had no contact with the European Commission or other multinational organisations about the effect of unfair competition on Jetstream.

There have been a number of representations from Jetstream alleging unfair support to aircraft manufacturers overseas. We have asked the company for specific details of the evidence they have on these allegations, and have offered to meet them to discuss what remedies are available under international mechanisms.

Four officials from my Department's aerospace division visited the British Aerospace Jetstream plant at Prestwick in the last year. The recently appointed head of the division is to visit Prestwick in early December.

EDUCATION

Schools (Inspectors Reports)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the inspector's report naming Dick Sheppard school and Lilian Baylis school as schools as giving cause for concern and serious concern.

Mr. Robin Squire: Both schools will be inspected in the current academic year under the new inspection arrangements introduced following the Education (Schools) Act 1992. Lilian Baylis school will be inspected in the spring term and Dick Sheppard school in the summer term.

Civil Servants

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of people employed, *(b)* the total number of black people and *(c)* the total number of Asians.

Mr. Boswell: We do not hold information on the ethnic origin of all our staff but of those who have responded to the ethnic monitoring survey (98 per cent.) carried out last year, the figures at 1 December 1993 are as follows:

	Number of staff in post	*Black*	*Asian*	*Other Ethnic Origin*
Grade 1	1	0	0	0
Grade 2	3	0	0	0
Grade 3	11	0	0	0
Grade 4	3	0	0	0
Grade 5	47	0	0	0
Grade 6	17	0	0	0
Grade 7	154	1	1	2
SEO and equivalent	111	0	0	1
HEO and equivalent	357	6	2	1
EO and equivalent	478	23	12	3
AO and equivalent	600	52	23	5
AA and equivalent	360	14	6	0
TOTAL	2,142	96	44	12

These figures reflect the number of staff in post and include 360 staff in the Teachers Pensions Agency.

Universities

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what new steps he is considering to enable universities to play a more active role in the development of Britain's manufacturing capacity.

Mr. Boswell: Universities are already contributing significantly to the development of our manufacturing capacity, both through the supply of highly qualified people and through collaborative research and other services. My right hon. Friend has encouraged scientific and technological education in universities through a differential tuition fee structure. He has also recently announced a bursary scheme to encourage particularly able students to enter engineering courses.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to enable university personnel greater freedom to undertake outside consultancy work.

Mr. Boswell: It is for universities as employers to determine the conditions of employment of their staff, including arrangements for consultancy work. The Government have no locus in this matter.

Students

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the trends in students entering higher education from *(a)* different social classes and *(b)* differential parental income brackets since the introduction of student loans.

Mr. Boswell: Details of the socio-economic background of accepted applicants to higher education have been collected and published by both the higher education admissions agencies since 1991. Details of the number of mandatory award holders in relation to the residual income of their parents are collected and published by the Department in the Statistics of Education Students Awards Volume. The 1993 student income and expenditure survey, the results of which are due to be published shortly, also sought information about the socio-economic background of those interviewed.

Although it is too early to identify any significant trends, the evidence so far indicates that the introduction of loans has had no adverse effect on participation by students from less well-off families.

School Performance

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what arrangements his Department has for taking into account when judging school performance the range of intake to a particular school and other relevant factors.

Mr. Robin Squire: Ofsted is responsible for advising my right hon. Friend on the quality of education and standards achieved in schools. I have asked Professor Sutherland, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, to send the hon. Member a copy of his published Framework of Inspection which sets out the criteria for judging school performance. Work on operational approaches to value added in the context of school performance tables is being taken forward by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

Local Government Review

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what consultation has taken place with teacher trade unions, about their employment conditions in the light of the local government review.

Mr. Robin Squire: The teacher trade unions have sought no such consultations with my right hon. Friend. None has taken place.

Swimming Instruction

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what surveys he has recently conducted via local education authorities of the percentage of pupils receiving swimming instruction; what assessment he has made of any change there has been in that percentage over the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department carried out two surveys at the end of 1991 to inform decisions on the feasibility of making swimming a statutory requirement of national curriculum physical education. One was to determine the number of schools with swimming pools; the other to find out how many of a representative sample of over 1,200 schools, with or without their own pools, made provision of some kind for swimming lessons. Copies of the findings of these surveys were placed in the Library. Neither, however, yielded information on the number or proportion of schools pupils receiving swimming instruction.

Free School Meals

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list, by education authority area, the number of pupils in receipt of *(a)* free school meals and *(b)* clothing grants for each year since 1987; and if he will indicate, in each case, what percentage this represents of the total number of pupils in each area.

Mr. Forth: The information requested on take-up of free school meals in January 1992—the latest date for which information is available—is shown in the table. Similar information for January 1989 and subsequent years is published annually in the Statistics of Education (Schools) Volumes, copies of which are available in the Library. Information prior to 1989 is not available on a comparable basis although the results of early school meals censuses were published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy up to 1988 in "—School Meal Statistics at October " copies of which are available in the Library.

Information on the number of pupils in receipt of clothing grants is not collected centrally.

Numbers and percentages of day pupils taking free school meals in maintained schools in England—January 1992

	Primary (including nursery)		*Secondary*		*Special*	
LEA	*number*	*percentage*	*number*	*percentage*	*number*	*percentage*
Corporation of London	91	41				
Camden	3,291	31	1,762	17	143	48
Greenwich	5,727	27	2,204	16	250	36
Hackney	6,567	40	2,443	31	222	44
Hammersmith	2,929	31	1,236	21	145	38
Islington	5,094	34	1,806	23	131	42
Kensington and Chelsea	1,980	31	741	20	1	100

	Primary (including nursery)		*Secondary*		*Special*	
LEA	*number*	*percentage*	*number*	*percentage*	*number*	*percentage*
Lambeth	6,720	35	1,607	26	324	43
Lewisham	5,188	26	2,257	21	154	38
Southwark	7,162	34	2,433	27	160	45
Tower Hamlets	9,179	45	4,406	40	269	57
Wandsworth	4,822	28	1,903	20	202	39
Westminster	2,949	32	1,992	28	63	47
Barking	2,330	15	665	7	30	19
Barnet	2,738	11	1,467	8	56	18
Bexley	2,030	11	714	5	88	32
Brent	4,574	21	1,789	15	119	34
Bromley	2,257	11	1,165	7	65	18
Croydon	4,217	16	1,466	9	157	31
Ealing	4,830	17	1,831	16	138	30
Enfield	3,096	14	1,548	9	137	32
Haringey	4,992	27	2,240	26	116	34
Harrow	1,277	7	536	7	40	20
Havering	1,560	8	724	5	51	23
Hillingdon	1,436	7	938	7	86	21
Hounslow	2,942	15	1,600	12	90	23
Kingston upon Thames	705	7	340	5	37	16
Merton	1,982	13	706	10	64	26
Newham	5,758	23	2,429	18	130	38
Redbridge	1,981	11	1,081	8	73	19
Richmond upon Thames	824	8	560	8	30	20
Sutton	1,122	9	552	5	54	22
Waltham Forest	4,355	22	2,102	17	214	28
Birmingham	32,673	30	15,042	23	1,327	48
Coventry	6,863	23	2,600	14	281	37
Dudley	3,780	14	1,711	10	183	32
Sandwell	6,727	21	2,329	13	328	42
Solihull	2,572	13	892	6	81	29
Walsall	5,823	20	2,786	15	207	38
Wolverhampton	5,445	22	1,870	12	187	38
Knowsley	6,867	37	2,544	29	312	55
Liverpool	15,828	31	6,888	24	670	46
St. Helens	3,379	19	1,310	11	169	36
Sefton	4,850	18	2,308	12	163	38
Wirral	7,391	24	3,849	18	305	40
Bolton	4,766	17	1,823	11	166	35
Bury	2,334	14	806	8	99	40
Manchester	18,506	40	6,154	26	734	42
Oldham	5,461	23	2,519	16	201	34
Rochdale	4,915	22	2,049	16	173	36
Salford	6,748	29	1,686	13	160	35
Stockport	3,588	14	1,495	8	118	29
Tameside	4,408	19	1,637	12	143	35
Trafford	2,942	15	1,186	11	102	26
Wigan	5,061	17	1,795	9	318	40
Barnsley	4,197	20	1,442	12	63	40
Doncaster	6,568	22	2,699	13	259	38
Rotherham	4,798	19	1,723	10	245	39
Sheffield	9,924	21	3,278	14	315	45
Bradford	8,984	22	9,588	21	310	32
Calderdale	3,528	18	1,403	11	50	25
Kirklees	6,185	17	2,742	10	205	36
Leeds	9,398	17	7,099	14	326	33
Wakefield	4,707	16	2,184	11	215	39
Gateshead	4,640	26	1,360	12	141	41
Newcastle upon Tyne	7,605	33	2,716	16	269	37
North Tyneside	3,017	18	1,526	10	161	37
South Tyneside	4,584	28	1,376	15	137	40
Sunderland	7,611	25	2,651	14	266	38
Isles of Scilly	8	5	23	25	0	0
Avon	12,852	16	4,496	8	575	32
Bedfordshire	6,053	14	4,629	10	293	28
Berkshire	5,350	9	2,018	4	336	21
Buckinghamshire	3,392	6	1,366	4	322	25
Cambridgeshire	6,768	12	2,907	7	212	23
Cheshire	11,950	13	5,033	8	291	25
Cleveland	15,336	24	5,650	14	548	40
Cornwall	5,846	15	3,058	11	101	42
Cumbria	5,205	12	2002	7	76	25
Derbyshire	11,351	13	4,662	8	375	30
Devon	11,598	15	4763	8	434	28
Dorset	2,995	7	2,423	6	243	23
Durham	11,724	20	3,968	11	402	43
East Sussex	7,282	15	3,071	9	384	30

LEA	Primary (including nursery) number	Primary (including nursery) percentage	Secondary number	Secondary percentage	Special number	Special percentage
Essex	14,808	12	5,890	6	583	24
Gloucestershire	4,774	11	1,905	6	351	29
Hampshire	15,169	12	4,579	5	864	25
Hereford and Worcester	3,848	8	2,776	6	274	24
Hertfordshire	7,643	9	3,744	6	387	24
Humberside	13,969	17	6,339	11	382	34
Isle of Wight	1,314	19	1,425	14	68	27
Kent	15,577	13	6,838	7	665	24
Lancashire	23,320	18	10,430	13	1,102	36
Leicestershire	10,669	14	4,604	8	300	32
Lincolnshire	2,812	6	2,104	6	263	28
Norfolk	7,511	12	2,394	6	183	23
North Yorkshire	4,944	9	2,012	5	162	20
Northamptonshire	4,441	9	3,160	7	237	21
Northumberland	3,210	15	2,403	8	119	28
Nottinghamshire	15,939	18	6,981	11	517	32
Oxfordshire	3,843	9	2,011	6	155	20
Shropshire	4,924	14	2,088	8	176	33
Somerset	3,132	9	1,726	6	161	27
Staffordshire	13,618	15	4,946	7	623	31
Suffolk	4,535	11	3,019	6	128	19
Surrey	5,821	8	1,338	3	273	19
Warwickshire	4,660	10	1,310	5	361	31
West Sussex	4,922	10	1,910	5	205	19
Wiltshire	4,676	10	1,987	6	145	25
England	681,167	16	294,297	10	26,504	32

Pupil Testing

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has for including the testing of trigonometry at key stage 4; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: From 1994, trigonometry will be examined at key stage 4 through GCSEs prepared to meet national curriculum requirements in mathematics. In a recent report on this year's GCSE, the Office for Standards in Education identified trigonometry as an area of mathematics where there were often high standards of achievement among candidates.

Schools Capital Programme

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what discussions he has held with his colleagues regarding increasing the capital programme for schools.

Mr. Forth: Decisions on central Government capital provision for schools were taken as part of the overall discussions within this year's public expenditure survey.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will consider increasing Coventry education department's capital programme for schools.

Mr. Forth: Capital bids for 1994-95 from all local education authorities are currently under consideration. My right hon. Friend expects to announce annual capital guidelines and voluntary-aided school capital allocations to all authorities, including Coventry, later this month.

Teacher Training

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals he has for improving teacher training; and when they will be implemented.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has set out new standards for initial training which define the knowledge and skills new teachers require. Student teachers must spend more time in schools, and schools will be able to play a full part in designing and running courses. Training for primary teachers must include more time on the core subjects. Courses are already being adjusted—all secondary courses must meet the new criteria by September 1994, all primary courses by September 1996. My right hon. Friend has also made arrangements to allow groups of schools to run their own courses. The first started this September, and more will start next year.

The Education Bill recently introduced in another place provides for a Teacher Training Agency to underpin these reforms. Subject to the passage of the legislation, the agency will be established in September 1994. It will fund teacher training and related courses; accredit institutions offering initial teacher training; and act as a central focus of information and advice about teaching as a career.

Play Groups

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what additional resources he intends to provide for improving facilities for pre-school play groups.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department for Education is this year making available a grant of £887,000 to the national Pre-School Playgroups Association to improve the education content of playgroup provision by supporting a number of training posts. This compares with a grant of £649,500 in 1992-93. Financial support is also provided by the Department of Health and the Ministry of Defence. Grant to the association for 1994-95 is currently under consideration. Individual playgroups are self-financing and receive most of their income from fees charged to parents, grants from local authorities, and local fund-raising.

Education Welfare Officers

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many education welfare officers were employed *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* for the latest year for which information is available; and if he will break the figure down by individual local education authority.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not centrally available.

Discretionary Awards

Mrs. Browning: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects the findings of the current national survey of local education authority discretionary award provision to be published.

Mr. Boswell: This survey was commissioned by the Calouste Gulbenkian and Sir John Cass Foundations, with the support of my Department and the Further Education Funding Council, and is being conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research. Accordingly, publication of the survey's findings is not in the Government's hands. I understand that by the middle of November only half of the local education authorities in England and Wales had been able to return the second of the two questionnaires sent to them in May. I very much hope that the remaining authorities will be able to make their returns by the end of December. The survey's steering committee, on which my Department is represented, now expects the findings to be published as a Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation document at the end of March.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Criminal Justice Act 1992

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what expenditure was incurred in the implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 1992, including the cost of training of lay magistrates; and what was the cost of implementing the subsequent amending legislation to the Act.

Mr. Maclean: The Criminal Justice Act 1991 contained a wide range of provisions including the introduction of a framework for sentencing, new early release arrangements and provisions relating, among other things, to children's evidence, prisoner escorts and cash limits for magistrates courts. A number of Government Departments and other agencies were involved in implementing the Act. Information about the expenditure which they may have incurred specifically in relation to implementing provisions of the Act is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The training of lay magistrates is carried out by courts locally, and training about the provisions of the 1991 Act was effected within overall training budgets. It is not possible to disaggregate the costs of this training. For similar reasons, it is not possible to identify the cost of implementing the amendments made to the sentencing framework of the 1991 Act by the Criminal Justice Act 1993.

Crime, Northumberland

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he proposes to tackle youth crime in Blyth Valley and in south-east Northumberland.

Mr. Maclean: My Department is already supporting in different ways a range of local action which has a reduction of the opportunity for, and prevalence of, crime by young people among its objectives. Thus, the local probation service is involved in a number of multi-agency initiatives. An activity project has been set up for more constructive use of leisure time and programmes are being developed to increase training and employment opportunities.

In addition, the Home Office funded Drugs Prevention Newcastle, in collaboration with the Northumbria Coalition Against Crime has produced "Dialogue on Drugs", an educational resource pack on good practice for drugs education which is being disseminated through Education Departments in Northumberland and Tyne and Wear.

The Government announced on 2 March 1993 further measures to tackle youth crime throughout England and Wales ranging from improving discipline in schools to giving courts a new sentence of detention, the secure training order, for persistent juvenile offenders.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what percentage of offenders appearing before the courts in south-east Northumberland were unemployed in each year since 1989;

(2) what percentage of offenders in Blyth Valley and south-east Northumberland were aged under 21 years in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Maclean: Information is not collected centrally on the employment status of defendants appearing before the courts.

The table shows the number and percentage of offenders by age convicted at Blyth Valley, Morpeth and Wansbeck petty sessional divisions and at the Crown court who were committed by the above mentioned three courts for 1992. 1993 data will not be available until autumn 1994. From 1 April 1993 the three courts combine to form the south-east Northumberland petty sessional division.

Number and percentage of offenders aged under 21 and all ages found guilty at Blyth Valley, Morpeth and Wansbeck petty sessional divisions and at the Crown Court by committing Blyth Valley, Morpeth and Wansbeck petty sessional divisions and type of offence 1992

PSD/Type of offence	*Under 21 Number*	*Under 21 Per cent.*	*All ages (= 100 per cent.)*
Blyth Valley			
Indictable offences	176	37	479
Summary non-motoring offences	81	9	895
Summary motoring offences	121	17	701
All offences	378	18	2,075
Morpeth			
Indictable offences	64	32	198
Summary non-motoring offences	58	18	317
Summary motoring offences	89	5	1,894
All offences	211	9	2,409
Wansbeck			
Indictable offences	161	39	411
Summary non-motoring offences	92	16	579
Summary motoring offences	128	22	570
All offences	381	24	1,560

Note:—From 1 April 1993 Blyth Valley, Morpeth and Wansbeck PSD combine to form the South East Northumberland PSD.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new strategies he intends to promote to tackle drug problems in Blyth Valley and in south-east Northumberland.

Mr. Maclean: The Government's overall strategy for tackling drug misuse is aimed at reducing both the supply of and demand for drugs throughout the United Kingdom. Through the local drugs prevention teams we are developing imaginative strategies specifically designed to tackle local drug problems in key areas. Initiatives planned by the team in Newcastle include the launch of a drugs information line and publication of information packs for both young people and parents which will also benefit those living in Blyth Valley and south-east Northumberland.

Obscenity and Violence

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many representations he has received over the last six months on videos available to children and containing pornographic material and scenes of violence; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what recent representations he has received on reform of the laws relating to obscenity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We have received a number of representations from hon. Members and others about the availability of pornographic and violent videos, and also about the law relating to obscenity in general. We have made clear our determination to act firmly against those who trade in obscene material, especially those engaged in the deplorable traffic in child pornography. We intend shortly to invite this House to approve legislation which will make child pornography offences under the Protection of Children Act 1978 and offences under the Obscene Publications Act 1959 serious arrestable offences—thereby giving the police increased powers of search and seizure as well as assisting them to break up child pornography rings by arresting those involved. We propose to extend existing legislation so that it will cover simulated child pornography manufactured on computer and to make other important changes to the law as it affects computer pornography. We will also be proposing that courts should have a power of imprisonment for those convicted of possessing child pornography and that the validity of search warrants under the Protection of Children Act should be extended from 14 to 28 days. In addition we propose to extend the powers of local authority trading standards officers and magistrates' courts to enforce the Video Recordings Act 1984.

Our controls on obscene materials and, in particular, on video recordings are already the toughest in Europe, and we will continue to seek suitable ways in which they might be further strengthened. Nevertheless, the final responsibility for what children watch inevitably rests in the home, and it is important that all parents and guardians should ensure that their children are not exposed to unsuitable material.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what consideration he has given to appointing a body other than the British Board of Film Classification to undertake statutory responsibility of the classification system under the Video Recordings Act 1984;

(2) when was the last time he met members of the British Board of Film Classification to discuss the operation of the Video Recordings Act 1984;

(3) if he will publish the details of the research project being carried out by the British Board of Film Classification into the impact of violent videos on children; and when he expects to receive a copy of the report.

Mr. Maclean: The Government keep the arrangements for the control of video recordings under constant review, but we have no plans to designate any other persons to undertake the classification of video works currently carried out by the British Board of Film Classification. We believe that the BBFC fulfils its role conscientiously. My officials maintain frequent contact with them. I met Lord Birkett, a Vice-President of the BBFC, to discuss the operation of the Video Recordings Act 1984 earlier this year.

The BBFC, together with the BBC, the ITC and the Broadcasting Standards Council, commissioned research into the viewing habits of young offenders and other children of comparable age. It will be for the sponsor bodies to arrange publication of the results of this research; but I understand that this is likely to be early next year.

North Wales Police

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cautions were administered by the North Wales police for driving-related offences in each year since 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The available information relates to written warnings for alleged motoring offences and is as follows:

Written warnings for motoring offences in north Wales

Year	Number
1990	3,655
1991	3,781
1992	[1]3,326

[1] Provisional.

Press and Publicity Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many press and publicity officers are currently employed in his Department; and how many were employed in *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* 1979.

Mr. Howard: There are at present 28 members of the information officer class employed as press and publicity officers in the Department's public relations branch. In addition, there are seven information officer grades similarly employed in the Prison Service and one in the national criminal intelligence service.

Precise information for 1985 and 1979 is not readily available, but comparable totals for the Department in those years are believed to be 27 and 24.

Right of Silence

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received on the abolition of the right of silence in a criminal court; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Since the report of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice was published, we have received 13 letters from right hon. and hon. Members on this issue and 51 letters direct from members of the public and organisations.

Home Affairs Council

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting of EC Home Affairs Ministers on 29 and 30 November.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The meeting on 29 and 30 November was the first Interior and Justice Council held under the provisions of the treaty on European union. The main points dealt with were as follows.

The Council agreed, for submission to the European Council on 10 and 11 December, action plans and work programmes for the areas for which under Title VI of the Treaty it is responsible.

The Council took note of the progress made on implementing the work programme on immigration and asylum adopted at Maastricht, and agreed subject to a Spanish reserve a number of matters related to asylum and the practical application of the Dublin convention. It agreed not to seek to transfer competence on the right of asylum to the Community but decided to review the matter before the end of 1995.

The Council considered a report on racism and xenophobia and agreed a resolution concerning concrete measures to combat this phenomenon.

The Commission gave a presentation on its proposals for Community legislation under Article 100C providing for a list of third countries whose nationals would require a visa to enter member states, and for an amendment of the draft external frontiers convention. The Council agreed that these proposals should be given further consideration when they were received.

The Council agreed broad principles to be observed in drawing up readmission agreements with third countries and will consider at a future meeting the question of the inclusion of a commitment to such agreements in Community co-operation agreements.

The Council considered means of extending cooperation with certain third countries on Title VI matters. It will examine proposals at its next meeting.

The Council noted an interim report on the work being carried out in the field of extradition and instructed officials to produce a final report by the end of 1994.

The Council considered a report by the Presidency on possible Community accession to the European convention on human rights and decided to consult the European Court of Justice about the legal consequences. The United Kingdom expressed strong reservations about the need for this at this stage, given the absence of consensus on the desirability of accession.

The Council noted preparatory work by the Europol drugs unit and progress on the Europol convention. It received a report commissioned by Ministers at Kolding in May 1993 on international organised crime and approved the action programme contained in it.

The Council discussed the internal and external terrorist threat to member states and decided to examine ways to improve co-operation between member states on counter-terrorism.

The Council adopted recommendations and resolutions on the campaign against money laundering; on protection of the financial interests of the Community; on the exchange of information on environmental crime; and on the responsibilities of organisers of sports events.

It also agreed five recommendations aimed at combating trade in human beings for prostitution.

I am placing in the Library of the House the press communique issued following the meeting, and other documents approved by the Council.

Wormwood Scrubs Prison

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list each of the projects now under development at Wormwood Scrubs prison, the cost of each project and if funding for each project has been approved and granted.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 6 December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your further Question about the current development work at Wormwood Scrubs prison.

My letter of 30 November 1993 in reply to your earlier Question about the current development work at the prison explained the work being carried out at the prison and the work planned for the future (published in Hansard on 1 December 1993 col 625). In the final paragraph of my letter I said that a final decision had still to be made about the timing and phasing of proposals to complete the modernisation of the four existing accommodation wings.

Although a precise timetable has still to be determined we are currently planning to start the modernisation of A and B wings in the Autumn of 1994. The work is expected to take two years. Further modernisation work to C and D wings will be carried out after work to A and B wings has been completed. It is too early to give an indication of the likely timing of this work, which will depend on resources available in future years and priorities across the Prison Service estate.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the prison population roll at Wormwood Scrubs prison on Monday 15 November.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 6 December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the prison population roll at Wormwood Scrubs.

On Monday 15 November 1993 there were 829 prisoners in Wormwood Scrubs.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in detail the actions that his Department have taken at Wormwood Scrubs prison following the report of Mr. Justice Tumim.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 6 December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the action taken by the Prison Service at Wormwood Scrubs prison following the report of His Honour Judge Tumim.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons made an unannounced short inspection of Wormwood Scrubs prison from 18 to 20 August 1993. The report was submitted to the Secretary of State on 22 November, and it is currently being considered.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the days of the week on which the photographs in the White Paper "Sunday Trading—A Guide to the Options for Reform", Cm 2300, were taken.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We do not know on which day of the week most of the photographs were taken as this is for the most part irrelevant. For example, we do not know on what day of the week the photograph on page 1 of the guide —the 1950s street scene—was taken. But, where a photograph is used clearly to illustrate a specific Sunday activity, the photograph was taken on a Sunday, for example, the photograph of Sunday shopping in Edinburgh on page 5 of the guide.

Sensitive Documents Unit

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the operation of his Department's sensitive documents unit; how many staff are employed in its operation; and approximately how many documents per annum come within its purview.

Mr. Howard: The Home Office does not have a sensitive documents unit.

Prisoners (Attacks)

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, with reference to the subject of attacks on prisoners, he will make it his policy to ensure that the same information is available on both privately and publicly managed prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on assaults on inmates in each Prison Service establishment is published in "Statistics of offences against prison discipline and punishments England and Wales 1992", Cm 2411. A copy is available in the Library of the House.

New Prisons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much new money is to be made available for the building of the proposed new prisons in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 6 December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about how much money is to be made available for the building of the proposed new prisons in England and Wales.

I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his earlier Question on 1 December 1993 (columns 627-28).

Public Order

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish the 1992 figures for prosecutions and convictions under *(a)* the Public Order Act 1936 and *(b)* sections 17 to 23 of the Public Order Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Court proceedings data for 1992 became available on 3 December 1993 following publication of the Command Paper "Criminal Statistics England and Wales 1992" Cm 2410. Copies of the Command Paper and its four supplementary volumes are available from the Library. Requests for information regarding specific sections of the Public Order Act 1936 can be made direct to room 1824B, S1 division, research and statistics department, Home Office, Lunar house, Wellesley road, Croydon, CR0 9YD.

I will write to the hon. Member regarding sections 17 to 23 of the Public Order Act 1986.

Identity Cards

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his latest estimate of the costs of introducing a national identity card scheme.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The costs of an identity card scheme would depend on the administrative details of the scheme and the checks required before an identity card was issued.

In 1989, it was estimated, on the basis of the costs of issuing passports, that the cost of introducing a national identity card scheme would be in the region of £350 million, excluding initial capital costs. Annual running costs were estimated to be between £50 million and £100 million. These figures were based on the unit cost of a passport—then £7·50—and assumed a scheme in which identity cards are issued to all British citizens aged 12 and over. The figures were published on 6 February 1989 at column *468* and on 10 May 1993 at column *340.*

In 1991-92, the unit cost of a passport was £10·15. At this cost, the 1989 estimate of the costs of introducing a national identity card scheme would increase to about £475 million.

James Bulger

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the parents of James Bulger will be informed of what custodial tariff is to be applied to Jon Venables and Robert Thompson.

Mr. Howard: I have not yet decided the period of custody to be served for retribution and deterrence in these cases. When I have, I will consider what information might be given to the parents of James Bulger, and how that might best be done. In considering what information they might receive I will of course wish to take their own views fully in to account.

The arrangements for determining the period of custody which those convicted of murder are required to serve in order to satisfy the requirements for retribution and deterrence are set out in my replies of 27 July 1993 at columns *863-65*, and 4 November 1993 at columns *376-78*, to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence).

Deportation Notices

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide figures for the number of notices of intention to deport issued since the coming into force of the Immigration Act 1988.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is given in the table.

Notices of intention to deport issued

Year	*Number*
1988 August to December	1,117
1989	3,213
1990	3,001
1991	3,440
1992	3,594
1993 January to September	[1]3,309

[1] provisional figure

Emergency Warning System

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to the need for a nationally co-ordinated emergency warning system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: After a review of the civil defence arrangements in the United Kingdom, it was announced on 12 November 1992 that the obsolescent national siren warning system was to be closed down and that future national arrangements for warning the public should be based on the use of radio and television broadcasts. Work is in hand for the new system.

Citizenship Applications

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of applications for British citizenship outstanding at the latest available date; what was the corresponding figure at the same time in each of the last five years; what is the average time currently between the receipt of a British citizenship application and a decision being taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: On 30 November 1993, the number of recorded outstanding applications for British citizenship was 39,638. The numbers of recorded applications outstanding at the end of November in each of the previous five years were as follows:

	Number
November 1988	114,152
November 1989	125,407
November 1990	88,671
November 1991	52,713
November 1992	49,945

During November the average waiting time between the receipt of an application and a certificate being issued was 17 months for certificates of naturalisation and 13 months for certificates of registration. The latter figure includes those certificates issued to minors whose applications were submitted at the same time as their parents' application for naturalisation.

Special Constabulary

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance he has issued to chief constables concerning explanations being given to those refused recruitment to the special constabulary; what right of review or appeal exists to applicants refused admission to the special constabulary; what is the time limit on a fresh application to join the special constabulary being made by a person refused admission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The way individual applications for special constables are dealt with and processed in each force is a matter for the chief constable concerned. No guidance on any of the points raised has been given to chief constables by the Home Office.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations from individuals and organisations he has received concerning the policy of the Yorkshire police in respect of giving reasons when a person is refused admission to the special constabulary.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No such representations have been received.

Child Deportees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what steps his Department takes to ensure that when deporting children article 3 of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child is upheld;

(2) how many children have been deported by his Department in the last year for which figures are available;

(3) what steps his Department is taking to ensure that when deporting children article 16 of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child is upheld;

(4) what steps his Department is taking to ensure that when deporting children article 24 of the UN convention on the rights of the child is upheld;

(5) what steps his Department is taking to ensure that when deporting children article 6 of the UN convention on the rights of the child is adhered to;

(6) what steps his Department is taking to ensure that when deporting children article 12 of the UN convention on the rights of the child is upheld.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No child under the age of 18 has been deported in the last year. In ratifying the United Nations convention on the rights of the child, the United Kingdom reserved the right to apply such immigration legislation as it deemed necessary from time to time.

In carrying out any deportation involving children, account is taken of the articles of the convention to which the hon. Member has drawn attention.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what immunisations his Department arranged for Nkechi Nwokedi to receive before she was deported to Nigeria with her mother on 9 July;

(2) what steps his Department takes to ensure that children deported with their parents receive the appropriate immunisations to protect their health in the country to which they are deported.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None. Nkechi Nwokedi was not deported. She accompanied her mother who was returned to Nigeria on 9 July as the subject of a deportation order. We understand that there is currently no requirement for people travelling to Nigeria to be immunised. However, Ms Nwokedi had been aware for some time of the intention to deport her and it would have been open to her to make arrangements for her child to be immunised, if she thought this desirable.

More generally, arrangements are made for immunisation to be provided, as appropriate, for any deportee who requests it, and would be extended on request to a child accompanying a deportee.

International Sikh Youth Federation

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library the material which he has supplied to the courts regarding the aims and methods of the United Kingdom branch of the International Sikh Youth Federation.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Secretary of State has not supplied any such material to the courts.

Immigration Complaints Audit Committee

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will announce the membership of the immigration and nationality department complaints audit committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I announced in reply to a question from my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) on 31 March at column *226* that my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State intended to appoint a Complaints Audit Committee for the Immigration and Nationality Department—IND. My right hon. and learned Friend has appointed Miss Diana Rookledge as chairman and Mr. Blair Greaves and Mr. Karamjit Singh to be members of the committee. The committee will start work at the beginning of the new year.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce ethnic monitoring throughout the criminal justice system.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 23 December 1993]:* Ethnic monitoring of stop and search by the police was introduced nationally in April 1993. On present plans I anticipate that by 1995 the police will also be in position to monitor arrests and cautions. Our ultimate intention is to extend monitoring throughout the criminal justice system, but at present it would be premature to forecast when that goal will be achieved.

Drugs Offences

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arrests have taken place of drug dealers in Liverpool in each of the past three years.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* The available information is of convictions and cautions for the two offences commonly associated with drug dealing, i.e. unlawful supply and possession with intent to supply unlawfully. Figures for the Merseyside police force area for the last three years for which data are available, are given in the table.

Table: persons found guilty or cautioned for offences of unlawful supply of a controlled drug, or possession of a controlled drug with intent to supply unlawfully

Merseyside police force area *Number of persons*

Year	*Unlawful supply*	*Possession with intent to supply*
1990	137	143
1991	119	178
1992	120	163

Some persons may have been convicted or cautioned for both offences, so columns cannot be added together to obtain totals.

Life Sentences

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been convicted for murder each year since the abolition of the death sentence; if he will present in tabular form the number of years' life sentence each of these individuals served before release, again classifying it by the year of conviction; and if he will also detail the number who are still serving their sentence again classified by year of conviction.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of people convicted of murder in England and Wales in each year 1965 to 1992 are tabulated below. Data on time served before release are not available in the precise form requested, but table 8.4 of "Prison statistics England and Wales 1991", Cm 2157 shows data for all life sentence prisoners received by Prison Service establishments. A copy is available in the Library of the House.

Persons convicted of murder in England and Wales 1965-1992

Year	*Numbers*
1965	57
1966	72
1967	63
1968	74
1969	75
1970	97
1971	97
1972	79
1973	90
1974	112
1975	107
1976	104
1977	115
1978	105
1979	136
1980	169
1981	126
1982	184
1983	132
1984	156

Year	Numbers
1985	173
1986	179
1987	166
1988	231
1989	189
1990	180
1991	201
1992	182

Source: Criminal Statistics, England and Wales.

DEFENCE

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department spends annually on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising and *(c)* press advertising; and what were the corresponding figures for 1985 and 1979.

Mr. Hanley: My Department's centrally controlled expenditure for advertising, broken down into media categories, for 1979-80, 1985-86 and 1992-93 and estimated expenditure for 1993-94 is as follows:

Advertising

Financial year	*Television*	*Radio*	*Press*	*Total*
1979-80	2·280	0·040	5·750	8·070
1985-86	1·820	0·020	6·820	8·660
1992-93	2·521	0·001	6·178	8·700
1993-94	2·372	Nil	6·408	8·780

Note: All figures are expressed in £ million.

Housing

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his Department's plans regarding security arrangements for housing currently occupied by armed forces personnel.

Mr. Hanley: There are no plans to change the Department's security arrangements for housing currently occupied by armed forces personnel, the details of which I am not prepared to reveal. Security is one of many factors being considered by officials looking at the proposal that a housing trust take over the management of the married quarters estate.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money he will be spending in the next two years on upgrading the physical condition of married quarters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: It is not our practice to reveal the future expenditure plans of Ministry of Defence budget holders at this level of detail.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what plans he has to ensure that the transfer of the administration of married quarters to a housing trust will not involve any change in the level of rents; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to increase the rents of married quarters.

Mr. Hanley: The rents paid by service personnel for married quarters are set on the basis of recommendations made by the armed forces pay review body. This will continue to be the case after the transfer of the married quarters estate to a housing trust. The proposed transfer will not therefore affect the method by which rents paid by individual service personnel are determined.

Tornado GR1

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what factors have been identified as possible reasons for improvement in the Tornado GR1 accident record.

Mr. Hanley: The statistical period involved is too short to draw any firm conclusions; however, the factors which may have contributed to the reduction in the Tornado GR1 accident rate include a greater level of experience among current aircrew and the increased flying hours in support of current overseas operations.

Night Low Flying (Scotland)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the nature and purpose of the night low flying without lights which took place at several locations in west and north-west Scotland in the week commencing 18 October; how many and what types of aircraft took part; how many low flying sorties were flown by each type; what proportion of these took place between the hours of 11 pm and 7 am British summer time; at what level of command authority was given for this activity; and what advance information was given to *(a)* hon. Members, *(b)* local media and *(c)* local aviation interests concerning the activity.

Mr. Hanley: It is necessary for the RAF and the Army Air Corps to practise the skills for flying a variety of operations, a number of which would involve flying under cover of darkness and without lights. A period of training to exercise such skills was held in west and north west Scotland between 16 and 28 October. The number of aircraft which took part, the total number of sorties flown and the number flown between 11 pm and 7 am were as follows:

	Total sorties	*Sorties between 11 pm and 7 am*
1 Chinook	5	3
1 Puma	11	2
5 Lynx	41	6
3 Wessex	20	0
1 Hercules	27	4
2 Tornado	17	0

The exercise was authorised at the appropriate level for such activity. My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence wrote to forewarn hon. Members for constituencies principally affected and a brief outline of the exercise was disseminated to local media by HQ Scotland and HQ North West Brigade before it began. Civil aviators were notified of the activity by the aeronautical information service in the usual way.

NATO

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will publish a summary of the United Kingdom's defence plans, together with details of those forces and capabilities that Her Majesty's Government will offer to make available to the alliance during the forthcoming year;

(2) when during 1993 NATO requested Her Majesty's Government to discuss revisions in the United Kingdom's defence plans, and the scale of military forces and capabilities which it makes available to the alliance;

(3) if all members of NATO's integrated military structure are obliged to provide annually to the alliance a detailed statement of their respective defence policies together with a disclosure of those military forces and capabilities which they intend to commit or make available to NATO during the forthcoming year;

(4) if the United Kingdom will be submitting a statement of its defence policy together with details of its military forces and capabilities which it is prepared to place at the disposal of NATO during the forthcoming year, at the Ministerial Defence Planning Committee at its meeting on 8 December;

(5) which other countries which are members of NATO's integrated military structure will be submitting a statement of their defence policies, accompanied by details of those military forces and capabilities which they are prepared to place at the disposal of the alliance during the forthcoming year, at the Ministerial Defence Planning Committee at its meeting on 8 December;

(6) if NATO may oblige any member state of the alliance's integrated military structure to discuss any significant changes in its defence plans and/or the scale of the military forces and capabilities which it makes available to NATO which it seeks to make outside of the annual review cycle conducted each autumn by the Ministerial Defence Planning Committee.

Mr. Hanley: All NATO allies who participate in collective defence planning: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States, are obliged to provide annually to the alliance a detailed statement of their defence policy and the military forces and capabilities they intend to commit to NATO. The commitment for the first year of the planning period is taken to be firm. For calendar year 1994 the United Kingdom submitted details to the alliance in July this year in its reply to the annual NATO defence planning questionnaire. An assessment of these plans will be submitted to NATO Defence Ministers at the autumn Ministerial Defence Planning Committee meeting on 8 December. These details are classified and will not be published. In exceptional circumstances the alliance may ask a nation to discuss significant changes in plans outside the annual review cycle. No such request was made of the United Kingdom during 1993.

Tendering

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to ensure that, when putting contracts out to tender, his Department includes the tender list companies which have acquired the BS5750 quality assurance standard.

Mr. Aitken: My Department maintains a list of companies interested in bidding for defence contracts, annotated to show which have achieved the BS5750 quality assurance standard. When seeking tenders for work which merits formal quality assurance procedures, we ensure that only qualified companies are invited to bid. The MOD Contracts Bulletin, which is published fortnightly, makes it clear that certification will normally be required. Since 1 September 1993 the Department has had a policy of "No Acceptable Certification—No Contract", and compliance with this policy is monitored.

Defence Costs

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will publish the full terms of reference of the defence costs study known as "Front Line First"; and what previous work will be used in the defence costs study.

Mr. Aitken: The defence costs study has been established to take a new and radical look at how the Ministry of Defence conducts its business, including procurement practice, headquarters and manpower costs and all aspects of support to the front line. The purpose will be to identify further areas where we can reduce costs, to ensure that the taxpayers' money we spend on defence is concentrated on the operational effectiveness of our front line force, and to enable our armed forces to discharge their military tasks and commitments properly, to the full and with formidable military capability. The study will build on all relevant previous work.

Ferranti International

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with the management of GEC regarding the future of Ferranti International; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The managements of both GEC and Ferranti International kept my Department informed about their discussions on the future of Ferranti. GEC's decision to make an offer for Ferranti, and its subsequent decision that the offer should lapse, were matters for its commercial judgment.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his United States of America counterpart regarding the future of Ferranti International; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no such discussions.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details of all the contracts he currently has with Ferranti International; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: It is not my Department's practice to provide details of all our contracts with a company. We have a large number of contracts with Ferranti International, covering a wide range of projects, on which, in the last financial year, we made payments of over £100 million.

Officials of my Department are discussing with the receivers of Ferranti International what can be done to minimise any disruption to the completion of our contracts.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the impact of the failure of GEC to take over Ferranti International on the defence industrial base; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: GEC's decision to let its conditional offer for Ferranti International lapse will in itself have no impact on the defence industrial base. The receivers of Ferranti International have said that they wish to restore trading to near-normality as soon as possible. Any long-term effects on the defence industrial base will depend on the outcome of the receivership.

RAF Support Command (Flying Training)

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has for the future structure of the RAF support command flying training organisation.

Mr. Hanley: As a result of the reduced training requirement for pilots and aircrew in the RAF a study has been conducted into the RAF's flying training organisation to ensure that the training is being provided in the most efficient and cost effective manner possible. The study embraced all seven flying training stations and has examined the scope for rationalisation of tasks. While work remains to be done on the scope for rationalising other types of flying training, the review has concluded that fast jet advanced flying training currently based at RAF Valley and RAF Chivenor, can be rationalised and it is proposed that the task should be centred at RAF Valley. This would mean that flying training would cease at RAF Chivenor on 1 October 1994 and that Chivenor would be placed on a care and maintenance basis from 1 October 1995.

This proposal is expected to save some £127·86 million in net present value terms over 10 years. Some 119 civilian and 779 service posts would be affected. Civilian employees would be offered the range of outplacement services available and redundancies would be kept to a minimum. Any people made redundant would be eligible for compensation under the relevant pension scheme.

This proposal will be the subject of consultation with the trade unions and other interested parties and I have placed a copy of the consultation document in the Library of the House.

Separately I have looked again at the provision of RAF search and rescue facilities in the region and have concluded that the Sea King SAR flight should continue to transfer to Chivenor next year. The move will take place by 1 July 1994 and the Wessex SAR flight currently based at Chivenor will be run on until then.

WALES

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has incorporated the code of practice for information security management, published by the British Standards Institution, into relevant contracts with information technology suppliers.

Mr. Redwood: The code of practice for information security management was developed by and established for use by commercial organisations and does not specifically address the requirements for the protection of official information. In procurement and all other aspects of IT development and operation, my Department follows the policy and guidance set down by the Government's own IT security authorities.

Tir Cymen Scheme

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the current operation of the Tir Cymen scheme in the three pilot areas in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Tir Cymen, the farm stewardship scheme developed and administered by the Countryside Council for Wales, was launched in July 1992 and operates in three pilot areas based on the local authority districts of Meirionnydd, Dinefwr and Swansea.

In the first year—from 1 October 1992 to 30 September 1993—a total of 201 Tir Cymen agreements were finalised, covering a total area of 24,897 hectares, which represents 13·75 per cent. of the eligible land area. Total payments to farmers for the first year amount to £1,497,733, of which £961,817 is for management and £535,916 is for capital works. A breakdown of the figures for the three pilot areas is given in the table:

Pilot area	*Agreements*	*Area (HA)*	*Management payment*	*Capital payment*	*total payment*
Meirionnydd	84	18,500	702,048	206,867	908,915
Dinefwr	89	5,575	224,525	277,233	501,758
Swansea	28	822	35,244	51,816	87,060
TOTAL	201	24,897	961,817	535,916	1,497,733

The response from farmers in these pilot areas has been most positive, with more than 800 inquiries being registered in the first year. A full report on the first year of operation will be published by the Countryside Council for Wales in the new year.

Press and Publicity

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many press and publicity officers are currently employed in his Department; and how many were employed in *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* 1979.

Mr. Redwood: The information is as follows:

Date	*Staff employed*
1993	14
1985	15
1979	15

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future of the hill livestock compensatory allowance scheme in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs.

Knight) by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 30 November 1993 at columns *490-91.*

Cattle Tagging

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received on the subject of cattle tagging; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: A consultation letter setting out the details of the Government's proposals for implementing the EC directive on animal identification and registration was issued earlier this year. A number of responses have been received on issues raised in the consultation exercise, including cattle tagging, and these are being considered at the moment.

National Geological Survey

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received on the future of the National Geological Survey department at Aberystwyth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Four. The proposed closure is an operational matter for the British Geological Survey and its parent council, the Natural Environment Research Council. I understand that the remaining mapping needs of Wales will in future be met by staff based at the survey's headquarters, near Nottingham.

Forest Enterprise

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what additional funding is envisaged for unitary authorities in Wales to assist them to enter into access agreements on Forest Enterprise estates being offered for sale; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend will take decisions on funding for unitary authorities at the appropriate time.

Sheep Quota

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received on the question of the operation of the siphon in the context of sheep quota where it applies to changes in existing partnerships; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Several.

Job Creation

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the percentage of new jobs created by *(a)* inward investment and *(b)* British-owned companies since 1991.

Mr. Redwood: Comprehensive information on all new jobs created by every employer in Wales is not held centrally. However, on the basis of offers of regional selective assistance made since 1 January 1991 and subsequently accepted, 41·67 per cent., or 10,348, jobs are promised in foreign-owned companies and 58·33 per cent. or 14,485 in other companies. The figures are based on information given by the relevant companies at the time of their applications and take no account of subsequent developments.

British Steel

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to meet the chairman of British Steel plc to consider the state of the industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have no immediate plans to meet the Chairman of British Steel.

Unemployment

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each constituency and county in Wales the number of long-term unemployed.

Mr. Redwood: The unemployment data requested are available from the NOMIS database, which can be accessed on line by the staff of the Library of the House.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those measures he has adopted to assist manufacturing industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: My Department and the Welsh Development Agency operate a wide range of measures to assist manufacturing industry, a number of which are focused on the key areas of improving productivity and the quality of goods.

The main assistance to Welsh manufacturing comes from the Government's general economic policy, based on low inflation and low interest rates, and a strong competition policy.

Source Wales aims to help Welsh suppliers compete worldwide and, over the last two years, 52 companies have obtained initial contracts worth about £8 million through the programme.

Support for new product development and innovation is provided through the SMART competition for small companies and through the SPUR—support for projects under research—scheme. In the past two years, 51 SMART awards totalling £2·44 million have been made and, since the start of SPUR in 1991, 24 companies have been assisted with a total grant commitment of £2·16 million.

In addition, the regional innovation grants element of the regional enterprise grants scheme aims to improve the performance of small businesses, through the introduction of successful new products and processes. The value of offers under this scheme more than doubled to £1·734 million between 1991-92 and 1992-93, and the number of applications received in the first half of 1993-94 was 5 per cent. higher than in the same period of 1992-93.

Assistance is also provided through various best practice awareness programmes, including: Managing in the 1990s, in which some 2,500 organisations have registered an interest; Inside United Kingdom Enterprise, which includes eight exemplar Welsh companies; and Inside Welsh Industry, which involves 10 Welsh demonstration companies.

The programme of regional technology transfer has included such themes as world class manufacturing, materials management and maintenance in the 26 projects supported over the past three years, with grants totalling £185,000.

Audits intended to identify technology and expertise of interest to industry have been initiated in five Welsh colleges.

My Department has also supported the work of many industry-led initiatives, such as the Wales Quality Centre, the Welsh Medical Technology Forum, and the Mid Wales Manufacturing Group.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of manufacturing jobs *(a)* created and *(b)* lost since 1 January 1991.

Mr. Redwood: Comprehensive information on the number of jobs created and lost is not available. According to the Employment Department's Quarterly Estimates Series there was a net decrease in the number of employees in manufacturing in Wales, between December 1990 and June 1993, of 28,000.

Business Closures

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of businesses that *(a)* closed down and *(b)* went bankrupt in 1988 and in 1992.

Mr. Redwood: There are no official figures for business closures. The number of companies going into liquidation due to insolvency in England and Wales was 9,427 in 1988, and 24,425 in 1992. The number of personal insolvencies, which could be classified to a trade or profession, was 5,601 in 1988 and 19,525 in 1992.

Aerospace Industry

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to meet the chairman of British Aerospace to consider the state of the industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have no plans to do so at present, but I maintain a close interest in the company's activities in Wales.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many extra people are in employment and what percentage increase that represents over those in employment in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: According to the Employment Department's Quarterly Estimates Series, the civilian work force in employment in Wales fell by 11,000 between June 1988 and June 1993. This represents a fall of 1 per cent.

Mink Farms

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many mink farms have operated in each county in Wales in each year since 1984; and what is the current figure.

Mr. Redwood: There have been no licenced mink farms in Wales from 1984 to the present.

SCOTLAND

Forestry Commission Land

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list *(a)* the name, *(b)* grid reference, *(c)* area, *(d)* date of sale and *(e)* whether formal public access agreements have been established, for each piece of land sold by the Forestry Commission since 1981.

Sir Hector Monro: Lists giving details of the areas of forest land sold by the Forestry Commission from the start of the disposals programme in July 1981 to December 1992 are held in the Library of the House. A list of the forest land sold by the commission in 1993 will be drawn up and placed in the Library in the new year.

These lists do not show grid references which could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Arrangements for securing continued public access to Forestry Commission woodlands after sale, by way of prior agreements entered into between the commission and local authorities, were introduced in October 1991. Most of the sales concluded since then were too far advanced in October 1991 to be considered for an access agreement, while most of the areas brought forward for disposal since that date have still to be sold. At the last count, access agreements had been concluded or were being negotiated in respect of 42 woodlands which were in the process of being sold, although none of these has yet been sold. Local authorities have expressed interest in negotiating agreements in over 40 other areas.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what areas of Forestry Commission land have been offered to conservation bodies.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 29 November 1993]:* At the stage when the Forestry Commission is considering selling land under its disposal programme, notices are placed in the *Estates Gazette* in respect of all woods larger than five hectares and all other land having a known conservation, recreation or amenity interest. This gives conservation or other bodies an advance opportunity to express an interest in purchase.

If the Government Department or agency responsible for the particular conservation interest concerned gives an unequivocal statement that the acquisition of a property by a conservation body would be in the public interest, and the commission agrees to a sale on these terms, it takes place at open market value.

No central record is kept of these offers and the compilation of a list would involve disproportionate cost.

Local Government

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received from Cumbernauld and Kilsyth concerning his proposals for the future structure of local government; how many of these representations favour his proposals; and how many favour Cumbernauld and Kilsyth becoming part of the proposed east Dunbartonshire council.

Mr. Stewart: Some 70 individual letters have been received from Cumbernauld and Kilsyth on the proposal to include the area within the proposed north Lanarkshire authority. In addition, about 4,000 postcards and petition signatures have been submitted. Most of these representations have asked specifically for the Kilsyth area to be included in the proposed east Dunbartonshire council.

Press and Publicity

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many press and publicity officers are currently employed in his Department; and how many were employed in *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* 1979.

Mr. Lang: The number of staff in the Information Officer grades employed, at present, in the Scottish Office information directorate is 30·5 with one vacant post. The comparable figures are 19 staff and one vacant post in 1985 and 22 staff and three vacant posts in 1979, both as at 1 April.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much his Department spends annually on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising and *(c)* press advertising; and what were the corresponding figures for 1985 and 1979.

Mr. Lang: Expenditure by my Department in 1992-93 was television advertising £831,000, radio advertising £120,000 and press advertising £415,000.

For 1988-89 to 1991-92, the figures were:

	1988-89 £	*1989-90* £	*1990-91* £	*1991-92* £
Television advertising	576,000	974,000	741,000	556,000
Radio advertising	40,000	85,000	188,000	141,000
Newspaper advertising	378,000	1,022,000	613,000	853,000

Figures in the form requested are not available for 1979-80 to 1987-88. Total expenditure on information publicity for 1979-80 was £263,000 and in 1984-85 £704,000.

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has incorporated the code of practice for information security management, published by the British Standards Institution, into relevant contracts with information technology suppliers.

Mr. Lang: The security requirements for IT systems and services used by central Government departments are stated in the Government IT security policy document. This document is supported by use of the CCTA risk analysis and management method (CRAMM) and baseline security for IT systems (BSITS) risk analysis methods and by supporting advice and guidance published by the Government IT security authorities. These are regularly reviewed to ensure best practice, have been developed specifically for use within government and have been in operation for some time. The code of practice for information security management was developed by and established for use by commercial organisations for the protection of official information.

Forestry Stewardship Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has received on the Forestry Stewardship Council.

Sir Hector Monro: I have received details of the formation of the Forest Stewardship Council, and of its aims.

Glenborrodale Castle Hotel

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was given in grant and loan assistance in respect of Glenborrodale Castle hotel by Highlands and Islands Enterprise and local enterprise companies; what steps have been taken to recover the money following disposal of the hotel to a private owner; what he estimates to be the net cost to public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No financial assistance has been given to Glenborrodale Castle hotel by Highlands and Islands Enterprise, any of its local enterprise companies or its predecessor body the Highlands and Islands development board.

Mr. Peterken

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the duration of Mr. Peterken's contract with the Scottish health service management executive; what will be the annual cost to the Exchequer; and from which budget the additional funds are to be drawn.

Mr. Lang: The duration of Mr. Peterken's contract is until 31 December 1995. The annual cost to the Exchequer will reflect Mr. Peterken's salary, which is within the range for general manager of Greater Glasgow health board—£66,949 to £83,681 from 1 September 1993—and will be met centrally.

Arable Area Scheme

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when his Department first informed the National Farmers Union of Scotland that there was the possibility of an overshoot of the base area in the non-less favoured area region of Scotland under the arable area payment scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department officials first informed the National Farmers Union of Scotland in August of the possibility of an overshoot having occurred this year in the Scottish non-less favoured area arable base area.

A77-M77 Link

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to be able to make an announcement about the A77-M77 link road.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* Discussions are taking place between the Scottish Office and Strathclyde regional council about this joint project and an announcement will be made in due course.

Appointments

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the occasions on which he has appointed a person to a post in the national health service which has not been advertised.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* Most NHS appointments are the responsibility of individual health boards and trusts. Some staff of the management executive are employees of the Common Services Agency and a number of such staff have been seconded to that body from another NHS employer without their posts being advertised.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy on recruitment of persons to posts in the NHS which have not been advertised.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* Posts in the NHS are in general filled by open advertisement or by secondment from another employer.

Health Service Management

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the management structure of the NHS in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* The management structure is published in the Civil Service Year Book 1993, a copy of which is in the Library of the House of Commons.

Nurses

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of *(a)* children's and *(b)* adult intensive care units have four or more whole time equivalent nurses per bed.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* The detailed information required to respond is not held centrally. What information is held, however, indicates that 50 per cent. of children's intensive therapy units and 61 per cent. of adult intensive therapy units have on average four or more nursing staff per occupied bed.

Smoke Detectors

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what monitoring regulations he has introduced in relation to the installation of mains-operated smoke detectors in new-build houses in *(a)* the public housing sector and *(b)* the private sector; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: With effect from 23 July 1993, applications for warrant to construct new dwellings must provide for smoke alarms to be installed in accordance with the requirements of the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations Technical Standards. The local authority will not issue a completion certificate unless the dwellings have been constructed in accordance with those standards.

The fact that smoke alarms now need to be wired to a main electricity supply should to a large extent remove any need to monitor the power supply as is the case with battery operated alarms.

There is no provision in the Building (Scotland) Act 1959 for the monitoring of the maintenance of systems but The Scottish Office Environment Department receives information about the effectiveness of the Building Standards Regulations through contacts with building control and fire authorities.

Early indications are that the new smoke alarm provisions have been well received by authorities, builders and house purchasers.

Hospital Building

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the capital allocation for the new hospital building programme announced in November 1992; and what is the current figure.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* The capital allocation figure announced in December 1992 was £180 million.

A further £5 million has become available from the current financial year for redistribution amongst health boards and trusts.

Ayrshire and Arran Health Board

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the contracts awarded by Ayrshire and Arran health board during the last 18 months; what was the nature of the contracts awarded; which organisations bid for each contract; what were the organisations holding each contract prior to them being re-awarded; when the contracts were awarded; and what periods were covered by the contracts.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 23 November 1993]:* Details of the contracts negotiated by Ayrshire and Arran health board for the year to 31 March 1994 and their nature are provided in the table below.

In the last 18 months, only urology services have been the subject of a bidding process: that process involved the South Ayrshire Hospitals NHS Trust and the North Ayrshire and Arran NHS Trust with the contract being awarded to the South Ayrshire Hospitals NHS Trust, which already held that contract, for a period to 31 March 1996.

Other changes in service provision within Ayrshire during the last 18 months were the centralisation from 1 April 1993 of ear, nose and throat and oral surgery at Crosshouse hospital under the control of the North Ayrshire and Arran NHS Trust. These services were previously provided by North Ayrshire and Arran NHS Trust and South Ayrshire Hospitals NHS Trust. These changes formed part of the board's local health strategy and had been endorsed by both trusts. These contracts were also awarded for the period to 31 March 1996.

Provider	*Nature of service*
Ayrshire and Arran Providers	
South Ayrshire Hospitals NHS Trust	Acute, Care for the Elderly
North Ayrshire and Arran NHS Trust	Acute, Care for the Elderly
Ayrshire and Arran Community Healthcare NHS Trust	Non-Acute, Mental Health, Care for the Elderly
Takare	Care for the Elderly
Providers outwith Ayrshire and Arran	
Dykebar	Mental Health
Inverclyde Royal	Acute
Royal Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust	Acute
Dumfries and Galloway Mental Health Unit	Mental Health
Dumfries and Galloway Acute Unit	Acute

Provider	*Nature of service*
Royal Scottish National Hospital and Community NHS Trust	Mental Health
Stobhill	Acute
Glasgow Royal Infirmary	Acute
Western Infirmary	Acute
Greater Glasgow Mental Health Unit	Mental Health
Yorkhill	Acute
Glasgow Care for the Elderly Unit	Care for the Elderly
Southern General	Acute
Victoria Infirmary	Acute
Stonehouse and Hairmyres	Acute
Ayr Hospice	Hospice

Public Expenditure

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the provisions he has made in his public expenditure plans for Government-supported expenditure and aggregate external finance in 1995-96 and 1996-97.

Mr. Lang: To assist local authorities in their financial planning, I have decided this year to publish planned figures for both Government supported expenditure (GSE) and aggregate external finance (AEF) for the two forward years of the Public Expenditure Survey. The figures for all three years of the survey are as follows:

	1994-95 £ million	*1995-96 £ million*	*1996-97 £ million*
GSE	6,013·6	6,175·4	6,321·1
AEF	5,272·0	5,378·1	5,494·9

The above amounts of GSE and AEF are inclusive of the following sums which relate to the transfer of resources to local authorities in respect of care in the community and the independent living fund:

1994-95 £ million	*1995-96 £ million*	*1996-97 £ million*
115·1	172·1	211·6

The underlying percentage increases in GSE and AEF, excluding the above amounts in respect of care in the community and the independent living fund, over the same three years are as follows:

	1994-95 Per cent.	*1995-96 Per cent.*	*1996-97 Per cent.*
GSE	2·25	1·79	1·77
AEF	0·97	0·97	1·48

At those levels of GSE and AEF, the average band D council tax need not increase in 1995-96 by more than the forecast inflation rate plus £10, and in 1996-97 by more than the forecast inflation rate alone.

Pending parliamentary approval to changes in organisation, GSE for 1996-97, conventionally, includes provision for local authorities' expenditure on domestic sewerage.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the provision he has made in his public expenditure plans for the costs of local government reform.

Mr. Lang: In determining the level of Government-supported expenditure (GSE) for 1994-95, which I announced on 30 November, I have included £5 million to cover costs which I expect local authorities will incur next year in preparing for local government reform. A separate grant aided expenditure (GAE) assessment will be created for this amount, which I intend will be distributed to all mainland authorities according to a standard formula. Each authority will receive a flat rate sum of £35,000 and the balance of the £5 million will be distributed amongst authorities on a per capita basis.

The precise level of the extra costs which will face authorities as a consequence of reform in 1995-96 and 1996-97 remains uncertain, and will depend on decisions taken by the new authorities. I do not expect the net costs to exceed £30 to £35 million in either year. In determining the planned level of GSE for these years I have assumed that the existing local authorities will incur local government reform costs of £25 million in 1995-96 and £55 million in 1996-97, and that in the latter year there will also be savings of £40 million. The proposed new authorities would therefore incur net reform costs of £15 million in 1996-97. In subsequent years there would be significant net savings. I shall of course continue to consult the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities each year before determining the local government finance settlement.

Entirely outside the settlement I am providing a total of £1·5 million over the three years to cover the costs of the Staff Commission which I intend to establish to assist the reform process, and a further £23 million in 1995-96 to cover the estimated costs of the proposed new authorities during their shadow period.

I believe that these plans make realistic provision for the transitional costs of local government reform, and demonstrate that allegations that the cost of reform will fall entirely on the council tax are completely without foundation.

HEALTH

Community Health Councils

11. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations she has received regarding the merger of community health councils.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales recently met the deputy chief executive of the National Health Service Management Executive and, among other things, raised the issue of CHC mergers. We also received a letter from the association which touched on this subject, among others.

Hospital Closures, Birmingham

12. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received in the last three months regarding hospital closures in Birmingham.

Mr. Sackville: We have received correspondence from a number of people in the west midlands about this issue.

Guy's and St. Thomas's Hospitals

15. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the proposals from the trust board of Guy's and St. Thomas's to remain on two sites.

Dr. Mawhinney: The trust board's outline business case is being assessed by the south NHS Management Executive outpost on behalf of the London implementation group and it would be premature to make a statement before this assessment work is concluded.

"Making London Worse"

16. **Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response she has made to the recommendations laid out in the report, "Making London Worse", produced by the Greater London Association of Community Health Councils, a copy of which has been sent to her.

Dr. Mawhinney: We welcome the views of any informed contributor such as the Greater London Association of Community Health Councils on the process of developing London's health services through positive change. We have no plans to make any specific response to this report, but will of course consider it carefully, against the Government's strategy which is set out in "Making London Better".

Adoption Panels

17. **Mr. Nicholls:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she intends to strengthen adoption panels.

Mr. Bowis: We shall consult on this in the new year. We propose to introduce more independent panel members, including adoptive parents and representatives from local interests, such as magistrates committees.

Private Care Homes

18. **Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the deregulation of private care and nursing homes.

Mr. Bowis: The Government are committed to ensuring that the interests of residents of residential care and nursing homes are protected and that they receive the care they need in well-run homes.

We have no doubt that regulation to underpin this objective will continue to be necessary, but we are seeking to remove unnecessary controls and to improve the way in which essential regulation is applied and enforced. Any proposed changes would be subject to consultation.

Deaths

19. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths there were in *(a)* the first and *(b)* third quarter of 1992 for (i) Britain and (ii) the Northern region.

Mr. Bowis: In the quarter to March 1992, there were 156,060 deaths in England and Wales of which 10,583 occurred in the northern region. The comparative figures for the September quarter were 125,301 deaths and 8,246 deaths respectively.

Queen Elizabeth II Hospital

20. **Ms Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has made a decision on the future of the Queen Elizabeth II hospital; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The future provision of childrens' services in east London will be considered in the light of the findings of a study of these services currently being carried out by the East London and City health authority. This will be completed by the end of January 1994.

NHS Purchasing

21. **Ms Estelle Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to monitor contracts between purchasers and provider units and to ensure that adequate funds are available for the remainder of the financial year.

Dr. Mawhinney: The National Health Service Management Executive issued guidance on monitoring contracts earlier this year. Recent evidence indicates that generally hospitals are managing their workload smoothly. Local managers are taking the necessary action to ensure activity remains within contract.

Dermatology Provision, Sheffield

22. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on dermatology provision in Sheffield.

Mr. Sackville: Between April and October, dermatologists in Sheffield treated in excess of 16,800 out-patients. In line with patients charter standards, there are no patients waiting more than 18 months for dermatology treatment.

Female Consultants

23. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the 1994 target for female consultants within the NHS; how many there are at present; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Goal 3 of the National Health Service Opportunity 2000 initiative is that by 1994 the percentage of women consultants in England should be 20 per cent. Figures for September 1992 show 2,739 female hospital consultants in England, representing 16·3 per cent. of all hospital consultants.

Clinical Audit

24. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made on establishing clinical audit.

Dr. Mawhinney: Over the past four years considerable work has been done on developing medical, nursing and therapy and primary care audit programmes. Multi-professional clinical audit programmes will contribute greatly to continuing improvement in the quality of patient care.

Hospital Waiting Lists

25. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients are currently waiting for hospital treatment.

Dr. Mawhinney: Provisional figures for the quarter ending 30 September are available in the Library. These show that regions are meeting the patients charter guarantee that all patients will be seen within a maximum of two years. In addition, no patient has to wait longer than 18 months for hip or knee replacements or cataract surgery.

GP Fund Holders

13. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what alternatives to general practice fund-holding her Department has costed.

Dr. Mawhinney: All general practitioner practices should be involved in purchasing decisions through their district health authorities, but this is no substitute for fundholding which enables GPs to improve services for their patients by directly managing resources. That is why ever-increasing numbers of GPs are joining the scheme.

26. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of the population of Derbyshire is covered by fund-holding doctors' practices.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not available centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to contact Sir Michael Carlisle, chairman of Trent regional health authority, for details.

Nurses

27. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nurses are employed in NHS hospitals within the Liverpool area health authority.

Mr. Sackville: There were 5,030 whole-time equivalent nursing and midwifery staff, excluding agency staff, employed by the national health service within the Liverpool district health authority area at 30 September 1992, the latest figures available.

Transitional Community Care Grant

28. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received regarding the requirement for local authorities to spend 85 per cent. of special transitional community care grant in the independent sector.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) on 6 December.

London NHS (Debts)

29. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assistance she is giving to London NHS trust and district health authorities to help them resolve their debt problems.

Dr. Mawhinney: As part of the overall resources required for the implementation of "Making London Better", transitional funds have been made available to support London hospitals who have lost contract income from purchasers and to meet the costs of staff redeployment or unavoidable redundancies.

Health Care (North West Thames)

30. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in improving primary and community health care in the North West Thames region.

Dr. Mawhinney: North West Thames regional health authority has committed £9 million this year to developing primary care and community services. In addition, £5 million has been provided from central sources to fund new primary care developments in their part of the London initiative zone. The regional health authority has also recently agreed a comprehensive programme to close all its large mental illness and learning disability hospitals by the year 2000, and to replace them with a full range of local community-based services.

"The Health of the Nation"

Mr. Olner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to revise "The Health of the Nation" targets.

Mr. Sackville: "The Health of the Nation" is a long-term strategy, with targets up to 17 years ahead, and we have made good progress in the first year. There is no need to revise the targets; they remain the right ones.

NHS Complaints Procedures

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to publish the report of the review committee into NHS complaints procedures.

Dr. Mawhinney: I understand that Professor Wilson and his colleagues plan to submit their recommendations to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State at the beginning of February. Decisions on publication will be made at that time.

Prescriptions

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the number of prescriptions, *(b)* total expenditure and *(c)* expenditure per head of population served for (i) sunscreens and similar protection and (ii) vitamins and dietary supplements for 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is shown in the table.

England 1992 figures	*Prescriptions (thousands)*	*Net ingredient cost (£ thousands)*	*Net ingredient cost per head of population (£)*
Sunscreening preparations	81·1	395·0	8·16
Vitamins and dietary supplements	5,833·3	51,009·2	1·05

Notes:

1. The data cover all prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors, dispensing doctors, and prescriptions submitted by prescribing doctors for items personally administered.
2. The data are based on September 1991 British National Formulary section 13.8.1.
3. For net ingredient cost per head Office Population of Censuses and Surveys 1991 mid year resident population projections for 1992 have been used.

Medical Cards

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to change the numbers of any NHS medical cards; and what will be the cost of the changes.

Mr. Sackville: By July 1995, we will have started to replace the present national health service number where it is currently in use with one with a more suitable format. Medical cards will record the replacement number when they are reissued after this date.

The number is being replaced as part of a wider programme to make the new format number the common patient identifier for the NHS. The costs of this programme are estimated at £22 million at today's prices, over the period 1992 to 1995.

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she has incorporated the code of practice for information security management, published by the British Standards Institution, into relevant contracts with information technology suppliers.

Mr. Sackville: The security requirements for information technology systems and services used by central Government Departments are stated in the HMG IT security policy document. This document is supported by use of the CCTA risk analysis and management method and baseline security for IT systems risk analysis methods, by the communications electronic security group memorandum No. 10 where appropriate and by supporting advice and guidance published by the HMG IT security authorities. These are regularly reviewed to ensure best practice, have been developed specifically for use within Government and have been in operation for some time. The code of practice for information security management was developed by and established for use by commercial organisations and does not specifically address the requirements for the protection of official information.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 29 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *307*, if she will list those district health authorities that *(a)* gain and *(b)* lose under the mortality weighted population projections for 1991 to 1996.

Dr. Mawhinney: The district health authority weighted capitation shares were obtained from the regional health authorities. Each region has its own weighted capitation formula for determining the shares of its districts. We do not hold centrally all of the information which would be required to model the effects of population changes on individual DHA shares.

Women's Refuges

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress she is making towards achieving a comprehensive network of women's refuge provision; in which borough areas such a provision currently does not exist; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Earlier this year, the Government published their response—HC 245—to the Home Affairs Select Committee's report on domestic violence. The Select Committee did not recommend that central Government should make more funds available to local refuges. Funding at a local level is a consideration for local authorities and other agencies who are best placed to make decisions on local need and provision.

The need for improved co-ordination of refuge provision is an area which will be given early consideration by members of the ministerial group on domestic violence at its forthcoming inaugural meeting.

Information relating to local refuge provision is not available centrally.

Herbs

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response she has made to the publication by the European Community Committee for Proprietary Medicinal Products of a list of herbs which have been banned in other European countries; if she will make it her policy to oppose any such ban on products containing these common herbs in this country; and to ensure that right hon. and hon. Members are kept informed of such proposals emanating from the different agencies of the European Community.

Mr. Sackville: No response was called for, and none has been made. The list is simply a factual record, for information, of herbs that have already been withdrawn from medicinal products for safety reasons in one or more member states. We are not aware of any current proposals for further action in the European Community.

The Government's policy on the licensing of medicinal products is that they must demonstrate acceptable standards of safety, quality and efficacy. This will continue to be applied.

Private Medical Insurance

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people *(a)* have and *(b)* do not have private medical insurance by age group, social class and gender.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

"Changing Childbirth"

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research and audit projects her Department has commissioned, and from whom, to evaluate the recommendations made by the expert maternity group in its report "Changing Childbirth"; and what role the national perinatal epidemiology unit will take in the evaluation.

Mr. Sackville: The consultation period for "Changing Childbirth", the report of the expert maternity group, ended on 29 October. Ministers are currently considering the comments received before deciding on future action. Decisions on any evaluation projects to be undertaken will be made as part of this process.

Copies of "Changing Childbirth" are available in the Library.

Sensitive Documents Unit

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the operation of her Department's sensitive documents unit; how many staff are employed in its operation; and approximately how many documents per annum come within its purview.

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Health does not operate a sensitive documents unit. All documents raised within the Department are public records under the terms of the Public Record Acts 1958 and 1967, and have varying degrees of sensitivity.

The Department has a departmental records officer who is responsible for systems for the control of all documents from the time of their creation to final disposal.

In the course of the Department's business, hundreds of thousands of records come within the departmental records officer's purview each year.

Extra-contractual Referrals

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many extra-contractual referrals were refused by each health authority in 1990-91 and 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Mental Health Care

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) in relation to each regional health authority area in England how many mentally ill patients from that region were in low security places on 30 June; how many of those patients were in private sector facilities; how many patients were waiting for a community place; and how many of the patients were, in the opinion of their responsible medical officer, fit to move to a community place;

(2) in relation to each regional health authority area in England how many people with learning disabilities are assessed as *(a)* requiring treatment or care in high security, *(b)* requiring treatment or care in medium security and *(c)* requiring treatment or care in low security; how many such people are currently detained in *(d)* high security, *(e)* medium security and *(f)* low security, in relation to those currently detained in secure facilities; how many are currently considered to be in unsuitable facilities; and how many are being cared for in secure private facilities;

(3) in relation to each regional health authority area in England what is the estimated number of people in the region assessed as needing treatment for psychopathic disorder; how many of these detained in secure NHS psychiatric facilities, or in other NHS psychiatric facilities as in-patients, are in touch with other NHS psychiatric facilities as outpatients, or are in local social services authority facilities; how many are in prison; and how many are in private sector health care or other facilities;

(4) in relation to each regional health authority area in England how many mentally ill patients from each region were in medium secure provision on 30 June; how many were in private sector facilities; how many were waiting for admission to less secure accommodation and how many waiting to be discharged to a community place; and how many were, in the opinion of their responsible medical officer, fit to move to less secure accommodation;

(5) in relation to each regional health authority area in England, how many mentally ill patients from each region were in special hospitals on 30 June and which special hospitals they were in; how many of the patients detained in special hospitals were, in the opinion of their responsible medical officer, ready to move to less secure accommodation; how many patients from each region were authorised for discharge but remained in the special hospital; how long each of these patients had been waiting for discharge; what had prevented discharge in each case; what arrangements are in place to ensure that patients in special hospitals are able to be discharged within a year of discharge being authorised; and how these arrangements will be developed to meet the six month maximum waiting time referred to in the NHS planning guidance for 1994-95.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not collected on a routine basis but regional directors of public health were asked in the Department of Health's letter, EL(93)68, to undertake an assessment of needs in their regions, including the numbers of patients needing mental health care at the different levels of security. We are awaiting the full results of this exercise. Copies of the letter (EL(93)68) are available in the Library.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will announce *(a)* changes to prescription charges and *(b)* changes in the proportion of costs paid by dental patients for 1994-95.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 3 December at column *805.*

Hospices

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of hospice beds in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the number of hospice in-patient beds in each of the last five years in England is shown in the table.

Year[1]	*Number of hospice beds*[2]
1989	1,863
1990	2,093
1991	2,171
1992	2,321
1993	2,409

[1] Figures collected in January of each year.

[2] In-patient, England.

Source: St. Christopher's Hospice Information Service.

NHS Trusts

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 1 December, *Official Report,* columns *583-84,* if she will list the remuneration of the chairman of each NHS trust in England.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not available centrally.

National health service trust chairmen's remuneration is paid on the basis of the following bands:

Unit turnover 1988-89	*Band*	*Rates per annum (£)*
In excess of £50 million	Band 1	19,285
Between £20 million and £50 million	Band 2	17,145
Less than £20 million	Band 3	15,125

Administrators

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many new management posts have been created since the NHS reforms; and what they cost.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Surgical Operations

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have now been waiting for more than a year for their operation.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on waiting times for in-patient and day case treatment is given in "Hospital Waiting List Statistics: England", which is published twice yearly. The latest published figures are for March 1993. In addition provisional figures for the quarter ending 30 September 1993 were published on 1 November, in press release H93/1036. Copies of both documents are available in the Library.

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many routine operations have now been suspended until the next financial year.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Cervical Smear Tests

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what advice her Department issues on methods to be adopted in carrying out cervical smear tests;

(2) what action she proposes to take following the findings of the report of the Northern regional health authority on the recall of Dr. Lustman's patients for repeat cervical smears that methods varied according to socio-economic group.

Mr. Sackville: In 1988 the Department of Health circulated to all health authorities the report of an intercollegiate working party on cervical cytology screening which includes guidance on the taking of cervical smears. HSG(93)41 issued in August 1993 updates earlier guidance on the cervical cancer screening programme. This refers both to accepted clinical guidance issued by the British Society for Clinical Cytology on the taking of cervical smears and fail-safe mechanisms for their follow-up. Copies of both documents are available in the Library. All women should have access to the same high standard of service regardless of socio-economic group. It is unacceptable to use an inferior method on such grounds. Variations from the standard method for taking cervical smears are acceptable only on clinical grounds, or where the patient makes an informed choice, in full possession of the clinical facts.

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she proposes to take following the publication of the report of the Northern regional health authority on the recall of Dr. Lustman's patients for repeat cervical smears; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the Northern regional health authority and Gateshead family health services authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairmen for details.

General Practitioners

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice she intends to issue to consultants on the importance of absolute accuracy and clarity in their advice and/or comments relating to methods adopted by general practitioners.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice she intends to issue to family health services authorities on the importance of verifying verbal assurances from general practitioners that their methods are supported by consultants.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Family Health Services Authorities (Training)

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what training provision in techniques for thoroughness she intends to provide for family health services authority members engaged in practice visits;

(2) what advice she intends to issue to family health services authorities on the importance of keeping accurate records of findings following FHSA practice visits.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Immunisation

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what immunisations her Department recommends for children under five travelling to Nigeria.

Mr. Sackville: A United Kingdom resident child should have been immunised routinely against diphtheria, tetanus, polio, whooping cough, measles, mumps, rubella and haemophilus influenzae b. Recommendations for travel, in addition to the above immunisations, will depend on factors such as purpose of visit—holiday or parents' occupation—length of stay, area to be visited and season of the year. They include, for Nigeria, hepatitis A human normal immunoglobulin, or hepatitis A vaccine where prolonged protection is required, typhoid—but not for infants under 12 months of age—yellow fever—but not for infants under nine months of age—and meningococcal meningitis. Advice in specific cases should be sought from a general practitioner or travel clinic.

Regional Health Authorities

Sir Donald Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial allocations each regional health authority will receive in 1994-95.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I am today sending each regional health authority details of their main revenue allocations for resident population. These are set out in table 1. They are provisional until Parliament approves the relevant supply estimate.

Regions are to receive an average cash increase of 5·4 per cent., and I have decided that all regions should get a minimum increase of 0·7 per cent. above forecast inflation.

This will enable all regions to make faster progress towards equalisation of resources at district health authority level.

Table 2 sets out the main capital planning totals for each region. Regional health authorities and National Health

Service Management Executive outposts will be giving me agreed proposals for how much of these planning totals should be spent by trusts and how much by health authorities. These will form the basis of external financing limits for trusts and capital cash limits for regional health authorities.

Table 3 sets out the cash-limited resources being made available to fund general practice expenditure. This will fund practice staff in fund-holding and non-fund-holding practices, premises improvements costs, and non-fund-holding computer costs. This represents a cash increase of 5·9 per cent.

Table 1
Regional health authority allocations
1994-95

Revenue allocations for resident populations

	Allocation for resident populations £'000s	*Percentage cash increase Per cent.*
Northern	1,219,112	5·10
Yorkshire	1,406,336	5·32
Trent	1,767,925	5·65
East Anglian	748,471	6·17
North West Thames	1,352,165	4·74
North East Thames	1,561,379	4·74
South East Thames	1,519,821	5·58
South West Thames	1,163,130	4·74
Wessex	1,136,485	6·43
Oxford	843,071	6·05
South Western	1,253,144	5·67
West Midlands	1,960,156	5·64
Mersey	932,826	4·87
North Western	1,583,160	5·14
ENGLAND	18,447,181	5·38

Table 2
NHS regional main capital planning totals for 1994-95

Region (both trusts and RHAs)	*Capital planning Total £000s*
Northern	100,462
Yorkshire	117,127
Trent	147,872
East Anglian	64,514
North West Thames	97,719
North East Thames	111,800
South East Thames	115,243
South West Thames	86,069
Wessex	96,881
Oxford	73,650
South Western	106,657
West Midlands	162,940
Mersey	76,509
North Western	129,970
ENGLAND	1,487,413

Table 3
General medical services cash limited allocations for 1994-95

Regions	*Allocation at 1994-95 prices (£000s)*	*Increase over 1993-94 cash Percentage*
Northern	39,415	7·4
Yorkshire	49,372	4·4
Trent	63,125	6·2
East Anglian	36,558	4·0
North West Thames	51,342	4·0
North East Thames	53,862	7·3
South East Thames	55,404	5·9
South West Thames	43,632	7·0
Wessex	43,478	4·0
Oxford	38,215	4·0
South Western	55,385	4·0
West Midlands	64,533	7·3
Mersey	31,814	5·9
North Western	48,261	10·2
ENGLAND	674,396	5·9

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensioner Incomes

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been *(a)* the mean and *(b)* the median increase each year from 1979 to 1990-91 in the incomes of (i) single male pensioners aged 65-74, (ii) single female pensioners aged 60-74, (iii) all single pensioners under 75, (iv) pensioner couples under 75, (v) single male pensioners aged 75 and over, (vi) single female pensioners aged 75 and over, (vii) all single pensioners aged 75 and over and (viii) pensioner couples aged 75 years and over; and in each case for which the figures are available if he will break the figures down by quintile groups.

Mr. Hague: The answer is in the tables.

Change in pensioner incomes from 1979 to 1990-1

	Per cent. increase in median per year	*Per cent. increase in mean per year*
Single men aged 65-74	2·4	2·9
Single men over 75	2·1	3·0
Single women over 75	1·6	2·2
Couples over 75[1]	2·5	3·8

	Q1	*Q2*	*Q3*	*Q4*	*Q5*	*All*
All singles over 75						
Per cent. increase in median per year	1·0	1·7	2·1	2·8	5·1	2·1
Per cent. increase in mean per year	0·2	1·2	1·9	2·4	3·9	3·0
Couples[1] under 75						
Per cent. increase in median per year	1·1	1·8	2·6	3·2	3·6	2·6
Per cent. increase in mean per year	2·4	1·5	2·2	2·9	2·9	3·0
All singles under 75						
Per cent. increase in median per year	1·2	2·0	2·2	3·0	4·6	2·2
Per cent. increase in mean per year	0·2	1·8	2·1	2·5	3·7	3·3

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	All
Single women aged 60-74						
Per cent. increase in median per year	1·1	2·0	2·1	2·7	4·3	2·1
Per cent. increase in mean per year	1·0	1·8	2·1	2·4	3·6	3·2

Note: Income is net before housing costs income. Because of small sample size, it has not been possible to provide all of the information in the form requested. Such information as is provided is liable to error due to small sample groups.

[1] Husband's age specified

Source: Family Expenditure Surveys 1979 and 1990-91

Benefit Statistics

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will disaggregate the total expenditure figures in table 1 of "The Growth of Social Security," in order to show the different growth rates of *(a)* national insurance basic retirement pension, *(b)* national insurance unemployment benefit, *(c)* naational insurance invalidity benefit, *(d)* family allowance/child benefit, *(e)* national assistance/supplementary benefit/income support, *(f)* one-parent benefit, *(g)* housing benefits and *(h)* rate rebates/community charge benefit.

Mr. Scott: The information requested in relation to national insurance basic retirement pension, national insurance unemployment benefit and family allowance/child benefit is in the table. Invalidity benefit and one-parent benefit were introduced in 1971 and 1980 respectively and information about growth in expenditure on these is in table 9a of "The Growth of Social Security." Meaningful comparisons of the growth rates since 1949 in national assistance/supplementary benefit/income support, housing benefit and rate rebates/community charge benefit are not possible because of changes in the structure of provision in the benefit system.

Real growth in social security benefit expenditure

£ billion (1992-93 prices)

	1949-50[1]	1959-60[1]	1969-70[1]	1979-80	1989-90	1992-93[2]
Total expenditure	10·3	15·4	27·2	44·9	59·7	74·1
of which						
basic retirement pension	4·4	7·9	13·3	21·1	24·1	25·5
unemployment benefit	0·3	0·6	1·1	1·6	0·9	1·8
family allowance/child benefit	1·1	1·6	2·9	6·7	5·4	5·8
Index of expenditure in real terms (1949-50=100) total	100	150	264	436	580	719
basic retirement pension	100	180	302	480	548	580
unemployment benefit	100	200	367	533	300	600
family allowance/child benefit	100	145	264	609	491	527
Expenditure as a percentage of GDP total	4·7	5·3	7·0	9·0	9·5	12·3
basic retirement pension	2·0	2·7	3·4	4·2	3·8	4·2
unemployment benefit	0·1	0·2	0·3	0·3	0·1	0·3
family allowance/child benefit	0·5	0·6	0·7	1·3	0·9	1·0

[1] Benefit expenditure data refers to 1949, 1959 and 1969 respectively.

[2] Provisional.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received regarding financial difficulties facing people who have been in private care or nursing homes since before 1 April.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 6 December.

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has incorporated the code of practice for information security management, published by the British Standards Institution, into relevant contracts with information technology suppliers.

Mr. Hague: The security requirements for IT systems and services used by central Government departments are stated in the Government IT security policy document. This document is supported by use of the CCTA risk analysis and management method (CRAMM) and baseline security for IT systems (BSITS) risk analysis methods and by supporting advice and guidance published by the Government IT security authorities. These are regularly reviewed to ensure best practice and have been developed specifically for use within Government and have been in operation for some time. The Department of Social Security's IT security standards have been devised in accordance with the above, and the need for compliance with them is being referenced in relevant contracts.

The code of practice for information security management was developed by and established for use by commercial organisations and does not specifically address the requirements for the protection of official information.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the operation of his Department's sensitive documents unit; how many staff are employed in its operation; and approximately how many documents per annum come within its purview.

Mr. Hague: The Department of Social Security does not operate a sensitive documents unit. However, all documents raised within the Department are public records under the terms of the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967, and have varying degrees of sensitivity. The Department has a departmental records officer, who is responsible for systems for the control of all documents from the time of their creation to final disposal. In the course of the Department's business, millions of records come within the departmental records officer's purview each year.

Press and Publicity

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many press and publicity officers are currently employed in his Department; and how many were employed in *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* 1979.

Mr. Scott: The numbers are:

Headquarters—22
Benefits Agency—21
Child Support Agency—3
Contributions Agency—1

Before 1988 the Department was part of DHSS and separate figures for Social Security are not available.

Social Fund

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many homeless people, who are living in hostels on a temporary basis, have applied for but have been refused a social fund community care grant or loan; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many refugees have, following an offer of permanent accommodation, applied for but been refused social fund start-up grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Michael Bichard, Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Family Credit

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many lone parents currently receive family credit.

Mr. Burt: The number of lone parents in receipt of family credit was 206,000 at the latest available date.

Source: 5 per cent. sample of family credit recipients at 30 April 1993.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing the proposed family credit ceilings in 1994-95 for each of *(a)* a married couple with one child aged under five years, *(b)* a married couple with two children aged under 11 years, *(c)* a married couple with two children aged over 11 years, *(d)* a married couple with three children aged under 11 years, *(e)* a married couple with three children aged over 11 years and *(f)* a married couple with two children aged under 11 years and two children aged over 11 years.

Mr. Burt: At the new benefit levels proposed for April 1994, the family credit ceilings represented by the highest amount of net earnings and other relevant income a family can have and still qualify for family credit at the minimum payment of 50p will be as follows:

	£
Married couple with one child under 5 years	150·27
Married couple with two children under 11	166·27
Married couple with two children over 11 (but under 16)	187·27
Married couple with three children under 11	182·27
Married couple with three children over 11 (but under 16)	213·77
Married couple with two children under 11 and two children over 11 (but under 16)	219·27

Relevant income excludes child benefit, which is disregarded for family credit purposes. Therefore, in addition to the amounts above, a one-child family will have £10·25 child benefit, a two-child family £18·45, a three-child family £26·70 and a four-child family £34·95. Relevant income also excludes the first £15 of any maintenance payable.

From October 1994, up to £40 a week will be disregarded in the calculation of net earnings in respect of formal childcare costs incurred where there is a child under 11 in the family of a couple where both are working, or where one is working and the other is incapacitated, increasing the potential ceilings still further. The disregard will also apply to lone parent families.

Lone Parent Families

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many lone parent families, headed by a mother under the age of 21 years are currently in receipt of *(a)* family credit, *(b)* housing benefit and *(c)* disability working allowance.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table:

Lone parent mothers under the age of 21

Type of benefit	*Numbers*	*Date*
Family Credit	1,240	30 April 1993
Housing Benefit	36,000	May 1992[1]
Disability Working Allowance	Nil	30 June 1993

[1] Sample taken May 1992.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many lone parent families are currently headed by a mother in receipt of disability working allowance.

Mr. Scott: There are 266 such families.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many lone parent families currently receive housing benefit.

Mr. Burt: The number of lone parents in receipt of housing benefit in Great Britain in May 1992—the latest date for which figures are available—was approximately 816,000.

Unemployment

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) at what level, in current prices, he intends to set the rates of the recently announced job seekers allowance for an unemployed person under 25 years of age who *(a)* would currently qualify for unemployment benefit and *(b)* would currently only qualify for income support;

(2) what is the current payment to a single, unemployed person under 25 years of age if he or she *(a)* qualifies for unemployment benefit and *(b)* is able to claim only income support.

Mr. Burt: The rates for job seeker's allowance for those under 25 years of age will be announced at the appropriate time before April 1996. It is intended that these will be based upon income support levels. The current levels of benefit are given, with the rates that will apply from April 1994 shown in parentheses.

An unemployed person under 25 years who qualifies solely for unemployment benefit and has no overlapping social security benefit is paid £44·65 (£45·45) a week.

If entitled to income support, the rate of personal allowance would be £34·80 (£36·15) if aged between 18 and 24, or £26·45 (£27·50) if aged 16 or 17. The higher rate of £34·80 (£36·15) also applies to people aged 16 or 17 who are of necessity living independently.

Disability

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the number of people in receipt of disability living allowance, for each component and attendance allowance, for each component in *(a)* the London borough of Newham, *(b)* the Wembley disability benefits centre and *(c)* nationally.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance and attendance allowance are matters for Mr. Michael Bichard, the Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. Tony Banks, dated 6 December 1993:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking what are the number of people in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA), for each component and Attendance Allowance (AA), for each component in *(a)* the London Borough of Newham, *(b)* the Wembley Disability Benefits Centre (DBC) and *(c)* nationally.

The information that you have requested for people in the London Borough of Newham and also for DLA payments in the area covered by Wembley DBC are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, the information in the following table answers a part of your question. The latest available figures are for quarter ending 31 March 1993.

DLA

	National
Care Component	
Higher rate care	206,000
Middle rate care	293,000
Lower rate care	154,000
Total	653,000
Mobility Component	
Higher rate mobility	887,000
Lower rate mobility	145,000
Total	1,032,000

For AA there is only one component which is care, although there are two rates for which I have provided details.

	National	*Wembley DBC*
Higher rate	368,000	51,000
Lower rate	522,000	78,000
Total	890,000	129,000

All figures are provisional and are rounded to the nearest thousand.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has formed of the effect of the change in weather stations used for the calculation of the cold weather payments for Ayrshire during the recent cold spell.

Mr. Scott: The administration of cold weather payments is a matter for Michael Bichard, the Chief Executive to the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. George Foulkes, dated 6 December 1993:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about the effect of the change in weather stations used for the calculation of Cold Weather Payments for Ayrshire.

The reason for the change of weather station for Ayrshire was the closure of the station at Prestwick. Prestwick station no longer provides any data to the Meteorological Office and it is therefore not possible to say if Prestwick would have triggered any Cold Weather Payments in the recent cold weather.

The replacement station for that part of the mainland affected by the change (Postcodes KA1-26 and KA28-30) is Glasgow Airport. This weather station has triggered cold weather payments for the period 19 November to 25 November, when the running seven-day mean temperature was –0·3 degrees Centigrade. These payments have now been issued.

The only part of Prestwick's old area not covered by the Glasgow weather station is the Isle of Arran (Postcode KA27), which was reassigned to the weather station at Macrihanish. Macrihanish station has not triggered any payments yet this winter. The running seven-day mean temperature ending 25 November 1993, was 3·4 degrees Centigrade.

Information provided by the Meteorological Office is that the Glasgow station historically records lower temperatures than Prestwick and is, therefore, more likely to trigger payments. The Meteorological Office have also informed us that the weather station at Macrihanish best reflects the weather on the Isle of Arran.

I hope that this reply has been helpful.

"Quarterly" and "Challenge"

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out the annual cost of the publication of *(a)* "Quarterly" and *(b)* "Challenge" magazines.

Mr. Hague: The cost of "Quarterly" magazine for the last full financial year was: £125,528·75. The estimated cost in 1993-94 is: £119,783·60.

There has been only one issue of "Challenge" magazine, which was published at a cost of £9,500.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to announce the outcome of his review of the workings of the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Agency was set up to secure more maintenance, more reliably, for more children and that is what it is doing. We have been examining the comments and concerns being raised about some of the aspects of the scheme and will consider carefully the recommendations of the Social Security Select Committee, to which a response will be given in due course.

Income Support

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by each parliamentary constituency in the city of Birmingham the number of persons without accommodation claiming income support at the latest convenient date and 12 and 24 months earlier.

Mr. Burt: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many industrial disablement claims for asbestos-related diseases referred to special medical boards, and the numbers in which the diseases were diagnosed in each year since 1991 in the same format as tables given in reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) of 28 January 1992, *Official Report,* columns *514-16.*

Mr. Scott *[pursuant to his reply, 25 November 1993, column 174]:* The information given contained a typographical error. The figure in the 1992 table for Newcastle under "References" column D1 should read 285, not 205 as shown. This does not affect the totals.

EMPLOYMENT

Deregulation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what response he has made to the report on deregulation, produced by the GMB trade union, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have seen and read the report, and have written to Mr. Edmonds, General Secretary of the General, Municipal and Boilermakers Union—GMB—in the following terms:

> Your letter of 18 November to the Secretary of State enclosed a copy of your document "Freedom to Kill? The Case Against Deregulation". I understand that your colleague Mr. Nigel Bryson has already received comments on your document from Frank Davies, Chairman of the Health and Safety Commission (HSC) and Mr. John Rimington, Director-General of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).
>
> As you know, the review arises from an invitation from me to the HSC earlier this year, asking them to look at health and safety regulation with the aim of reducing any undue burdens which it may impose on business, especially small firms. As you said in your letter, the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act has provided a sensible framework for improvements to safety in the workplace. HSC accepted my invitation in the context of its mandate under section 1 of the Act to remove outdated, unnecessary and technologically redundant legislation from the statute book. The review builds upon and continues that work.
>
> I was therefore astounded to read your report's confused account of the HSC Review of Regulations. I find it surprising that the GMB should wish to mislead the public on such important work, the aim of which is to develop an even more effective health and safety legislative framework. More surprisingly still, the report makes a barely concealed attack upon the integrity of the HSC, an *independent tripartite body.*
>
> I should not need to remind you that the seven Sector Task Groups, which are helping the HSC take the work of the review forward, have trade union members (including one from the GMB); and the Steering Group for the Review, under the Chairmanship of Miss Jenny Bacon, one of the HSE's Deputy Directors General, contains representatives from the TUC. It says little for your confidence in your colleagues if you endorse the conclusions of the report that there is a "hidden agenda" or "predetermined outcome."
>
> There is certainly no intention of increasing "freedom for employers to go back to 19th century working conditions" now, or at any time in the future. Two Press Notices were issued recently, in response to garbled Press accounts of what was supposedly in the Deregulation Bill, which made this perfectly clear.
>
> Indeed I believe that if people find it easier to understand their legal obligations as a result of the review of regulations currently being undertaken by HSC, they will be better able to comply —and that has to result in better health and safety standards for workers. Some employers have argued that section 1 (2) of the 1974 Act inhibits sensible legislative change. The HSC review is looking at this, and the Government will decide what if anything to do in the light of this and any other evidence. In the meantime, I await the advice of the HSC.
>
> HSC has already emphasised that the review needs to look not only at the substance of individual regulations but at the broader aspects of the regulatory regime. This includes: how to reduce the burden of paperwork imposed on business by health and safety regulations; the enforcement practices of HSE and local authority inspectors; and the further consolidation of all health and safety legislation to produce a simpler legislative framework designed to maintain or improve the standards of health and safety.
>
> Any proposals for legislative change arising from the review will themselves be subject to the usual consultation procedures. *Good standards of health and safety save business money* in terms of less lost production due to accidents and so on. They also prevent illness, death and injury which costs individuals and the community dear. In simplifying and clarifying the requirements of the law, a system of regulation will be created which is easier for everyone to understand and easier for employers in particular to comply with. I am disappointed that the GMB does not appear to be able to agree with that aim.

Workplace Nurseries

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workplace nursery facilities have been financially assisted from Government resources; and if he will list where each is located.

Miss Widdecombe: Since 1990 the Government have granted tax exemption to workplace nurseries as a benefit in kind. No figures are held as to the number of facilities thereby assisted.

The civil service runs 40 nurseries for its employers, several joint ventures with other employers, and over 120 holiday play schemes. They are listed in the Cabinet Office's Childcare Bulletin for October 1993 which is available in the Library.

Disabled People (Sheffield)

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what has been spent on disabled individuals in the Sheffield area over the last five years on assistance towards *(a)* special aids to employment, *(b)* adaptations to premises, *(c)* fares to work and *(d)* the personal reader scheme;

(2) how many disabled individuals in the Sheffield area have benefited from the Government's present provision of assistance towards *(a)* special aids to employment, *(b)* adaptions to premises *(c)* fares to work and *(d)* personal reader service over the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M. Fogden to Mrs. Helen Jackson, dated 7 December 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Questions to him about what has been spent on disabled individuals in the Sheffield area, and how many disabled individuals in the Sheffield area have benefitted from the Government's present provision of assistance over the last five years on assistance towards (a) special aids to employment, (b) adaptations to premises, (c) fares to work and (d) the personal reader service.

The information you have asked for is not held centrally and I have asked my people to investigate the availability of the details you request. I will send details to you as soon as they are available.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Disabled People (Employment Symbol)

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment his Department has carried out as to the degree to which companies who display the two-tick symbol denoting them as positive about disabled people are complying with the criteria required.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its Chief Executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M. Fogden to Mr. Robert Ainsworth, dated 7 December 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to him about what assessment his Department has carried out into the degree to which companies who display the disability symbol are meeting the commitments expected of symbol users. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Use of the disability symbol is a voluntary step taken by an organisation which considers that its employment practices are consistent with the commitments required of symbol users, and which wants to ensure that disabled people know this. Users must accept five commitments:

to interview all job applicants with a disability who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy;

to consult disabled employees to ensure that they can develop their abilities at work;

to take steps to retain employees who become disabled to make sure they stay in employment;

to ensure that key employees develop the awareness of disability needed to make employers' commitments work;

and each year, to reviewing achievements and planning improvements.

The first four commitments are intended as a starting point for good practice, the fifth to help them monitor progress and make sure that their commitments are working in practice.

Employers preparing to adopt the symbol are encouraged to first discuss the symbol commitments in detail with a representative of my local Employment Service Placing, Assessment and Counselling Team (PACT). The PACT will advise on ways to meet the commitments within the particular organisation and, if necessary, suggest steps to be taken before the organisation formally adopts the symbol. Although it will be most useful for employers to call on their PACT when first preparing to adopt the symbol they may seek advice at any stage. The PACT role in monitoring employers' use of the symbol is thus one of helping rather than policing.

As far as possible the commitments involve specific, observable actions and will be self-policing. We believe that employers are unlikely to sign up unless they intend to take them seriously. We would of course take up with a symbol user any complaint received from disabled people that the commitments were not being met in their case and if, exceptionally, it became clear that the symbol was being abused, we would ask the firm to stop using it. In the main, however, we expect to resolve difficulties through discussion to resolve any misunderstandings about what the commitments involve in practice.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administrative Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Health and Safety

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many health and safety inspectors there are in Wales; and from which locations they work.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of inspectors permanently employed by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and based in Wales at 1 November 1993 was 63. The locations from which they work are HSE field operations division area and local offices in Cardiff, Wrexham, and Carmarthen.

Car Boot Sales

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to strengthen health and safety regulations at car boot sales.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None.

Workstart Project

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each workstart pilot project, what is the number of places available for unemployed people and the number actually taken up.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* Each of the four workstart pilots has funding to place up to 250 long-term unemployed people into employment.

On 23 November the number of people in employment supported under workstart in each pilot area was as follows:

	Number
South London	40
East Kent	35
Tyneside	30
Devon and Cornwall	3

The rate of take up in workstart is increasing. The Tyneside training and enterprise council (TEC) is working closely with the local employment service to match individual unemployed people to specific vacancies. The other TEC-run pilot, in Devon and Cornwall, is now adopting a similar approach to improve performance.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average length of time *(a)* males over 35 years, *(b)* males over 16 and under 35 years, *(c)* women over 16 and under 35 years and *(d)* women over 35 years remain unemployed.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 29 November 1993]:* Analysis of the computerised records relating to claimants whose spell of unemployment was completed in the period between 10 September and 14 October gives the following *median* durations of unemployment: those aged between 16 and 35; males—15·7 weeks, females—11·2 weeks: those aged 35 and over; males—21·9 weeks, females—15·9 weeks.

Analysis of a 5 per cent. sample of these same claimants shows that their *mean* duration of unemployment was as follows: those aged between 16 and 35; males—32 weeks, females—22·7 weeks: those aged 35 and over; males—39·9 weeks, females—29·3 weeks.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide a table showing the number of vacancies in jobcentres that were *(a)* temporary and *(b)* permanent in each quarter from April 1987 in each region.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M. Fogden to Mr. Alan Milburn, dated 6 December 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to him asking about the number of vacancies notified to Jobcentres since April 1987. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

On 30 July, in response to an earlier question from you on this subject, I sent you details of permanent and temporary notified vacancies from April 1987 until 2 July 1993. For ease of reference this information has been repeated again in the attached tables. In addition, information has been added to cover the period 3 July 1993 to 8 October 1993.

As I explained in my earlier letter, changes to the ES area and regional structure means that information is not available in the form requested in respect of the period April 1987 to March 1990. To obtain this information would require direct approaches to my local offices. Given the size of the ES network this would be a disproportionate cost and I am sorry I am unable to supply the detailed information for the earlier period. However, information covering Great Britain as a whole is available and this is also attached.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the library of the House.

Details of permanent and temporary notified vacancies
5 April to 8 October 1993

Region	*Period*			
	5 April 1993 to 2 July 1993		*5 July 1993 to 8 October 1993*	
	Permanent vacancies notified	*Temporary vacancies notified*	*Permanent vacancies notified*	*Temporary vacancies notified*
Northern region	17,956	4,444	21,851	6,457
Yorkshire and Humberside region	34,516	6,878	40,299	10,857
East Midlands and Eastern region	40,484	12,212	48,768	14,586
London and South East region	114,773	25,423	132,283	32,726
South West region	36,680	10,304	41,138	10,672
Office for Wales	26,532	10,129	29,583	14,246
West Midlands region	34,234	7,003	42,991	8,669
North West region	64,203	19,902	74,754	26,070
Office for Scotland	53,278	14,781	58,804	17,397
NATIONAL TOTAL	422,656	111,076	490,471	141,680

Details of permanent and temporary notified vacancies
6 April 1992 to 2 April 1993

Region	*Period*							
	6 April 1992 to 3 July 1992		*6 July 1992 to 2 October 1992*		*5 October 1992 to 8 January 1993*		*11 January 1993 to 2 April 1993*	
	Permanent vacancies notified	*Temporary vacancies notified*	*Permanent vacancies notified*	*Temporary vacancies notified*	*Permanent vacancies notified*	*Temporary vacancies notified*	*Permanent vacancies notified*	*Temporary vacancies notified*
Northern region	20,062	3,953	19,851	6,431	15,620	4,760	16,433	3,631
Yorkshire and Humberside region	31,472	5,039	34,126	6,474	27,666	5,555	29,782	4,785
East Midlands and Eastern region	39,191	10,711	41,668	10,647	33,762	10,402	35,206	7,720
London and South East region	113,916	21,371	112,996	24,329	96,795	26,871	100,593	21,330
South West region	34,577	7,580	32,649	7,536	26,009	6,915	31,449	6,397
Office for Wales	25,888	9,086	25,912	9,410	20,419	10,077	22,000	7,497
West Midlands region	29,982	4,496	33,118	6,211	28,113	6,421	30,816	4,781
North West region	59,776	15,205	61,847	20,745	51,670	18,115	53,792	13,674
Office for Scotland	51,424	13,972	52,808	14,662	44,669	14,212	48,053	11,961
National total	406,288	91,413	414,975	106,445	334,723	103,328	368,124	81,776

Details of permanent and temporary notified vacancies
5 April 1991 to 3 April 1992

	Period							
	8 April 1991 to 5 July 1991		*8 July 1991 to 4 October 1991*		*7 October 1991 to 3 January 1992*		*6 January 1992 to 3 April 1992*	
Region	*Permanent vacancies notified*	*Temporary vacancies notified*	*Permanent vacancies notified*	*Temporary vacancies notified*	*Permanent vacancies notified*	*Temporary vacancies notified*	*Permanent vacancies notified*	*Temporary vacancies notified*
Northern region	21,480	5,064	21,244	5,233	17,089	4,407	19,962	3,361
Yorkshire and Humberside region	32,479	7,765	33,383	7,516	25,247	6,459	29,559	4,748
East Midlands and Eastern region	41,167	15,916	43,408	13,307	31,718	11,084	37,950	7,962
London and South East region	109,042	38,093	117,659	37,172	89,972	34,950	103,478	30,479
South West region	31,754	8,847	36,016	8,380	25,963	7,141	34,035	7,762
Office for Wales	22,819	10,893	22,571	13,738	17,696	10,071	19,983	11,646
West Midlands region	33,303	8,258	32,764	8,198	25,786	5,698	30,348	4,603
North West region	60,575	21,717	62,565	21,617	46,056	19,878	55,662	16,060
Office for Scotland	51,687	15,753	54,374	15,543	38,520	14,040	45,601	17,818
National total	404,306	132,306	423,984	130,704	318,047	113,728	376,578	104,439

Details of permanent and temporary notified vacancies
9 April 1990 to 5 April 1991

	Period							
	6 April 1990 to 6 July 1990		*9 July 1990 to 5 October 1990*		*8 October 1991 to 4 January 1991*		*7 January 1991 to 5 April 1991*	
Region	*Permanent vacancies notified*	*Temporary vacancies notified*	*Permanent vacancies notified*	*Temporary vacancies notified*	*Permanent vacancies notified*	*Temporary vacancies notified*	*Permanent vacancies notified*	*Temporary vacancies notified*
Northern region	28,341	5,436	28,945	6,606	19,605	5,907	20,236	5,724
Yorkshire and Humberside region	43,905	8,338	45,504	9,310	30,055	7,585	30,321	5,342
East Midlands and Eastern region	47,021	11,527	46,726	11,893	34,155	9,223	36,328	8,013
London and South East region	127,503	39,632	119,005	45,548	90,485	38,157	96,219	34,093
South West region	41,596	10,256	38,658	8,266	25,491	6,594	27,621	8,976
Office for Wales	29,314	10,782	27,317	12,694	19,672	9,446	20,785	8,646
West Midlands region	44,305	5,599	43,559	7,999	30,683	6,475	30,565	5,388
North West region	76,003	18,324	77,683	24,035	55,887	24,344	58,109	19,896
Office for Scotland	53,025	19,769	71,179	2,653	40,445	15,932	47,068	17,624
NATIONAL TOTAL	491,103	129,663	498,576	129,004	346,478	123,663	367,252	113,702

Permanent and temporary vacancies Great Britain
3 April 1987 to 6 April 1990

	Permanent vacancies notified	*Temporary vacancies notified*
1987-88		
3 April 1987 to 3 July 1987	468,996	210,708
6 July 1987 to 2 October 1987	501,197	227,078
5 October 1987 to 8 January 1988	369,122	197,996
11 January 1988 to 8 April 1988	483,308	159,501
1988-89		
11 April 1988 to 8 July 1988	536,813	188,610
11 July 1988 to 7 October 1988	551,792	183,931
10 October 1988 to 6 January 1989	431,515	159,602
9 January 1989 to 7 April 1989	519,323	129,831
1989-90		
10 April 1989 to 7 July 1989	[1]502,329	[1]205,176
10 July 1989 to 6 October 1989	[1]526,374	[1]204,701
9 October 1989 to 5 January 1990	[1]402,654	[1]164,464
8 January 1990 to 6 April 1990	[1]475,679	[1]167,130

[1] Estimated.

Giro Delivery

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what irregularities there have been in the delivery of unemployment benefit giros in the Clydebank and Milngavie area in the past month; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M Fogden to Mr. Tony Worthington, dated 7 December 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to him about irregularities in the delivery of Unemployment Benefit giros in the Clydebank and Milngavie area in the past month. This is something which falls within the responsibilities he has delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

There have been two delays in the delivery of Unemployment Benefit giros to the Clydebank and Milngavie area in the past month. The first occurrence was on Friday 19 November and was caused by the failure of Royal Mail to ensure that the giro mail bag was loaded onto the appropriate evening flight from Heathrow Airport. This mail was delivered by first post on Monday 22 November.

The second failure was on Friday 26 November and was due to adverse weather conditions (fog) at Heathrow. There were many flight delays on that Friday evening due to the fog. Mail as a consequence had to be transferred onto the Saturday morning flight.

As both delays occurred on a Friday, when mail arrived at the sorting/delivery offices on Saturday morning it has missed the first and only delivery of the day.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by what method unemployment benefit giros are delivered to the Clydebank and Milngavie area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M. Fogden to Mr. Tony Worthington, dated 7 December 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to him about the method of delivery of Unemployment Benefit giros in the Clydebank and Milngavie area. This is something which falls within the responsibilities he has delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Unemployment Benefit giros are delivered by Royal Mail via the first class postal system. UB giros are handed to Royal Mail ready for sorting and despatch from the Computer Centre in Reading by noon on the day prior to delivery to the client.

From this point on the responsibility for the delivery of Unemployment Benefit giros lies with Royal Mail.

Any failure on their part to deliver the girocheques on time are the subject of immediate representation on our part for an investigation as to the clause.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive Replies to Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the library of the House.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to improve the delivery of giros to the Clydebank and Milngavie area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M. Fogden to Mr. Tony Worthington, dated 7 December 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write direct to you to respond to your Parliamentary Question to him about the steps taken to improve the delivery of unemployment benefit giros in Clydebank and Milngavie area. This is something which falls within the responsibilities he has delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Strong representations have been made to Royal Mail and through them to their third parties, British Airways and British Midland to ascertain what steps needed to be taken to ensure consistent delivery of girocheques to our Scottish clients. As a consequence, an agreement has been reached with Royal Mail and British Airways for girocheques to be treated as priority security mail. This means that they will be placed on the first available flight out of Heathrow to Scotland rather than await the regular scheduled 18.00 hours flight as had previously been the case.

We will be monitoring this new arrangement closely to ensure girocheques are delivered on time to our clients in Scotland.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what rights are conveyed by the citizens charter in respect of the late or unpredictable payment of benefits.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M. Fogden to Mr. Tony Worthington, dated 7 December 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to him about what rights are conveyed by the Citizen's Charter in respect of the late or unpredictable payment of benefits. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

It may be helpful if I explain that the policy of the Employment Service is to issue a prompt replacement whenever a girocheque is reported not received, lost, stolen, or destroyed unless there is reason to doubt the report is genuine.

The ES is currently in the process of updating the Jobseeker's Charter, and the above girocheque replacement policy will be reflected within it.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will place a copy of this letter in the library of the House.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 8 December 1993

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers; and how many vehicles are involved.

Mr. Brooke: In the financial year 1992-93, the cost to the Department of the Government car service for Ministers was £167,000. Two vehicles were involved.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

Mr. Brooke: The Department of National Heritage was not formed until April 1992, therefore data in the form requested are not available.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the budget for criminal legal aid for the current financial year; and what amount it is estimated will be spent.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The net provision for criminal legal aid for the current financial year is £564 million, inclusive of the duty solicitor schemes and criminal green form. Latest forecasts suggest an outturn of around £535 million.

Courts

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on how many court sitting days recorders were engaged in 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The total number of court days sat by recorders in the years 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 was 16,251, 17,898, 17,046 and 18,056 respectively.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on how many court sitting days deputy registrars, latterly deputy district judges, were engaged in 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The total number of court days sat by deputy registrars, latterly deputy district judges, during the years 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 was 10,750, 13,642, 18,407 and 20,012 respectively.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on how many court sitting days deputy recorders were engaged in 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The total number of court days sat by assistant recorders in the years 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 was 8,804, 9,296, 9,209 and 9,618 respectively.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary Lord Chancellor's Department on how many court sitting days deputy circuit judges were engaged in 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The total number of court days sat by deputy circuit judges in the years 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 was 1,455, 1,817, 1,546 and 1,119 respectively.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how much was paid by the public in plaint fees and issue fees in the High Court registries and county courts in the years 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92 and during 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not all readily available. Data on district registry fee income are not disagregated, so no separate data are held for issue fees in High Court registries. Plaint and issue fee income in the county courts for the years requested was as follows:

	£
1988-89	59,317,960·34
1989-90	71,177,637·85
1990-91	85,882,609·11
1991-92	99,954,524·94
1992-93	98,647,663·98

EDUCATION

Religious Education

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many responses he has received from the standing advisory councils for religious education to the draft DFE circular 10/93.

Mr. Robin Squire: None. DFE circular 10/93 deals with the grants for education support and training programme for 1994-95, and seeks responses only from local education authorities.

The Department has received 42 responses from the standing advisory councils for religious education to the draft circular "Religious Education and Collective Worship", which issued on 11 October.

Legal Courses

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many discretionary grants have been awarded by local education authorities to enable students to pursue *(a)* the legal practice course and *(b)* the bar finals;

(2) what is the standard level of discretionary grant given by local authorities for *(a)* legal practice course and *(b)* the bar finals course.

Mr. Boswell: The information requested is not collected centrally. The provision of discretionary awards is a matter for local education authorities, as is the value of such awards.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many students are currently taking *(a)* the legal practice course and *(b)* the bar finals course;

(2) how many self-financing students are currently taking *(a)* the legal practice course and *(b)* the bar finals course.

Mr. Boswell: Information from the Law Society shows that 6,566 students were enrolled on the legal practice course for 1993-94. For the bar finals course, the Council of Legal Education's statistics show that 1,022 students took the course in 1992-93. Figures for numbers of self-financing students are available only for the bar finals course. These show that during 1992-93 618 out of 1,022 students received no local authority grant.

Office for Standards in Education

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the relationship between Ofsted and the Department for Education.

Mr. Robin Squire: Ofsted is a non-ministerial Government Department established by the Education (Schools) Act 1992. It is headed by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Schools, Professor Stewart Sutherland, who is required to advise my right hon. Friend on the quality of education and standards achieved in schools and to oversee the new system of independent four-yearly inspections of schools.

My right hon. Friend wrote to all hon. Members on 11 November 1992 explaining the work of Ofsted and its relationship with the Department.

Sex Education

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether local education authorities will be required to monitor the numbers of parents exercising their right to withdraw their children from sex education lessons.

Mr. Forth: No.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what plans he has to introduce mandatory sex education and at what ages;

(2) what he is doing to introduce compulsory AIDS tuition into schools.

Mr. Forth: Under the Education Act 1993, all maintained secondary schools will from autumn 1994 be required to provide sex education for all their registered pupils, including education about HIV and AIDS. All maintained special schools will be required to provide such education for all their pupils of secondary age.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many parents exercised the right to exclude their children from sex education lessons in the years 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Forth: There was no statutory right for parents to withdraw their children from sex education lessons in the years in question. Under section 241 of the Education Act 1993 we are introducing, from September 1994, the right for the parent of a pupil in attendance at any maintained school to withdraw that pupil from all or part of the school's sex education provision other than those elements which are a requirement of the national curriculum.

Union Flag

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the cost of purchasing and installing the Union flag in the foyer of the Department for Education.

Mr. Forth: The cost of purchasing the flag, the flagstaff and base was £150, excluding VAT.

PRIME MINISTER

Bomb-proofing

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister what has been the cost of bomb-proofing *(a)* No. 10 and *(b)* No. 11 Downing street.

The Prime Minister: On security grounds, I do not propose to give this information.

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister what is the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers; and how many vehicles are involved.

The Prime Minister: The charge to my office for ministerial use of the Government car service during 1992-93 was £107,395. Two vehicles are involved.

EU Summit

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what matters in regard to environmental protection he intends to raise at the European Union Heads of Government summit in Brussels on 10 to 11 December.

The Prime Minister: The Council will focus on the European economy and the Commission White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment. It will also consider the Commission's report on subsidiarity. I shall continue to emphasise the importance of properly sustainable development, in accordance with the treaty provisions.

TRANSPORT

Trans-European Road Network

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the route and construction of United Kingdom roads included in the trans-European road network are subject to the planning process; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: All schemes in the Department's roads programme, including any on routes in the trans-European road network, are subject to the same procedures.

Motorway Cones

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals his Department has to improve the safe and secure laying of cones and the removal of unnecessary cones on motorways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The laying out of traffic cones has to follow procedures laid down in chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs Manual. This sets out British standards requirements for the cones themselves, how they should be positioned at roadworks—in the interests of road workers' safety as well as road users—and how they should be removed as soon as they are no longer required. It is a condition of highway contracts on motorways and other trunk roads that contractors, and their traffic management sub-contractors, adopt the requirement of chapter 8. Together with Health and Safety at Work etc. Act legislation, this already imposes considerable safety obligations on all those concerned with the placement, management and removal of traffic cones. Nevertheless, the Department is constantly reviewing its safety procedures and guidance.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents have occurred on motorways as a result of stray motorway cones in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: My Department does not keep records or statistics which show whether any motorway accidents have been caused by stray traffic cones.

East and West Coast Main Lines

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the estimated repayments which will need to be made on capital raised for improvements to the west coast main line; how these costs will be recouped; what estimate he has as to the average extra cost per journey for passengers and carriers of freight imposed by the need to make these repayments; and what are the equivalent projected costs on the east coast line.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend announced on 1 December that Railtrack will be working with the private sector to devise new performance standards for the west coast main line and that a private sector consortium will be selected by competition to build and maintain the line.

The precise cost of the project, and therefore the level of repayments, will not be known in advance of that competition.

Cost comparisons with the east coast main line are inappropriate. The east coast main line project, from commencement of planning to the start of the new service in 1991, took some 10 years to complete. The lines also have different patterns of use.

Roads, Southport

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when he next expects to visit Southport to inspect the site of proposed improvements to the trunk road network to Preston;

(2) when he expects to visit Southport to inspect the site of the A565 proposed road improvements;

(3) when he expects to visit Southport to inspect the site of the A570 Ormskirk to Southport bypass.

Mr. Key: It would be a pleasure to visit my hon. Friend's constituency, but I have no plans to visit the sites of these proposed schemes. I shall, though, consider carefully the response to public consultation on the proposed improvements to the A570 and A59 trunk roads.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much his Department spends annually on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising and *(c)* press advertising; and what were the corresponding figures for 1985 and 1979.

Mr. Scott: Such information as is available is in the table.

	Television £	*Radio* £	*Press* £
1989-90	4,911,000	402,000	1,486,000
1991-92	4,396,000	626,000	772,000
1992-93	1,792,000	429,000	2,296,000

Notes:

1. The total spend in 1990-91 was £4,360,000 but a breakdown is not immediately available.
2. The Department did not exist independently prior to August 1988.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out the average length of time taken by the Child Support Agency to reply in full to a letter from an hon. Member.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) by the chief executive of the Child Support Agency on 29 November at column *429.*

Benefit Fraud

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what information he has on dealers at car boot sales fraudulently claiming benefits;

(2) if he will list the occupations most frequently claimed by those fraudulently claiming benefit.

Mr. Hague: The administration of benefit fraud is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Douglas French, dated 7 December 1993:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Questions about the occupations of people fraudulently claiming benefit; including in particular dealers at car boot sales.

I regret that I am unable to provide the information you request as statistics are not kept on the occupations of those who are found to be fraudulently claiming benefit.

I can tell you, however, that from October this year I have established a new Security Branch with a responsibility to ensure a co-ordinated and strategic approach to fraud and security matters; and to protect future expenditure against fraud and abuse.

Part of this co-ordinated response is to maintain statistics that allow analysis of the fraud effort in terms of prevention, deterrence and detection. At the same time we must ensure that statistics are not kept for their own sake and to this end the new Branch is currently examining what statistics are necessary to achieve the three aims I have outlined.

I am sorry that on this occasion I cannot be more helpful.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Industrial Development Boards

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total budget allocated by his Department to industrial development boards in 1992-93 in *(a)* the Northern region and *(b)* the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Sainsbury: The industrial development boards advise my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on applications for selective financial assistance and on industrial opportunities within their areas. The boards do not have budgetary responsibility for schemes providing selective financial assistance which have centrally held budgets.

Consultants

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the names of the consultants employed to review the future of *(a)* the Patent Office, *(b)* Warren Springs Laboratory and *(c)* AEA Technology and the costs of employing such consultants in the year 1992-93, with the sum estimated for 1993-94.

Mr. Heseltine: The consultants employed in each case were *(a)* Price Waterhouse, *(b)* PA Consulting and *(c)* BZW. The fees paid to these firms are confidential for commercial reasons.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Mullin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the Ministers in his Department who since June 1987 have visited *(a)* Saudi Arabia, *(b)* Malysia, *(c)* Singapore and *(d)* South Africa on official business; and which such visits included party political activities in addition to official duties.

Mr. Heseltine: A central record of official ministerial visits overseas during the period in question has not been kept for all markets. The list that follows may therefore not be comprehensive.

Country	*Year of visit*
Saudi Arabia:	
Secretary of State (then Mr. Ridley)	November 1989
President	January 1993
Minister for Energy	May 1993
Malaysia:	
Minister for Energy	September 1993
Minister for Trade	September and November 1993
Singapore:	
Minister for Trade (then Lord Trefgarne)	July 1990
Minister for Industry (then Lord Reay)	February 1992
Baroness Denton	May and September 1993
Minister for Trade	June and December 1993
South Africa:	
Minister for Trade (then Mr. Sainsbury)	November 1991

There is no record of whether these visits included party political activities.

Tobacco

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the value of *(a)* imports of tobacco and tobacco paper and *(b)* exports of finished tobacco products in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham: Information on the topic is regularly published by the Central Statistical Office in Business Monitor MA20, Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Unmanufactured and manufactured tobacco are classified to headings 121 and 122 respectively of the Standard International Trade Classification, while cigarette paper is classified under headings 641.55 and 642.41.

Textiles

Sir David Knox: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of the lowest and highest rates of EC customs import duties for both textile and clothing products.

Mr. Needham: The common customs tariff charged on imports into the Community ranges from 0 per cent. to 17 per cent. for textiles and from 6·3 per cent. to 14 per cent. for clothing.

Hosiery Industry

Mr. Garnier: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from the hosiery industry about the level of sock imports from Indonesia and from whom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: On 25 October the Knitting Industries Federation wrote to my Department to request action to restrict sock imports from Indonesia. The case is being evaluated and my officials will contact the federation shortly.

Mr. Garnier: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total of all imports of socks into the United Kingdom (category 12 of the multi-fibre arrangement) *(a)* in total and *(b)* from Indonesia, in terms of quantity, value and average price for each of the years from 1990 for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham: The information that my hon. Friend has requested for multi-fibre arrangement category 12 is given in the table.

MFA category 12 imports

	From Indonesia			*United Kingdom total*		
Year	*quantity million pairs*	*value £ million*	*price pence per pair*	*quantity million pairs*	*value £ million*	*price pence per pair*
1990	12·2	3·1	25	89·7	52·4	58
1991	16·7	5·0	30	117·4	67·9	58
1992	38·9	11·4	29	187·9	93·6	50

Bonding

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what studies his Department has made of the extent to which bonding requirements act as a barrier to exports by small and medium-sized United Kingdom companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: I am not aware of any studies made by my Department into bonding requirements on exporters. Funding bonds is a matter for the private commercial sector, but I would be interested to see details of any particular cases the hon. Member may have.

Agency Agreements

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action his Department is taking to advise United Kingdom companies of the effect of EC directives on the formalisation of agency agreements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Regulations which implement Council directive 86/653/EEC relating to self-employed commercial agents have been made and were laid before both Houses today; they come into force on 1 January 1994.

A commercial agent is a

> "self-employed intermediary who has continuing authority to negotiate the sale or purchase of goods on behalf of another person (the 'principal') or to negotiate and conclude the sale or purchase of goods on behalf of and in the name of that principal".

The regulations are designed to lay down minimum requirements governing the contracts between commercial agents and their principals. In particular, they provide the agent with additional benefits which may not currently be available under United Kingdom common law, for example the right to a written contract if he requests one. The regulations have been the subject of consultations with industry in 1987, 1990 and in June this year. A number of revisions to the regulations have been made. The major amendments are:—

(i) *Applicable Law:* The regulations lay down the basic rule that it is where the agent is, rather than the principal, that determines whether the regulations apply but also enable the parties to opt for the law of another member State to govern the contract.

(ii) *Secondary Activities:* The regulations now define the core or essential activities of a commercial agent and provide for those who do not satisfy these criteria to be excluded. Such activities would be secondary. There are specific exclusions for mail order agents and consumer credit agents.

(iii) *Indemnity/Compensation:* Following comments received from industry, the regulations now provide for the parties to choose either an indemnity or compensation payment upon termination of an agency contract. This will allow greater flexibility.

A cost compliance assessment on the possible costs to industry of implementing the EC directive is being made available. In addition, guidance notes will be issued in the near future, detailing what we believe is the intention behind the directive. Copies of this guidance note and the cost compliance assessment will be available from the following address:—

Consumer Affairs Division 2a
Room 325
10-18 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0NN

Copies of the regulations themselves will be available from HMSO bookshops.

Fur

Mr. Morley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the value of fur and fur product exports from the United Kingdom in each year since 1984.

Mr. Needham: The available information is given in the following table.

Value of United Kingdom Exports of fur and fur products

Year	*£ million*
1984	268·0
1985	231·7
1986	227·9
1987	267·6
1988	192·1
1989	141·8
1990	63·4
1991	44·7
1992	45·9

Fur and fur products are defined by headings 212, 613 and 848·31 of the Standard International Trade Classification.
Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how his Department was represented at the test to simulate a meltdown accident at a pressurised water reactor, held in France on 3 December; and what are the implications of the results of this test in regard to the future safety of the Sizewell B power plant.

Mr. Eggar: My Department was not represented at the test carried out at Cadarache by the Commissariat a l'Engergie Atomique—the French nuclear safety R and D organisation. However, I understand that the Atomic Energy Authority is involved by means of an exchange agreement with the CEA under the nuclear safety R and D programme which is sponsored by the Health and Safety Executive. Both the HSE's nuclear installations inspectorate and Nuclear Electric will be informed of the results through the CEA-AEA agreement. It is not expected that the test will produce results which would affect the safety case prepared for Sizewell B.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Straw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the target population set by the European Commission for objective 2 status for areas in the United Kingdom; and by what percentage of the population the list submitted by Her Majesty's Government either exceeds or falls short of their target.

Mr. Sainsbury: There is no target population set by the Commission for United Kingdom objective 2 areas. The procedure is governed by article 9 of Council Regulation 2081/93 which, among other things, sets out various statistical criteria, requires member states to propose areas, and requires the Commission to establish the list taking into account national priorities in consultation with the member state concerned.

One of the recitals to the regulation, which is not legally binding, states that objective 2

"could cover up to 15 per cent. of the Community population".

The Government's proposals for the United Kingdom amount to approximately 23·5 million population. I understand that the proposals of all member states together amount to 22·5 per cent. of the Community population. I am discussing our proposals with the Commissioner responsible. Our consultation will be governed by article 9 of the Council regulation.

Mr. Straw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether Her Majesty's Government are differentiating between areas which had first obtained assisted area status before 1993 from those areas which have recently acquired this status, in their representations for objective 2 status.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. The Government's proposals for objective 2 are based on the criteria in article 9 of Council regulation 2081/93.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Private Health Insurance

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people are claiming tax relief for private health insurance; and what proportion of these are higher rate taxpayers in (i) Great Britain and (ii) Northern Ireland.

Mr. Dorrell: It is estimated that about 350,000 people in the United Kingdom receive tax relief on their private medical insurance premiums for those aged 60 or more. About 1 per cent. are higher rate taxpayers. Separate information for Northern Ireland is not available.

Taxation

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the loss in revenue resulting from an increase in the single person's tax allowance of *(a)* £50, *(b)* £100, *(c)* £150, *(d)* £200, *(e)* £250 and *(f)* £300; and how many people would be taken out of tax in each case.

Mr. Dorrell: The estimated cost in a full year at 1994-95 income levels from the specified increases in the personal allowance and the number of people taken out of tax are given in the table.

Personal allowance	*Revenue cost (£ million)*	*Individuals taken out of tax (thousands)*
Increased by £50	320	120
Increased by £100	650	220
Increased by £150	970	330
Increased by £200	1,290	470
Increased by £250	1,610	580
Increased by £300	1,920	680

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the latest estimate of the number of *(a)* basic rate and *(b)* higher rate taxpayers; and how many taxpayers are (i) male and (ii) female;

(2) what is his latest estimate of the total number of top rate taxpayers;

(3) what is the latest estimate he has for the number of people who pay income tax at a rate of *(a)* 20 per cent., *(b)* 25 per cent. and *(c)* 40 per cent.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest estimates for 1993-94 based on projections from the 1991-92 Survey of Personal Incomes are given in the table.

Millions

Taxpayers liable at	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
Lower rate only	1·8	3·0	4·8
Basic rate but not higher rate	11·4	7·1	18·4
Higher rate	1·6	0·3	1·9
All taxpayers	14·8	10·3	25·1

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the current numbers of *(a)* corporate taxpayers and *(b)* income taxpayers in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: About 350,000 companies pay corporation tax and 25·1 million individuals pay income tax in the United Kingdom.

Companies

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the percentage of Britain's companies that are working at full capacity.

Mr. Portillo: According to the October CBI quarterly industrial trends survey 39 per cent. of manufacturing firms were working at capacity. Estimates are not available for the whole company sector.

Students

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many students pay income tax; and what is the total number of students who pay VAT.

Mr. Dorrell: Information on the number of students who pay income tax is not available centrally and could be collected only at disproportionate cost.

VAT is chargeable on a wide range of consumer expenditure and it is likely that everybody has to pay some in the course of a year.

North Sea Oil

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the total revenues to the Exchequer from North sea oil since May 1979, expressed in 1992 prices.

Mr. Dorrell: Total revenues to the Exchequer from the North sea since 1979-80 at 1992-93 prices have been £114 billion.

ECOFIN

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the most recent meeting of European Economic and Finance Ministers.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Economic and Finance Council of the European Union met in Brussels on 5 December. I represented the United Kingdom.

ECOFIN discussed the Commission's recommendation for the broad guidelines for the economic policies of member states and of the Community under the new procedures of article 103 of the treaty. ECOFIN agreed a report to the European Council containing the draft guidelines. The treaty requires the European Council to agree conclusions on the basis of this report which will then be translated into a formal Council recommendation at a subsequent meeting of Finance Ministers. The recommendation will not have legally binding force.

There was a short discussion on the likely content of the Commission White Book on growth, competitiveness and employment. I said that it was unfortunate that the Commission had been unable to prepare a full draft of its White Book in time for it to be considered by the ECOFIN before the European Council. The Commission circulated the text on 6 December and copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

There were no formal votes.

Privatisation (Consultants' Fees)

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide details of all fees to consultants and brokers associated with privatisation and share sales of *(a)* BT since 1982, *(b)* British Gas since 1986, *(c)* all regional electric companies since 1998-89, *(d)* all regional water companies since 1988-89 and *(e)* the total.

Mr. Dorrell: No. Fees paid to consultants, brokers, and so on as part of the privatisation programme are treated as commercially confidential. Total fees paid to advisers are quantified within the relevant National Audit Office reports published by the Comptroller and Auditor General. For the sales requested, the total fees paid to advisers were:

		£ million
BT	1984	6
British Gas	1986	5
Water	1989	[1]25·8
BT	1991	7·4
BT	1993	[2]5·4

[1] Ex VAT.

[2] To date.

Civil Servants

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of people employed, *(b)* the total number of black people and *(c)* the total number of Asians.

Sir John Cope: The information requested is shown in the table. Figures are given in terms of grade levels which include equivalent grades, and reflects the position as at October 1993. The figures cover only non-industrial staff in post, exclude agency staff and are calculated on a head count basis with part-timers counted as one. The figures are based on the Department's ethnic origin questionnaire which drew a 93 per cent. response rate.

	(a) *Total staff*	*(b)* *Black respondents*	*(c)* *Asian respondents*
Grade level			
1	5	—	—
2	6	—	—
3	22	—	—
4	2	—	—
5	70	—	—
6	19	—	—
7	191	—	3
SEO	90	1	2
HEO	222	4	2
EO	301	12	9
AO	407	32	37
AA	281	20	19

Value Added Tax

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy that value added tax will not be levied on community care transfer moneys in Scotland.

Sir John Cope: Community care transfer funds are exempt from VAT when used by recipient bodies to provide welfare services.

European Investment Fund

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, with reference to the Act to amend the statutes of the European investment bank permitting the establishment of a European investment fund—Cm 2359—approved by Parliament on 29 November, he will state *(a)* the maximum permitted liability of the fund in guarantees, *(b)* the initial contributed capital subscribed by the European Community as such, by member states, and by others respectively, *(c)* who will be inviting others to become members of the fund, and what qualifications they are likely to possess, *(d)* the limitations placed on the fund in respect of the purposes of the enterprises to which assistance is given, *(e)* when he expects the statutes of the fund to be decided and how and by whom they will be published and *(f)* who will appoint its governing body, and by what means, and to whom the person representing the interests of Her Majesty's Government on that body will be responsible.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 7 December 1993]:* The rules of operation of the proposed new European Investment Fund are set out in the fund's statute. At present, this document exists only in draft form, but it will be adopted by the governors of the European investment bank immediately after they establish the fund itself. If the draft statute is adopted in the form in which it now stands, the situation would be as follows:

(a) The fund would initially be limited to providing guarantees with a total value of no more than three times the amount of its subscribed capital. Since the fund's subscribed capital is fixed at 2 billion ecu, £1·511 billion, this would mean that it could grant guarantees worth up to 6 billion ecu, £4·534 billion.

(b) It is envisaged that 40 per cent.—800 million ecu or £605 million—of the fund's initial subscribed capital would be held by the European Investment Bank, 30 per cent.—600 mecu or £453 million—by the European Community, with the remaining 30 per cent.—600 mecu or £453 million—contributed by banks and financial institutions, which operate within the Community, and which agree to become members of the fund.

(c) It is for the board of governors of the EIB to invite institutions to become members of the fund. So far as participation by banks is concerned, the EIB has approached institutions which are well established, and well known to it as clients, with invitations to take part.

(d) The fund will operate through the Community in support of small and medium-sized enterprises, and of projects which form part of trans-European networks.

(e) The statute of the fund will be adopted by the governors of the European investment bank immediately after the fund is established. Establishment, in turn, will take place as soon as the treaty amendment which enables this to happen has been ratified by all 12 EC member states. This is expected to occur early in the new year. Once the fund becomes operational it will of course publish its own statute, but in order to avoid delay it may be possible to arrange for the EIB, or the European Commission, to publish the statute in advance of this.

(f) The fund's supreme governing body will be the annual general meeting. The membership of this body will be fixed by the fund's statute, with all three classes of shareholders participating. The European Community's representative at the meeting will be one of the members of the Commission, and the EIB will be represented by its president. Both of these will be responsible for safeguarding and representing the interests of Her Majesty's Government, by virtue of the United Kingdom's position as a member state of the Community, and a shareholder in the EIB, respectively.

All figures converted at 30 November 1993 £-ecu conversion rate (£=1·3232 ecu).

Private Finance Projects

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many of the 78 private finance projects listed in the appendix to the text of the Chancellor's speech to CBI Scotland's annual dinner issued on 9 September are currently under construction.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 7 December 1993]:* Of the projects listed, 12 have been completed—or, in the case of services, contracts signed—and there are 17 which are under construction or for which contracts have been signed.

Personal Pensions

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what action he is taking to ensure that those individuals who have been wrongly sold personal pension plans are identified and given full redress;

(2) what is his estimate of the total number of individuals who have been wrongly sold personal pension plans *(a)* in each of the last five years and *(b)* since the introduction of the Financial Services Act 1986;

(3) what is his estimate of the total value of personal pension plans that have been wrongly sold *(a)* in each of the last five years and *(b)* since the introduction of the Financial Services Act 1986.

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the marketing of personal pensions.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* The responsibility for regulating the marketing of personal pensions and other investment products rests primarily with the Securities and Investments Board, as lead regulator under the Financial Services Act.

Following the intial findings of a survey commissioned in September into the selling of personal pensions to clients transferring from occupational pension schemes, the chairman of SIB has today set out the action the regulators are taking to establish the extent of any problems that may have resulted from poor compliance with the marketing rules made under the FSA; to rectify any shortcomings; and to obtain remedy for any disadvantage to investors that may have resulted.

SIB is leading this regulatory action, working closely with the other regulators concerned and with the life insurance industry to establish the extent of the problem and any financial implications for personal pension policyholders. The evidence relates to non-compliance with the regulatory standards. Further detailed work will be needed to assess whether the non-compliance has resulted in poor advice and disadvantage to investors.

I welcome this initiative, together with the actions already taken by SIB to improve the guidance on the selling of personal pensions. Should the further investigations now under way reveal that any clients have suffered financial loss as a result of bad advice, I have made it clear to SIB that the Government expect effective remedies to be put in place promptly.

Personal pensions have proved their popularity, combining as they do an opportunity for a flexible career with the security of an income in retirement.

But as with other investment products people must be able to rely on high standards of professionalism and competence on the part of salesmen and advisers, and be confident that they will not be sold products unsuitable for their requirements.

I have asked the chairman of SIB to keep me closely informed as this work develops.

WALES

Unitary Authorities

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current estimate of the cost of establishing unitary authorities in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The measures in the Local Government (Wales) Bill will result in transitional costs estimated on the basis of a report prepared by consultants to be between £65 million and £150 million over 15 years. The level of these costs will depend on decisions to be taken by the new councils on such matters as staffing levels and management structures. I intend to encourage tight control of costs and believe the consultants' higher figures would be reached only if councils decide to make a large number of existing employees redundant, leading to substantial subsequent revenue savings.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much his Department spends annually on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising and *(c)* press advertising; and what were the corresponding figures for 1985 and 1979.

Mr. [illegible]wood: There is no average annual spend on advertising, but the figures for the two specific years 1979 and 1985, and for the lastest available year 1992-93, are as follows:

Welsh office publicity spend

£000

Year	*Radio*	*TV*	*Press*	*Joint[1] press and TV*
1979-80	Nil	—	—	61
1985-86	Nil	Nil	31	—
1992-93	Nil	77	350	—

[1] Television and Press advertising for the years 1979-85 cannot be readily separated.

Note:

In 1992-93 it was decided to advertise the Organ Donor Scheme on TV, which accounted for £70,000 out of the £77,000.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hospitals have closed in each of the counties of Wales since 1980.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information, which relates to hospitals which have closed since 1 January 1980 and are still closed, is given in the following table. During the same period nine hospitals were opened.

Health authority	*Number of hospitals closed*
Clwyd	6
East Dyfed	3
Gwent	2
Gwynedd	9
Mid Glamorgan	9
Pembrokeshire	—
Powys	1
South Glamorgan	4
West Glamorgan	4
TOTAL	38

Since 1980 the numbers of patients being treated by the national health service in Wales has increased from 848,432 to 1,248,356 in 1992-93 or 47 per cent.

School Closures

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many schools have closed in each Welsh local education authority since 1980.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is not collected in the form requested. The available information is as follows:

Schools in existence as at January 1993

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Special														
Clwyd	14	13	13	13	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
Dyfed	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Gwent	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	6	6	6	6
Gwynedd	8	7	7	7	7	7	7	6	6	6	6	5	5	5
Mid Glamorgan	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Powys	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
South Glamorgan	19	19	19	17	17	16	16	16	16	15	15	15	15	15
West Glamorgan	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	6	6	6	5	5	5	5
Wales	75	73	73	71	69	68	67	65	65	64	62	61	61	61
All LEA/GM Schools														
Clwyd	316	314	311	309	302	301	300	300	300	299	296	293	292	292
Dyfed	400	398	392	387	382	379	372	365	365	359	354	354	354	352
Gwent	343	338	328	324	321	312	296	293	287	283	279	278	265	263
Gwynedd	231	230	230	229	229	229	229	228	226	224	223	221	220	219
Mid Glamorgan	396	392	391	393	390	384	387	387	387	387	387	380	381	379
Powys	147	145	141	138	138	136	134	132	131	131	130	129	126	126
South Glamorgan	239	236	232	222	219	213	211	211	210	210	210	209	210	210
West Glamorgan	238	236	226	215	210	208	208	204	203	202	198	198	198	198
Wales	2,310	2,289	2,251	2,217	2,191	2,162	2,137	2,120	2,109	2,095	2,077	2,062	2,046	2,039

Housing Revenue Account

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the total amount of housing revenue account subsidy payable to local housing authorities in Wales in 1992-93, and his estimates for 1993-94 and 1994-95, indicating separately the housing and housing benefit components and showing the difference between the actual subsidy payable and the amount which would have been payable if expenditure on rent rebates had qualified in full for subsidy.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The available information is set out as follows. The Welsh Office is consulting authorities on subsidy proposals for 1994-95 upon which decisions have yet to be taken.

£ million

	1992-93[1] Estimated Outturn	1993-94[2] Provisional Outturn
Housing Element[3]	5·1	3·9
Rent Rebate Subsidy[4] Entitlement	184·7	192·3
Total Housing Revenue Account Subsidy	189·8	196·2
Gross Rent Rebate[5] Expenditure by local authorities	212·9	228·9

[1] Local authorities Housing Revenue Account Subsidy 1992-93 Advance Final Claims.

[2] Local authorities Housing Revenue Account Subsidy 1993-94 Second Advance Claims.

[3] Positive entitlement to housing subsidy.

[4] Gross rent rebate expenditure by authorities less incentive area deductions, adjustments for benefit period over-runs and negative housing subsidy entitlements.

[5] Rent Rebate expenditure awarded by housing authorities.

Diabetes

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will arrange for a copy of the British Diabetic Association booklet "Recommendations for Management of Diabetes in Primary Care" to be sent to every general practitioner practice in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The British Diabetic Association has written to all family health services, as managers of primary care services, offering supplies of this booklet for distribution to GP practices. To date, I understand that three authorities in Wales—Clwyd, Powys and West Glamorgan—are arranging for copies to be distributed to practices in their area.

House Condition Survey

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the house condition survey for Wales will be published.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The results of the Welsh House Condition Survey are expected to be published in spring 1994.

Forestry

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the Forestry Commission forests and woods in each of the counties of Wales.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each separate piece of land currently owned or leased by the Forestry Commission in Clwyd *(a)* its name, *(b)* its area in hectares; and if he will place a map in the Library which names and identifies each of these pieces of land.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Forestry Commission manages the following areas of land in each county in Wales.

County	*Area (hectares)*
Clwyd	9,457
Dyfed	31,002
Gwent	8,787
Gwynedd	27,954
Mid Glamorgan	13,038
Powys	31,292
South Glamorgan	486
West Glamorgan	14,399

Details of individual forests and woodlands are not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

I have, however, made arrangements for a map showing the location of the individual areas to be placed in the Library of the House as soon as possible.

Political Adviser

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date, on what terms and at what cost to public funds his political adviser Hywell Williams will commence employment; if he will place a copy of his terms of reference in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Gentleman for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 4 November 1993, c. *334*.

Trawsfynydd Nuclear Power Station

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he is taking to create jobs for the former workers of the Trawsfynydd nuclear power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have announced a range of measures, attracting Welsh Office support of over £700,000, to assist with economic development in the wake of the closure of Trawsfynydd nuclear power station. These include the funding of the project manager for the South Gwynedd Partnership; improvements to Blaenau Ffestiniog community centre; the development of land at Llanystumdwy; and land acquisition at Penamser business park at Porthmadog. I am also considering the scope to accelerate some of the more important schemes in my forward roads programme and the South Gwynedd Partnership is preparing a case for an enterprise zone in the area.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to announce the appointment of a new reviewer of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am pleased to announce that Mr. John J. Rowe QC has accepted my invitation to succeed Viscount Colville of Culross QC in carrying out the annual review of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991. Mr. Rowe is a highly respected and senior Queen's counsel who will bring considerable experience to the post.

Departmental Files

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by the Department; and how many are marked "Not for Public Accounts Committee eyes."

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by his Department.

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer 3-6 December 1993]:* The responsibility of the National Audit Office does not extend to the six Northern Ireland Departments which have their own similarly appointed body—the Northern Ireland Audit office. There are eight files marked "Not for Northern Ireland Audit Office eyes".

The marking "Not for NIAO eyes" is used in accordance with an agreement between the Department of Finance and Personnel and the Northern Ireland Audit Office under which documents relating to the handling of relations between Departments and the NIAO and PAC are not automatically available to the NIAO while they are current.

There is no marking, "Not for PAC eyes".

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers; and how many vehicles are involved.

Sir John Wheeler: The cost of providing cars for Ministers during the 1992-93 financial year was just over £856,000. Ministers do not all have exclusive use of a car; these costs therefore include private hire cars and supplement the four cars provided by the Government car service. They also include the cost of cars provided by the Royal Ulster Constabulary for Ministers when they are in Northern Ireland.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Electricity and Gas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee what was the total cost of electricity and gas supplied to the Palace of Westminster in the eight current years to date; and what is his estimate of the extra costs arising from the imposition of VAT on fuel at *(a)* eight per cent. and *(b)* 17·5 per cent.

Mr. Paul Channon: Until 1 April 1992, the cost of electricity and gas supplied to the Palace of Westminster was met by the Department of the Environment. In 1992-93, the first year that fuel and utilities were met by the votes of the Houses of Parliament, gas and electricity accounted for some £740,000, of which the House of Commons paid 60 per cent. So far in the current financial year £365,000 has been spent.

No extra costs arise from the imposition of VAT on fuel as the tax is already applied in respect of commercial use.

Christmas Tree

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what was the total cost of purchasing and decorating the Christmas tree located in New Palace Yard together with the total cost of installing the tree, including the cost of crane hire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ray Powell: The Christmas tree in New Palace Yard has been presented to the House by the Forestry Commission. The cost of its installation and decoration, including labour and crane hire, was £800.

Refreshment Department

Mr. Madden: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make arrangements for any food not required each day by the Refreshment Department to be passed to suitable charities for distribution, including to the homeless.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: I have been asked to reply.

This is a matter for the Director of Catering Services.

EMPLOYMENT

Access to Work Scheme

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he will announce the upper limits on *(a)* help to a disabled person and *(b)* the contribution expected from the employer in a five-year period under his proposed access to work scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will make an announcement as soon as possible about details of the access to work scheme, including the upper limits on *(a)* help to a disabled person and *(b)* the contribution expected from the employer in a five-year period.

Civil Servants

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of people employed, *(b)* the total number of black people and *(c)* the total number of Asians.

Miss Widdecombe: The figures are given in the following table:

Staff in post in ED Group as at 1 October 1993

Grade level	*Ethnic group* *Black respondents*	*Asian respondents*	*Other ethnic minority respondents*	*Total staff*
AA level	243	186	18	4,375
AO level	1,157	1,362	159	32,362
EO level	233	355	65	17,073
HEO level	30	41	24	4,770

Grade level	*Ethnic group* *Black respondents*	*Asian respondents*	*Other ethnic minority respondents*	*Total staff*
SBO level	7	18	3	1,975
Grade 7 level	2	11	3	1,257
Grade 6 level	1	4	1	270
Grade 5 level	0	0	0	160
Grade 4 level	0	0	1	59
Grade 3 level	0	0	0	66
Grade 2 level	0	0	0	12
Grade 1 level	0	0	0	2
Industrials	1	0	0	50
TOTAL	1,674	1,977	274	62,431

Part-time staff have been counted as whole units.
Only permanent staff have been included. Casuals and period appointees have been excluded.
Grade levels include equivalent grades.
Figures quoted include Employment Service agency staff.
The total staff figures include non-respondents to the Ethnic Origin Survey, from which the other figures have been compiled.

Asbestos

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement summarising the provisions of those regulations which seek to control the use of asbestos in roofing and other building materials; and if he will indicate the means through which those regulations should be enforced.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* The Asbestos (Prohibitions) Regulations 1992 which came into force on 1 January 1993 impose major restrictions on the use of asbestos, including its use for some building materials. They prohibit the import, supply and use of all types of amphibole asbestos, including corcidolite—blue asbestos—and amosite—brown asbestos—the two forms most commonly associated with asbestos-related disease. The regulations also prohibit asbestos spraying and the installation of asbestos insulation and a range of building products containing chrysotile—white asbestos—including low-density insulating and sound-proofing materials and roofing felt.

The Control of Asbestos at Work (Amendment) Regulations 1992 which came into force on 1 January 1993 include a requirement for the substitution of products containing asbestos when practicable and provided the alternative creates a lesser risk.

The regulations are enforced by Health and Safety Executive inspectors, and local authority inspectors who have powers under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many cases have been identified by the appropriate enforcement authorities in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available, of the use of asbestos materials in building and roofing work contrary to the relevant regulations.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* The information requested is not available. However, the figures in the following tables show the numbers of informations laid and the number of convictions secured in the construction industry, under the Asbestos Regulations 1969 and the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 1987, as amended, which replaced them. The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations cover all work with asbestos. There were no informations laid during the period under the Asbestos (Prohibitions) Regulations 1985 or the Asbestos (Prohibitions) Regulations 1992.

Year	*Informations laid*	*Conviction*
The Asbestos Regulations 1969		
1983	26	25
1984	41	32
1985	23	18
1986-87	11	7
1987-88	8	8
1988-89	4	3
The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 1987		
1988-89	13	13
1989-90	33	32
1990-91	50	41
1991-92	32	25
1992-93[1]	24	23

[1] Provisional.

Notes:

1. The figures above include informations laid and convictions for those in the construction industry involved in asbestos stripping.
2. The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 1987 came into force on 1 March 1988.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to ensure compliance with regulation 8(1A) of the Control of Asbestos at Work (Amendment) Regulations 1992 and with its associated approved code of practice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* Regulation 8(1A) of the Control of Asbestos (Amendment) Regulations 1992 has been in force since 1 January 1993. Health and Safety Executive inspectors and local authority inspectors enforce these provisions. At their visits to workplaces, inspectors give high priority to encouraging the use of asbestos substitutes as the principal means of preventing any exposure to asbestos whenever this is appropriate.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the Health and Safety Commission will review the effectiveness of the regulations governing the use of asbestos products in roofing and other building work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* Current regulations governing the use of asbestos products in roofing and other building work are considered to be effective with regard to the protection of the health of workers and the public. There are no plans at present to extend them, but, in common with other health and safety legislation, there is an ongoing process of monitoring and review by the Health and Safety Commission.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what recent representations he has received concerning the effectiveness of the regulations governing the use of asbestos products in roofing and other building work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* The letter from my hon. Friend, dated 24 November 1993, addressed to me is the only representation received on this matter.

North Norfolk Action

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 29 November, *Official Report,* columns *355-56,* if he will estimate the savings on benefits incurred due to persons leaving the unemployment register after interviews and to persons obtaining employment after participating in the North Norfolk Action scheme, stating the number in each case and the percentage this represents in each case to the number engaged on the scheme; what was the overall expenditure on North Norfolk Action up to 31 October; how much expenditure has been incurred on *(a)* provider fees, *(b)* extra allowances, *(c)* fares to work, *(d)* publicity, *(e)* evaluation and *(f)* Employment Service running costs, showing overall figures and how the provider fees and extra allowances were arrived at; and what is the net saving to the public funds which has resulted from the first six months of North Norfolk Action.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Sir Ralph Howell, dated 8 December 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question about the savings on benefits incurred due to persons leaving the unemployment register after interviews and to persons obtaining employment after participating in the North Norfolk Action Scheme, stating the number in each case and the percentage this represents in each case to the number engaged on the scheme; what was the overall expenditure on North Norfolk Action up to 31 October; how much expenditure has been incurred on (a) provider fees, (b) extra allowances, (c) fares to work, (d) publicity, (e) evaluation and (f) employment service running costs showing overall figures and how the provider fees and extra allowances were arrived at; and what is the net saving to the public funds which has resulted from the first six months of North Norfolk Action.

Up to 31 October 16 people had found work following participation on the North Norfolk Action programme which represents 13·3 per cent. of all participants. The number leaving the register to go into work following Supportive Caseload interviews was 120 representing 35 per cent. of all those given such interviews.

Overall expenditure on North Norfolk Action which had been brought to account by 31 October was £205,182. This was made up as follows:

(a) Provider fees—£87,349.
1,770 trainee weeks at £49·34 (average cost) per week.

(b) Allowances—£85,178.
741 payments (made fortnightly) × £114·94 (average fortnightly payment: represents £47·47 plus £10 per week).
This does not include other payments such as Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit etc., which are not paid by the Employment Service.

(c) Fares to work—£2,455.

(d) Publicity—£1,500.

(e) Evaluation—Work to start in 1994.

(f) Running costs—£28,700.

It is not yet possible to estimate what, if any, benefit savings have resulted from North Norfolk Action. This is because such savings would be achieved only if people leave unemployment quicker than they would have otherwise have done, but without displacing others, and remain out of unemployment for longer. These effects can be estimated only when we have the full results of our planned evaluation. An evaluation exercise of supportive caseload is being conducted by my Research and Evaluation Branch and external contractors will shortly be appointed to assess the effects of participation in North Norfolk Action. Results should be available during 1994.

Nor is it possible to make an estimate of the net effect of North Norfolk Action on the exchequer. For example this would require information about how expenditure on North Norfolk Action might have affected unemployment if it had been used in other ways.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Trawsfynydd Power Station

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the defuelling process will be completed at the Trawsfynydd nuclear power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

This is a matter for Nuclear Electric plc subject to the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorates's requirements as to safety.

HEALTH

Concorde (Staff Flights)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the use of Concorde flights by health staff.

Mr. Sackville: Information about the use of Concorde by NHS staff is not collected centrally. We expect health staff to make proper and economic use of public funds when travelling at public expense.

NHS Senior Managers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will order the chairmen of all health authorities to initiate action to recover all irregular severance payments to NHS senior managers;

(2) when she expects to be able to present to Parliament a report on investigations into irregular payments to and by NHS senior managers.

Dr. Mawhinney: Health authorities are required to make payments in accordance with their statutory powers.

If any payments are found to be irregular we would expect health authorities to consider, in the light of legal advice, to what extent they are recoverable. We supply to the Public Accounts Committee such information as they require following reports from the Comptroller and Auditor General giving cause to do so.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will request the Audit Commission to make a special audit report on the regularity of severance payments to senior managers.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

GP Fundholders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioners expressed an interest in fundholding and received the start-up management and then did not proceed to become a fundholder in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information for 1990-91 is not available. A total of 310 practices expressed an interest in becoming fundholders in 1991-92 with 253 joining the scheme the following April. Six hundred and sixty-eight practices expressed an interest in 1992-93 with 580 joining the following April. Practices are reimbursed for the additional expenditure involved in preparing to manage a fund.

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers; and how many vehicles are involved.

Mr. Sackville: There are five cars and the basic projected annual cost for the current financial year is £253,626.

Respite Care

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many families with children with disabilities have received respite care in each year since 1990; and what are the proposed figures for 1993.

Mr. Bowis: Information about the number of children receiving respite care was first collected centrally, following the implementation of the Children Act 1989, for the period 14 October 1991 to 31 March 1992. No information is collected centrally on the number of families. It is estimated that the number of children with disabilities looked after in England who received respite care during this period, specifically because their parents need relief from problems of stress of caring for them was 2,500.

The decision to offer respite care is a matter for local authorities. Information for the year ending 31 March 1993 is not yet available centrally.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to increase the number of respite carers for families of children with disabilities.

Mr. Bowis: Plans for respite services are a matter for local authority social services departments, according to local need, resources and priorities.

Guy's and Lewisham NHS Trust

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was paid to Peter Griffiths, former chief executive of the Guy's and Lewisham NHS trust, upon his departure from that post.

Dr. Mawhinney: Mr. Griffiths is still employed by the Lewisham National Health Service Trust, which is the successor authority to the Guy's and Lewisham NHS Trust.

NHS Trusts (Salaries)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance she has issued, or is planning to issue, to NHS trusts, regarding pay norms for 1994-95.

Dr. Mawhinney: There is no pay norm in 1994-95.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance has been issued to trust boards, regarding the need to observe a limit on pay rises for trust employees for the current year.

Dr. Mawhinney: On 12 November 1992, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wrote to the chairmen of all health service employing bodies setting out arrangements for restraining public sector pay in the coming year. On 20 January 1993, the chief executive of the National Health Service Management Executive also wrote to general managers and chief executives giving guidance on the application of this policy.

Copies of both letters are available in the Library.

Press and Publicity Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many press and publicity officers are currently employed in her Department; and how many were employed in *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* 1979.

Mr. Sackville: The number of press and publicity officers currently employed is as follows:

Press —13 full time

Publicity—20 full time and 1 part time

Publicity officers are responsible for devising, developing, managing and monitoring a wide range of paid publicity campaigns to further the health promotion and other aims of the Department and the national health service. They are professional buyers of all forms of publicity, for example, advertising, videos, publications and research using around 300 different suppliers.

Information for the years 1979 and 1985 is not available in the form requested.

Human Corpses

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's policy towards the use by hospitals or medical research institutes of human corpses for scientific research into road accidents.

Mr. Sackville: Bodies may be donated to licensed medical schools, either in accordance with donors' wishes or when the family has agreed, under the terms of the Anatomy Act 1984. This Act makes provision for the use of such bodies for the purposes of anatomical examination, which is defined in the Act as examination by dissection for the purposes of teaching or studying or researching into morphology, that is, the study of the form—anatomy—of the body. This precludes the use of such bodies for scientific research into road accidents.

The Human Tissue Act 1961, which in specified circumstances and subject to the consent of the donor permits the use of bodies or parts of bodies for therapeutic purposes or for the purposes of medical education or research, does not preclude the use of bodies for medical research into road accidents.

However, many people will regard the placing of bodies in cars which are then crashed, which is reported to have happened in other countries, as unacceptable as part of medical research. Local research ethics committees, which would have to consider any proposed medical research into road accidents, would be expected to take this viewpoint into account.

Myodil

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to help those suffering from arachnoiditis following treatment by Myodil used in spinal investigations to claim compensation from Glaxo; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Medicines Control Agency complied with a High Court order for discovery of documents relating to Myodil in 1991, but has had no further involvement. Myodil has not been marketed since 1987 when it was withdrawn by its manufacturer.

Broadmoor

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received relating to the extent of racism at Broadmoor; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: We have received no specific representations about racism at Broadmoor hospital, but we recognise, as does the Special Hospitals Service Authority, the importance of ensuring that the needs of black and other ethnic minority patients both there and in the other special hospitals receive proper attention. The recent report of the inquiry into the death of Mr. Orville Blackwood while a patient at Broadmoor made a number of recommendations directed to this. The report was welcomed by the SHSA, which will be reporting to me under the accountability review procedure on progress in implementing the recommendations. Broadmoor hospital has already introduced a strategy for improving services for black and other ethnic minority patients and has appointed a consultant to help establish closer links with relevant community and support organisations. Copies of the report are available in the Library.

Waltham Forest District Health Authority

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she has received relating to Waltham Forest from *(a)* the London initiative zone and *(b)* the London implementation group; and what is the estimated cost of each.

Dr. Mawhinney: Waltham Forest has submitted to the London Implementation Group, primary health care development plans for the years 1993-94 and 1994-95. The plans contain proposals for improving Waltham Forest's primary care infrastructure and for developing innovative practice in primary and community care. The estimated cost of the 1993-94 and 1994-95 proposals is £5 million.

Health Benefit Claims

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1), pursuant to her answer of 29 November, *Official Report*, column 301, on the low income scheme, how many applications in 1992-93 for health benefits were *(a)* incorrectly filled in and returned to the claimant and *(b)* not successful in receiving help towards the item claimed; and what is the average financial help awarded to the claimants;

(2) if she will publish the proposals made by the review into health benefits in respect of reforming or simplifying the AG1 claim form.

Dr. Mawhinney: Proposals for simplifying the national health service low income scheme claim form AG1 remain under consideration. Implementation of any changes will be discussed with those who contributed to the review, including the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, before they are introduced. During 1992-93, approximately 18 per cent. of all claim forms were returned to the claimant for additional information or clarification. Full or partial help was offered on each completed claim form except for 3,000 where a capital holding in excess of £8,000 precluded an award. It is not possible to quantify the average financial help awarded. Holders of low income scheme certificates are entitled to receive national health service services free or at a reduced cost as and when these are needed during the currency of a certificate; they do not receive a specified financial award.

Hospital Admissions

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of patients admitted so far in 1993 to hospitals in Berkshire as *(a)* emergency and *(b)* non-emergency cases were registered at (i) fund-holding and (ii) non-fund-holding general practices.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Richard Eassie, the chairman of Berkshire health authority, for details.

Consultants

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many consultants have been suspended in each of the last 15 years; and how many from each year are still under suspension by regional health authority, district health authority and provider unit.

Dr. Mawhinney; This information is not available centrally.

Self-medication

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimates she has made of the savings possible from her initiative to encourage self-medication.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

GPs

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of patients deregistered by their general practitioners in each of the past five years, nationally and by region.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

NHS Psychogeriatric Care Beds

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration she has given to the report, "NHS Psychogeriatric Continuing Care Beds" published by the Alzheimer's Disease Society, copies of which have been sent to her Department; what action she is taking; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The report, which makes a number of recommendations for Government action, will be given full and careful consideration.

NHS Sight Tests

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations she has had with optometrists concerning the level of expenses to be included in the NHS sight test fee for 1993-94.

Dr. Mawhinney: The optometrists have been consulted as normal, through the established Whitley machinery, about the level of the national health service sight test fee.

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what amount of the current NHS sight test fee is attributable to the reimbursement of optometrists' expenses.

Dr. Mawhinney: The national health service sight test fee contains both a remuneration and expenses element. These components are not separately identifiable.

Estates Information Systems Group

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what are the responsibilities and terms of reference of the national health service estates information systems group;

(2) when the national health service estates information systems group was established; and to whom it reports.

Mr. Sackville: The group was established on 1 April 1992 and is part of National Health Service Estates, an executive agency of the Department of Health. It provides services to the NHS and other clients on a range of estates information systems and software products on a recover of cost basis. It also contributes to reducing the net cost of the agency's services by marketing activity. As part of the agency it is accountable to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff the national health service estates information systems group employs; and what has been its annual budget since it was established, in the current year and its projected annual budgets.

Mr. Sackville: The group employs 16 full-time staff. Since the group was established its annual budgets have been:—

	£ million
1992-93	1·5
1993-94	1·6

As the service is provided on a recovery of cost basis, projected annual budgets will be in line with anticipated demands for its services.

Mentally Ill People (Housing)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many active clients the four mental health teams have set up under the homeless mentally ill initiative; and of these, how many have moved into potentially permanent accommodation;

(2) if she will list for each of the four mental health teams set up under the homeless mentally ill initiative *(a)* the number of active clients, *(b)* how many have moved into potentially permanent accommodation and *(c)* how many clients were lost.

Mr. Bowis *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* The four community psychiatric teams set up under the homeless mentally ill initiative, for which figures are available, have had continuing contact over a period of time, with 1,222 clients; 301 of these have moved into potentially permanent accommodation.

These figures are broken down by each of the teams in the table, which also shows the number of clients lost.

	Clients	*Potentially permanent accommodation*	*Lost*
Focus team (Bloomsbury and Islington)	280	100	30
Mental health team (South East London)	349	102	28
Joint homelessness team (Westminster)	443	66	92
HELP team (East London and City)	150	33	32
Totals	1,222	301	182

Notes:

1. The figures provided by the FOCUS team are estimates.
2. A fifth team set up for Kensington and Chelsea has been running for less than one year. Valid data for this team are not yet available.
3. The category 'potentially permanent accommodation' has not been taken to include the hostels which have been set up under the HMI.
4. The exact definition of 'client' varies between teams.

The figures indicate that the HMI has been very successful in making contact with this vulnerable group of people and bringing a significant proportion of them into care.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people entered a registered care home under the homeless mentally ill initiative *(a)* before and *(b)* after April 1993.

Mr. Bowis *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* Some homeless mentally ill initiative hostels have been set up as residential care homes. These hostels admitted 33 homeless mentally ill people before April 1993 and 27 after that date. In addition 49 homeless mentally ill people identified by the HMI community psychiatric teams entered other residential care homes before April 1993 and 19 after that date.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many units of permanent accommodation have been provided as part of the homeless mentally ill initiative announced in July 1990.

Mr. Bowis *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* We have funded up to 150 specialist short-stay hostel places: five hostels are already open providing 61 places. More hostels are being developed.

Negotiations are currently taking place with interested parties, including the Housing Corporation, over the provision of permanent places to accommodate homeless mentally ill people in London.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Regina *v.* Brown

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will place a transcript of the Regina *v.* Brown appeal in the Library; and whether the case is being sent to further appeal.

The Attorney-General: No transcript of the judgment of the Court of Appeal is yet available.

The Director of Public Prosecutions has invited the Court of Appeal to certify that a point of general public importance arises in relation to the meaning to be attached to the word "use" when applied to personal data within section 5 of the Data Protection Act 1984, and to grant leave to appeal on this point to the House of Lords. It is expected that the matter will be listed in the Court of Appeal before Christmas 1993 in order that the court may consider the application made by the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Attorney-General how much his Department spends annually on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising and *(c)* press advertising; and what were the corresponding figures for 1985 and 1979.

The Attorney-General: The expenditure on press advertising by the Departments for which I am responsible in the financial year 1992-93 was £330,360. Corresponding figures for 1979-80 and 1985-86 can be provided only at disproportionate cost. There was no expenditure on either television or radio advertising in any of the years in question.

Press and Publicity Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Attorney-General how many press and publicity officers are currently employed in his Department; and how many were employed in *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* 1979.

The Attorney-General: There are currently eight full-time and one part-time press and publicity officers employed in the Departments for which I am responsible. There were no such officers employed in 1985 or 1979.

Jonathan Goldberg QC

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Attorney-General if the Serious Fraud Office intends to refer the conduct of Jonathan Goldberg QC in the Levitt case to the Bar Council.

The Attorney-General: No. I understand that the matter has already been referred to the Bar Council.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about the operation of his Department's sensitive documents unit; how many staff are employed in its operation; and approximately how many documents per annum come within its purview.

Mr. David Davis: The Cabinet Office has no "sensitive documents unit". However, all Cabinet Office records are reviewed for continuing sensitivity in the period before their release by a team of up to four part-time reviewers who form part of the Cabinet Office records section. Records are reviewed in accordance with the guidelines contained in chapter 9 of the Open Government White Paper (Cmnd. 2290) of July 1993. Records that are withheld are subject to regular re-review. Approximately 100 linear feet of records are dealt with during a year.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much his Department spends annually on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising and *(c)* press advertising; and what were the corresponding figures for 1985 and 1979.

Mr. David Davis: Expenditure by the Office of Public Service and Science on press advertising in the last financial year was £608,957, of which £589,838 was incurred in connection with the citizens charter. There was no expenditure in this period on television or radio advertising.

The corresponding information for 1985 and 1979 is not available in the form requested.

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers; and how many vehicles are involved.

Mr. David Davis: During 1992-93, the charge to the Office of Public Service and Science for use of the Government Car Service by its departmental Ministers and the Government Whips was £420,088.

Cloud Research

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what help he gives to encourage research *(a)* on how clouds modulate the climate system, *(b)* on cloud radiation problems and *(c)* on cloud profiling radar.

Mr. David Davis: The Government make funds available under the science budget to the research councils, which determine their priorities in accordance with the terms of their royal charters. Such research is supported by the Natural Environment Research Council and the Science and Engineering Research Council.

The NERC is paying specific attention to these matters through a special topic called "Clouds, Aerosols and Radiation", at a total cost of £733,000. It is also supporting four training awards and four research grants, at a total estimated cost of approximately £700,000.

The SERC has assisted in some preliminary studies for a spaceborne profiling radar, as a contribution to the global energy and water experiment of the world climate research programme. It is not possible to disaggregate the cost of this work from other SERC operations.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Mink Farms

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many mink farms have operated in each county in England in each year since 1984; and what is the current figure.

Mr. Soames: Information is readily available only for the last five years. The number of licensed mink farms in England by county, from 1989 to 1993, is shown in the table.

			As at;		
	31 March 1989	*20 February 1990*	*20 February 1991*	*12 March 1992*	*22 July 1993*
Buckinghamshire	1	1	—	—	—
Cheshire	2	1	1	1	—
Cornwall	2	2	1	2	1
Dorset	1	1	1	—	—
Gloucestershire	1	—	—	—	—
Greater Manchester	1	1	—	—	—
Hampshire	2	2	1	1	1
Hertfordshire	1	1	—	—	—
Humberside	2	2	2	1	—
Isle of Wight	1	1	1	1	1
Lancashire	14	12	9	8	4
Lincolnshire	1	1	—	—	—
Norfolk	1	1	1	1	—
North Yorkshire	1	1	—	1	—
Northumberland	1	1	1	1	1
South Yorkshire	1	1	1	1	—
Staffordshire	1	1	1	1	1
Suffolk	4	4	3	3	2
West Sussex	1	—	—	—	—
West Yorkshire	11	8	2	3	2
Wiltshire	2	1	—	—	—
Totals	52	43	25	25	13

Fur Farms

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what animals other than mink or Arctic fox are kept on fur farms in the United Kingdom; what county or region they are in; what number of each particular animal are kept; and what is the minimum statutory cage size for the particular animals concerned.

Mr. Soames: No information is kept on the numbers or locations of particular species kept for fur farming except in respect of mink in the United Kingdom and Arctic foxes in Northern Ireland. There is no legislation governing the minimum cage size for fur-bearing animals.

Rare Breeds

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps her Department is taking to assess the effectiveness of rare breeds in conservation grazing schemes, with particular reference to the Hebridean sheep; and if she will study the means by which set-aside arrangements can be adjusted to help conserve rare breeds and control pernicious weeds.

Mr. Jack: Our current research on conservation grazing does not include any work specific to Hebridean or other rare breeds of sheep. However a recent change to the EC set-aside rules has introduced the possibility of limited grazing of set-aside land in the autumn, including grazing by rare breeds.

Incinerators

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the incinerators in the north-west licensed to incinerate BSE-infected cattle and scrapie-infected sheep; and how many such carcases were destroyed in each of the last 12 months at each incinerator.

Mr. Soames: Incinerators are not specifically licensed for this purpose. One incinerator plant in the north-west in Derbyshire has held a contract with the Ministry for the disposal of carcases of cattle suspected of being affected with BSE since 1 July 1993. Specific information relating to this incineration plant as with all others contracted to the Ministry is classed as commercial-in-confidence.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress her Department is making to implement measures to conform to EC

Regulation 2078/92 regarding premium payments for the preservation of rare breeds of domestic animals; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 7 December 1993]:* Our proposals for implementing EC regulation 2078/92 are based on a careful assessment of environmental priorities and the needs of the countryside. They do not include premium payments for the preservation of rare breeds of domestic animals but do include measures which will benefit local breeds such as, for example, Exmoor ponies in the case of the Exmoor environmentally sensitive area.

Potatoes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is her estimate of the tonnage of *(a)* seed potatoes of each variety and *(b)* ware potatoes by market description growing in England and Wales in (i) 1992 and (ii) 1993; what tonnages of each were sold for *(x)* home and *(y)* foreign seeds, and for human consumption by category; and what was the estimate made in 1992 in each case.

Mr. Jack: The total amount of certified seed grown in England and Wales in 1992 was 35,000 tonnes. A breakdown by variety is given in the table. For 1993 the estimate is 48,000 tonnes, but no varietal split is yet available. However, a breakdown by area grown is given in the table:

Tonnage of certified seed by variety grown in 1992

	Tonnes
Accent	112·1
Ailsa	77·5
Alcmaria	52·9
Aminca	18·9
Arran Comet	140·4
Arran Pilot	23·9
Asterix	3·3
Ausonia	535·4
Balmoral	119·4
Bintje	77·5
Cara	4,547·2
Cleopatra	50·0
Colmo	328·2
Concorde	65·6
Concurrent	85·0
Costelia	1·0
Cultra	22·0
Desiree	1,350·7
Duke of York	0·9
Dundrod	12·0
Epicure	0·3
Estima	6,120·2
Fambo	110·0
Fianna	3·5
Foremost	0·7
Hermes	—
Home Guard	93·2
Kennebec	44·3
King Edward	675·6
Kondor	150·9
Lady Rosetta	45·0
Manna	4·0
Marfona	3,491·0
Marianna	—
Maris Bard	1,364·9
Maris Peer	602·1
Maris Piper	1,415·8
Minerva	362·8
Morene	5·0
Nadine	910·0
Obelix	212·3
Ostara	223·6
Penta	128·6
Pentland Crown	121·4
Pentland Dell	1,002·4
Pentland Hawk	14·4
Pentland Ivory	4·0
Pentland Javelin	378·2
Pentland Lustre	1·2
Pentland Squire	698·8
Pink Fir Apple	25·0
Premiere	588·0
Record	1,157·4
Red Pontiac	29·2
Rocket	—
Romano	3,189·5
Russet Burbank	—
Sante	445·0
Saturna	2,419·6
Sharpes Express	6·3
Shula	—
Stroma	158·5
Ulster Chieftain	3·0
Ulster Sceptre	43·0
Vanessa	214·2
Wilja	1,200·6
TOTAL	35,287·2

Area of certified seed by variety grown in 1993.

Variety	*Hectacres*
First early	
Accent	2·6
Alcmaria	1·6
Aminca	0·4
Arran Comet	5·8
Arran Pilot	0·9
Colmo[1]	13·6
Concorde	4·4
Concurrent	2·8
Duke of York[1]	2·9
Dundrod	1·2
Foremost	0·6
Home Guard	5·3
Manna	0·2
Maris Bard	110·1
Minerva	19·2
Nikita	0·2
Ostara	19·2
Pentland Javelin	24·2
Premiere[1]	20·3
Provost	0·7
Rocket	0·5
Sharpes Express[1]	0·6
Ulster Sceptre	0·1
Vanessa	6·8
Second early maincrop	
Ausonia	14·2
Baillie	0·4
Balmoral	1·6
Bintje[1]	6·0
Brodick	2·0
Cara	232·0
Cornado	0·8
Desiree	75·2
Estima	196·9
Fambo	21·0
Fianna	2·3
Kerr's Pink	0·4
King Edward[1]	28·8
Kingston	1·7
Kondor	7·2
Lady Rosetta	30·5
Marfona	131·5
Maris Peer	43·4
Maris Piper	55·0

Variety	Hectacres
Morene[1]	3·5
Nadine	58·0
Obelix	3·0
Panda	5·5
Pentland Crown	6·6
Pentland Dell	54·2
Pentland Hawk	2·0
Pentland Squire	53·0
Picasso	10·9
Pink Fir Apple	0·4
Record	17·5
Red King Edward[1]	1·3
Remarka	0·6
Romano	102·9
Sante	4·1
Saturna	107·2
Stroma	11·5
Wilja	58·5
Total	1,595·5

[1] Denotes non-immune variety

Estimates of England and Wales seed tonnages sold for (x) home and (y) foreign use are not available. However, current estimates for the United Kingdom are:

Seed (tonnes)

Year grown	1992	[1]1993	[2]1992
(x) home use	515,000	488,000	n/a
(y) foreign use (exports)	30,000	42,000	69,000

[1] Estimate.

[2] Estimated in 1992.

A breakdown by market description of the ware potatoes grown in 1992 and 1993 is not available at the England and Wales level. However, utilisation of potato crops marketed in 1992 and 1993 calendar years is given below. These figures are subject to revision.

Ware (tonnes)

Year	1992	[1]1993	[2]1992
Ware for human consumption of which:	6,821,000	6,026,000	6,902,000
Ware for foreign market: raw	120,000	113,000	98,000
Ware for foreign market: processed (raw equivalent)	76,000	63,000	76,000

[1] Estimate.

[2] Estimated in 1992.

Agricultural Tenancy

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations she has received on reform of the law relating to agricultural tenancy; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Since we published proposals for reform in February 1991, my right hon. Friend has received around 300 representations, almost all of which have expressed support for reform of the kind proposed.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much her Department spends annually on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising and *(c)* press advertising; and what were the corresponding figures for 1985 and 1979.

Mr. Jack: Expenditure on advertising by MAFF in the financial years 1985-86 and 1992-93 was as follows:

	(a) TV	(b) Radio	(c) Press
1985-86	nil	nil	£29,000
1992-93	£475,000	nil	£19,000

Figures prior to 1982-83 are not available in this form since they do not distinguish between expenditure on advertising and other paid publicity.

Sheep Dip

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations she has received over the past 12 months on the use of organophosphate sheep dip; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The Minister has received a number of representations over the past 12 months on the use of organophosphate sheep dip. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) on 1 December.

Press and Publicity Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many press and publicity officers are currently employed in her Department; and how many were employed in *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* 1979.

Mr. Jack: The number of press and publicity officer currently employed by MAFF is 33. The corresponding figure for 1985 is 30. A figure for 1979 is not readily available.

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether she has incorporated the code of practice for information security management, published by the British Standards Institution, into relevant contracts with information technology suppliers.

Mr. Jack: The security requirements for IT systems and services used by central Government Departments including MAFF, are stated in the HMG IT security policy document. This document is supported by use of the CCTA risk analysis and management method and baseline security for IT systems risk analysis methods and by supporting advice and guidance published by the HMG IT security authorities. These are regularly reviewed to ensure best practice, have been developed specifically for use within government and have been in operation in some time. The code of practice for information security management was developed by and established for use by commercial organisations and does not specifically address the requirements for the protection of official information.

Fishing Licences

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many fishing licences have been issued in England and Wales to *(a)* under 10 m vessels and *(b)* over 10 m vessels up to the most recently available date.

Mr. Jack: As at 1 December some 3,900 10 m and under licences had been approved, or were likely to be approved, for issue to fishing vessel owners in England and Wales. There were some 1,690 licensed vessels over 10 m in overall length in the English and Welsh fleet.

Animals (Transit)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will indicate how many animals were found at ports to be unfit to travel further in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* so far in 1993.

Mr. Soames: In 1992 the number of farm animals inspected at portal lairages in Great Britain and found unfit for their international journey was 28,070. Since 1 January this year veterinary inspection of animals for journeys extending beyond United Kingdom territory has been carried out at the point of origin. Numbers of animals so inspected and found to be unfit for their journey are not recorded centrally.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many letters she has received from members of the public indicating that they have seen unsatisfactory treatment of animals in transit so far this year; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Very few representations are received giving first-hand accounts of unsatisfactory treatment of animals in transit. The great majority of the letters received about the transport of animals are the result of general campaigns by animal welfare organisations.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations have been received on the subject of the transportation of live animals since 1 November.

Mr. Soames: Since 1 November the Government have received nearly 17,000 pieces of correspondence, and 10 petitions representing 740 signatures, on the transportation of animals.

Ministers (Foreign Visits)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the Ministers in her Department who since June 1987 have visited *(a)* Saudi Arabia, *(b)* Malaysia, *(c)*Singapore and *(d)* South Africa on official business; and which such visits included party political activities in addition to official duties.

Mr. Jack: In 1988 the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food my right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor) visited Malaysia and Singapore, in 1991 the Minister of State, Baroness Trumpington visited Saudi Arabia and in 1992 the Parliamentary Secretary, Earl Howe, visited South Africa on official business. None of these visits included party political activities.

Fishing (Prosecutions)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many prosecutions there have been since 1988 under the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Acts in respect of vessels that fish for profit in England and Wales.

Mr. Jack: Two owners of vessels in England and Wales have been prosecuted for fishing for profit while unregistered under the Merchant Shipping Act 1988.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment she has made of the extent of the unlicensed dumping of toxic waste off the coast of south Wales.

Mr. Jack: I have no information concerning any illegal dumping of toxic waste off the coast of south Wales. If the hon. Member has suspicions that such an operation is taking or has taken place I would welcome any details he may have and I will arrange for the matter to be fully investigated.

Badger Setts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many licences have been granted to disturb badger setts in each of the last five years; and where were the setts concerned.

Mr. Soames: Legislation requiring the issue of licences to allow interference with badger setts came into force in October 1991. The first licences were issued in February 1992 and the number issued since for each of the Ministry's regions is as follows:

	February to December 1992	*January to October 1993*
Northern Region	1	1
North East Region	5	3
North Mercia Region	28	18
South Mercia Region	13	19
East Midlands Region	11	11
Anglia Region	4	3
South East Region	18	25
Wessex Region	56	105
South West Region	18	23
Total	154	208

Mrs. Browning: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement about the link between badgers and tuberculosis in cattle generally, and in the south-west of England in particular, and about her Department's response to the prevalence of TB breakdowns.

Mr. Soames: Tuberculosis in cattle in some areas and particularly in the south-west of England remains a worrying problem. It has serious implications for animal health and for those farmers who have disease breakdowns in their herds. In the south-west of England this year there have been 197 new confirmed breakdowns up until the end of November, significantly exceeding 121 for 1992 as a whole.

Two independent inquiries have looked into the question of bovine TB and concluded that one of the significant factors is the reservoir of infection in the wild badger population. The second enquiry by Professor Dunnet in 1986 recommended that the Department develop a diagnostic test to detect TB infection in the live badger. This has now been done and the test has been evaluated in field conditions.

The results were presented to a meeting of the consultative panel on badgers and bovine tuberculosis which met on 18 November. While the panel was not unanimous in its views on the way forward, there was general recognition that the Government needed to address the increased incidence of badger-related TB breakdowns. Agriculture Ministers have taken into account the views expressed at the meeting and have decided to set in place an action programme of six measures:

1. research to develop effective vaccines for TB in badgers;
2. research to develop new or improved diagnostic tests for the presence of infection in cattle and badgers;
3. continued monitoring of infection in the wild badger population where appropriate;
4. continued support for research into ways of avoiding transmission of disease from badgers to cattle;
5. co-operation with university departments on proposed studies on the effects of badger removal operations on the badger population and its impact on the subsequent spread of disease within the badger population; and importantly,
6. a trial of a new badger control strategy based on the application of the test for tuberculosis in the live badger.

The trial will be undertaken in the areas of the south-west of England which have the greatest disease problem. The trial will have to run for at least five years to generate scientifically valid results and will look at the effect on the incidence of TB in cattle in the areas surrounding the farm where a TB breakdown occurs.

There will be three approaches: no action at all against badgers where the farmer who has suffered the herd breakdown decides that no action should be taken; the application of the existing strategy of trapping and killing badgers on the farm or part of the farm were the disease outbreak occurrred; and finally, in about half the high-risk areas, an extension beyond the farm to apply the live test and to trap and test badgers on neighbouring farms. The trapping and testing will be carried out on a sett-by-sett basis: where a sett is found to contain one or more badgers positive to TB in the test then the positive badgers and any other badgers caught from that sett will be killed. Setts which test negative will not be disturbed. As in the current strategy no action will be taken if there is no evidence to suggest that the original breakdown in the cattle herd was related to badgers. Agriculture Ministers have also decided to continue the existing policy of not killing any lactating sows which are trapped because of the resulting impact on the cubs which are dependent on her.

In areas outside the trial the existing arrangements will continue which will mean that no action will be taken against badgers on any farm in those areas where there has been a tuberculosis breakdown unless it has been specifically sanctioned by a sub-Committee of the consultative panel on badgers and bovine tuberculosis.

I will be depositing a note in the Library of the House today.

Civil Servants

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list for each civil service grade in her Department *(a)* the total number of people employed, *(b)* the total number of black people and *(c)* the total number of Asians.

Mr. Jack: The information set out in the table as at 1 October 1993 relates to non-industrial staff in MAFF and its agencies and is derived from responses to a voluntary questionnaire completed by 95 per cent. of staff.

By grade	*Total staff*	*Black*	*Asian*
1	1	—	—
2	6	—	—
3	27	—	—
4	12	—	—
5	120	—	1
6	163	—	1
7	920	—	11
SEO	985	4	9
HEO	1,875	8	14
EO	1,839	16	24
AO	2,330	68	76
AA	2,056	85	62
Total	10,334	181	198

The figures are given by grade equivalent and include all permanent staff, excluding casuals. Part-time staff are counted as one. These figures do not include staff who have classified themselves as "other ethnic minority" when responding to the questionnaire.

Equine Viral Arteritis

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she is taking to combat and eliminate equine viral arteritis; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: I am meeting representatives of the equine industry on Thursday 9 December in order to discuss possible action that might be taken to combat future outbreaks of the disease.

Mink

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which type of premises other than fur farms are licensed to keep mink; how many of each type of premises there are; and where they are.

Mr. Soames: For the period 1 April 1992 to 31 March 1993, the most recent for which information is available, licences to keep mink on premises other than a fur farm have been issued to a wildlife centre in Staffordshire and a country park in Lancashire.

Wages Board

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will place in the Library the responses to the consultation on the future of the Agricultural wages board.

Mr. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* Copies of all the responses to the consultation have been placed in the Library of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and are available to public scrutiny.

I am still considering the responses to the consultation. Once I have reached conclusion, a summary of the responses will be made available in the Library of the House.

ENVIRONMENT

Ozone Working Group (Montreal Protocol)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what decisions were taken at the meeting of the Ozone working group of the parties to the Montreal protocol held in Bangkok from 8 to 9 November; and what assessment he has made of the effect on halon production and use in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Yeo: The fifth meeting of the parties to the Montreal protocol took place in Bangkok from 17 to 19 November. The main issue at the meeting was replenishment of the protocol's multilateral fund, and it was agreed that the fund's budget for 1994-96 should be $510 million, which, after taking account of uncommitted resources, implies a $455 million replenishment.

It was also agreed that there should be no continued production of halons in developed countries in 1994 to meet essential uses. This means that there will be no production or supply of new halons in the United Kingdom in 1994.

Durham (Boundary Commission Inquiry)

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the estimated costs of reopening the Boundary Commission inquiry into County Durham; what is the estimated cost to local authorities in Durham; and what additional finance he will make available to them.

Mr. Baldry: The resources which we are making available to the Local Government Commission, £5·124 million in 1993-94 and £8·300 million in 1994-95, should be adequate to enable it to complete all the reviews of local government structure in the shire counties of England by the end of 1994. My right hon. Friend has announced proposals for the arrangements for any start-up costs of local government reorganisation incurred by authorities in 1994-95.

Council Tax

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice his Department has given to local authorities regarding computer systems for operating the council tax.

Mr. Baldry: To assist authorities in specifying the requirements of their computer systems to their suppliers, the Department has funded the production of a council tax requirement specification which was distributed to authorities in March 1992. The Department has also produced detailed guidance on the operation of the tax in the form of nine practice notes and a continuing series of implementation letters.

Homelessness

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with organisations that look after homeless people in *(a)* London and *(b)* other major cities of the United Kingdom as to what help his Department will be giving to such organisations during the Christmas and new year period; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: As part of the Government's rough sleepers initiative, £1·5 million has been allocated to fund seven cold weather shelters in central London this winter. These will provide around 360 bed spaces, open from 1 December to 31 March, for people who would otherwise spend the winter months sleeping on the streets of the capital. A further 280 beds are also available at short notice in the event of particularly severe weather. My officials have been in regular contact with the voluntary sector since July to plan this and to ensure that the programme proceeds smoothly.

In England—the extent of the Department of the Environment's remit—outside central London, housing responsibility for all homeless people properly rests with local authorities, who should include within their housing strategies measures to meet the accommodation needs of people sleeping rough on the streets. To complement these measures the Department is paying £6·45 million in grants this year to over 170 projects around the country run by voluntary organisations to prevent and relieve homelessness.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number of elderly homeless people at risk in central London who do not have access to suitable accommodation.

Sir George Young: The most recent count, undertaken by the voluntary sector in June 1993, found nearly 360 people sleeping rough in central London, of whom about 40 were believed to be aged over 60. Most of these older rough sleepers had been on the streets for at least five years. They will have received several offers of accommodation and resettlement support under the Government's rough sleepers initiative in central London, which will continue for a further two years.

Community Care

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has to support the view that the measures contained in the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 which allow social services authorities to sponsor individual residents of housing association homes will eliminate the need for special needs management allowance and transitional special needs management allowance.

Sir George Young: Local authorities have long had the power to sponsor clients placed in homes run by housing associations. One of the basic rules of the Housing Corporation's distribution of the resources available for revenue grants to such homes has been that Exchequer grant should not be paid in cases where clients are sponsored by their social services authority. To help with the introduction of the new community care arrangements, however, the Government agreed with the Housing Corporation that for the current financial year this "sponsorship" rule should be relaxed. No decisions have been taken yet about the arrangements beyond this financial year, but before they are taken we will take into account the representations which housing associations and others have made about this issue.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has given to the findings contained in the report of the National Federation of Housing Associations, "Funding of Registered Care Homes", a copy of which has been sent to him.

Sir George Young: I plan to meet the chairman and director of the NFHA later this month to discuss the issues raised in its report.

Local Government Review

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the teacher trade unions with regard to their employment conditions in the light of the local government review.

Mr. Baldry: We have received no direct representations from the teacher trade unions, but I have discussed with the Trade Union Congress's local government committee the implications of the review for local government employees in general.

Environmental Reports

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will issue his reports on *(a)* the third annual review of progress on "This Common Inheritance", *(b)* sustainable development, *(c)* biodiversity and *(d)* climate change; and if he will ensure that each report is issued separately for consideration by Parliament.

Mr. Yeo: Regarding publication of the Government's sustainable development strategy for the United Kingdom and the other documents following the earth summit at Rio, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) on 2 December 1993, at column *656*. The third report in the series, "This Common Inheritance", which will take account of the strategy, will be published shortly afterwards. We shall lay the documents before the House in the normal way.

Climate Change Convention

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements have been made for the ratification by the United Kingdom, before the end of 1993, of the climate change convention.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) on 3 December, *Official Report*, column *764*.

Disabled Facilities

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to put an upper limit on disabled facilities grants; what the limit will be; and if it will include value added tax and professional fees.

Sir George Young: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) on 3 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *206*. The £20,000 limit will apply to all mandatory renovation grants, including grants for disabled facilities, for which applications are submitted to local authorities on or after 14 January 1994.

The limit is inclusive of any VAT chargeable on works carried out and professional fees and other ancillary costs incurred by applicants in undertaking grant-aided works. However, works qualifying for mandatory disabled facilities grant are zero rated for VAT purposes.

There is no limit to the size of discretionary disabled facilities grants given by local authorities under part VIII of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

The Solent

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to lay before the House the revised regulations and designated sites for the Solent under the Ramsar convention.

Mr. Yeo: We are waiting for detailed proposals from English Nature for the listing of Southampton Water and the Solent as a Ramsar site.

Environmental Assessment Summit

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will participate in the international summit on environmental assessment, to be held in Quebec city in June 1994.

Mr. Yeo: Yes.

Global Warming

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research he is grant-aiding in relation to the vertical and horizontal measurements of the distribution of greenhouse gases in his global warming programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Global atmospheric research is detailed in "Department of the Environment Global Atmosphere Research Programme 1992-93, Contract Information Schedules", copies of which have been placed in the Library. The research programme includes measurements of the vertical distribution of ozone, monitoring of a range of greenhouse gases, including a contribution to the international global atmospheric gases experiment, and modelling studies of greenhouse gas distribution. The work is carried out in collaboration with the atmospheric sciences programme of the Natural Environment Research Council and is aimed at improving the representation of greenhouse gases in climate models of the Department's climate prediction programme at the Hadley centre, Bracknell.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations his Department received on the consultation exercise on THORP before 4 October; how many of them were in favour of THORP going ahead and how many against; and if he will summarise the conclusions of the exercise.

Mr. Yeo: About 42,500 responses were received during the consultation exercise. They are still being assessed. Detailed information about the responses will be made available once they have all been considered.

Nitrogen Dioxide Monitoring Stations

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) of 1 December, *Official Report*, columns 1034-35, what are the precise locations of the nitrogen dioxide monitoring stations.

Mr. Yeo: The Department of the Environment which monitors nitrogen dioxide continuously at 21 stations. These are located as follows:

Site name and area	*Grid reference*
1. Stevenage, Hertfordshire	TL237225
2. Cromwell Road, London Kerbside	TQ264789
3. West London, London Earls Court	TQ251788
4. Glasgow, Strathclyde	NS595653
5. Manchester, Greater Manchester	SJ838980
6. Walsall, West Midlands	SO995985
7. Billingham, Teesside	NZ470237
8. Sheffield, South Yorkshire	SK403905
9. Bridge Place, London Victoria	TQ289788

Site name and area	Grid reference
10. Lullington Heath, East Sussex	TQ538016
11. Strath Vaich, North Scotland	NH347750
12. Ladybower, Derbyshire	SK164892
13. Central London 2, London Bloomsbury	TQ302820
14. Cardiff Centre, South Glamorgan	ST184765
15. Belfast 2, Belfast Centre	J339744
16. Birmingham Centre, West Midlands	SP064868
17. Edinburgh Centre, Lothian	NT254738
18. Newcastle Centre, Tyne and Wear	NZ250646
19. Leeds Centre, West Yorkshire	SE299343
20. Bristol Centre, Avon	ST594732
21. Liverpool Centre, Merseyside	SJ349908

Merseyside Housing

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many grants for house improvement grants were awarded in the five Merseyside boroughs last year; how many applications are outstanding; what representations his Department has received about targeting resources for house improvements and the redesignation of districts as housing action areas; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Figures showing the number of house renovation grants paid in the Knowsley, Liverpool, St. Helens, Sefton and Wirral local authority areas in 1992 and for the first half of 1993 under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and under the Housing Act 1985 are in the quarterly publication "Local Housing Statistics", issues No. 107, tables 3(a) and 3(b). Figures for the first half of 1993 are provisional. A copy of the publication is in the Library.

The Department does not collect data on the number of house renovation grant applications outstanding.

Over 400 written responses were received following the issue of the consultation paper on the future of private housing renewal programmes on 21 June 1993. I announced short-term changes arising from that consultation on 3 November and I refer the hon. Member to the *Official Report*, column 206.

Liverpool Airport (Planning Application)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will call in the Liverpool airport planning application, consider it in tandem with the Manchester application, appoint the same inspector to consider both and base a decision on a coherent approach to the north-west region as a whole.

Mr. Baldry: I understand that the application was submitted to the relevant local planning authorities on 3 December. It is for those authorities in the first instance to undertake statutory and other consultations and reach a preliminary view on the proposals, before the question of intervention by the Secretary of State would be considered.

Environment Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what matters were discussed; what decisions were taken; and what was the voting record of each member state at the Environment Council in Brussels on 2 December.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 3 December 1993]*: I attended the Environment Council meeting on 2 December in Brussels. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment attended on 3 December.

A common position was reached unanimously on a directive to set further reductions in passenger car emissions. It will apply to all cars sold in the EU as from 1 January 1997. The directive also commits the Commission to come forward, by the end of 1994, with proposals for further substantial reductions in emissions from the year 2000.

The Council agreed that the Community will ratify the Copenhagen amendment to the Montreal protocol. Member states will ratify, as far as possible, simultaneously and not later than 30 June 1994. Political agreement was reached on the proposed regulation on substances that deplete the ozone layer. The production and use of methyl bromide is to be frozen in 1995 at 1991 levels, with a 25 per cent. cut by 1998. The consumption of hydrochlorofluorocarbons is to be capped in 1995, with a cut of 35 per cent. in 2004. The level of the cap will be 2·6 per cent. of the chlorofluorocarbon consumption plus all HCFC consumption in 1989. The production and import of HCFC's will be controlled by quotas once 80 per cent. of the cap, or the year 2000, has been reached. Use controls of HCFC's will be introduced. There will be a duty to recover and to prevent leakages of controlled substances in certain circumstances.

A common position was reached on an amendment to the hazardous waste directive deferring implementation to spring 1995. The United Kingdom abstained because of concern over the definition of hazardous waste which would have had the effect of making all wastes contained on the list deemed hazardous in all circumstances.

The Council discussed progress reports on the amended proposals for directives on waste landfill and the disposal of polychlorinated biphenyls and PCTs. There was an open debate about the Commission Green Paper on remedying environmental damage. My right hon. Friend made clear the Government's concerns about over-restrictive liability regimes. Progress on the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was briefly discussed.

In discussion of implementation and enforcement of Community environmental legislation, the Council agreed to work for the consistent and effective application of legislation in all member states. The Council will review the position in specific sectors at future meetings.

The amended proposals for a directive on packaging and packaging waste and the Community strategy for climate change were discussed at length; the Council will resume discussions on these on 13 December.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Budget

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications of the spending plans and the projections of economic growth and inflation announced on 30 November for the level of aid to developing countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The spending plans announced on 30 November reflect the Government's firm commitment to a substantial and effective aid programme. The aid budget, covering aid to developing countries and assistance to central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, is planned to rise by £83 million by 1996-97, compared with the 1993-94 provision. The Government do not forecast future aid/GNP ratios. The DAC ratios are calculated on calendar year expenditure.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much of the combined aid budget for the current financial year announced on 30 November will be devoted to assistance to *(a)* central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and *(b)* developing countries, as defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The provision for 1993-94, announced last year, is £1,900 million for aid to developing countries and £232 million for assistance to central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. From 1994-95 there will be a combined aid budget. Details of expenditure by country and region will continue to be shown in the annual British aid statistics.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much of the combined aid budget announced on 30 November for each of the years 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97 will be devoted to assistance to *(a)* central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and *(b)* developing countries, as defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The combined aid budget will allow the Government to allocate aid more effectively in response to the needs of countries individually. The main focus of our aid programme will continue to be to reduce poverty and suffering in the poorest countries, particularly those in Africa and Asia, as well as to provide know-how assistance for countries in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The levels of our assistance are carefully reviewed each year in the light of the public expenditure survey outcome. Details of expenditure by country and region will continue to be shown in the annual British aid statistics.

Non-governmental Organisations

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria are used in allocating Government funds to non-governmental organisations working overseas.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: For humanitarian aid we require proposals addressing the assessed needs. The key objective in allocating Government funds in such circumstances is saving lives. The size and scope of the disaster, steps being taken by the local government or by the Red Cross or Red Crescent Society and action taken or proposed by United Nations organisations and other non-governmental organisations are also important factors affecting our decisions.

Funds for long-term development are allocated for activities which are judged to contribute to our aim of promoting sustainable economic and social development and improving the quality of life for poor people generally. Organisations must proviede evidence that they have the capacity to carry out the projects or programmes for which they have sought support. They must also demonstrate that they are able to account properly for the funds.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what methods are used to monitor the spending of non-governmental organisations working overseas that receive financial grants from Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: For disaster relief we receive both narrative and financial reports from non-governmental organisations on the spending of grants. The regularity of reporting depends on the period covered by the grant.

Organisations receiving funds for long-term development work submit regular financial and progress reports and a final report is submitted on completion of the work.

We also undertaken periodic evaluations, in co-operation with NGOs, of their development work and their systems for assessing its effectiveness.

United Nations High Commission for Refugees

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance he is giving to enable the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to respond to emergency situations in the current year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has approved an additional contribution to UNHCR of £1·35 million—equivalent to $2 million—to help replenish its emergency fund. This will enable UNHCR to continue to make initial responses to emergencies, in advance of putting together a longer-term assistance programme.

Britain's overall contributions to UNHCR activities this year now amounts to £50·75 million.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Iraq

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the use of chemical weapons against the marsh Arabs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Reports of the use of chemical weapons in the southern marshes of Iraq last September caused us great concern. We immediately offered resources to the United Nations Special Commission to help it investigate the allegations and a British scientist took part in the UNSCOM 65 mission to the marshes in November. UNSCOM could find no immediate evidence that chemical weapons had been used at the sites visited. However, the mission took a large number of soil, water, fauna and flora samples which are now being analysed. Conclusive results will not be known for some months. We remain committed to supporting UNSCOM in its search and destruction of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

Hong Kong

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the People's Republic of China about the freedom of movement of Hong Kong residents who are holders of BN(O) passports after 1997; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The terms of memoranda exchanged by the United Kingdom and Chinese sides and associated with the Joint Declaration enable Hong Kong residents with British National (Overseas) Passports to use these passports as travel documents after 1997. Under the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law all Hong Kong residents, including BNO passport holders, will enjoy freedom of travel.

Common Foreign and Security Policy

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out in detail the procedures and new mechanisms for co-operation in the field of common foreign and security policy to which he referred in his speech in Bologna on 29 November; and if he will indicate under which specific provisions of the Maastricht treaty each of these procedures and mechanisms is established.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The provisions of title V—common foreign and security policy—of the treaty on European Union, which came into force on 1 November, introduce some new mechanisms to make intergovernmental co-operation among the member states on foreign policy more efficient. Chapter IV of the report on implementation of the treaty on European Union, which was agreed at the Brussels European Council on 29 October, sets out some of the practical details of implementation of the provisions of title V. The report is available in the Library of the House.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government support the proposals by the Belgian presidency of the EU seeking to implement a common code on the publicity given to documents provided to or initiated by the Council of Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Foreign Affairs Council on 6 December agreed a code of conduct for the Council and the Commission to follow in responding to requests by members of the public for access to documents held by the Council or the Commission. We supported the presidency's proposals, which fulfilled a commitment entered into at Maastricht.

World Service

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current position of the new relay station for the World Service in Thailand; and when he expects it to be completed.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have reached agreement in principle with the Thai authorities for the construction of the new relay station. Detailed site survey work, which is required before final project approval can be given, is close to completion. The target date for completion of the project is 1996.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what will be the impact of the reduction in his Department's grant to the World Service of the BBC on the range of language services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The funding provision for the World Service from 1994-95 to 1996-97 will enable it to introduce two new language services, Uzbek and Azeri. There are no plans at present to discontinue any existing language service, but small reductions are likely in the hours of broadcast of a few services.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the BBC on the practical impact of reductions in his Department's grant to the World Service.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The planned funding levels for the 1994-95 to 1996-97 triennium, discussed in advance with the BBC, have been protected despite the toughest expenditure round for years. Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials and the World Service have already provisionally discussed resource allocation for the triennium on the basis of these planned figures. Now that the figures have been confirmed, we will agree with the World Service a more detailed plan for the triennium.

CSCE Meeting

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the meeting of the CSCE Ministers in Rome.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[pursuant to his reply 7 December 1993]:* The fourth paragraph should read:

> "I regret that despite intensive negotiations the Council was unable to agree on any new steps to resolve the conflict dealt with by the Conference on Nagorno-Karabakh."

Unfortunately no agreement was reached at the Rome Council on Nagorno-Karabakh and the Minsk process.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Car Parks

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what steps he is taking or considering to ensure that the large car-parking providers offer a more secure environment for the parking of vehicles;

(2) what steps he is taking to stimulate awareness and activity among car-parking providers on security matters so as to bring their efforts up to those of vehicle manufacturers;

(3) what steps he is taking to ensure that local government car parking providers ensure a higher degree of security in their car parks;

(4) what consultations he is planning with major car parking companies to encourage greater security of car parking facilities;

(5) what consideration he has given to introducing a system by which car owners and drivers can evaluate the safety of available car parking facilities;

(6) what discussions he has had with his European counterparts on the way in which car parking providers can be made more responsible for vehicles parked in their premises for a fee;

(7) what steps he is considering to increase the degree of responsibility borne by car parking providers for the safety of vehicles in their care.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Last year, the Home Office published crime prevention unit paper No. 34, "Preventing Car Crime in Car Parks", a copy of which is in the Library. This was widely distributed.

My predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), met the major car parking operators, local authority associations, consumer bodies and others in January to discuss what could be done to improve car park security. I intend to have a further meeting early next year to review progress.

We urge all car park operators to support the national secured car park scheme, which was launched by the police in September 1992, with Home Office support. Under that scheme, operators can apply for an award if their premises meet prescribed security standards. This enables motorists to identify car parks with good security. Both local authorities and private operators are participating in the scheme. Awards have been made to more than 150 car parks and many more are pending.

There have been no specific discussions with our European counterparts on this matter.

Life Sentences

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inmates serving life sentences are at present being detained in any open prison establishment in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Tom Cox, dated December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the number of inmates serving life sentences being detained in any open Prison Service establishment.

On 31 October 1993, the latest date for which information is available, there were 274 life sentence prisoners detained in open Prison Service establishments in England and Wales.

Prisons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what extra money and staffing is now under consideration by his Department to meet the cost of his policy on prison population; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about resources for dealing with the projected prison population.

Following the recently announced Unified Budget decisions, the Prison Service will give priority to providing and staffing additional places. These include over 2000 new houseblock places in existing prisons by 1996-97, at a total cost of £120m, and approximately 3600 places in six new prisons. The first two of these are expected to be completed in 1997-98. It is intended that they should be privately financed and the costs will depend on the size, design, role, site and ground conditions.

Directly employed staff numbers are planned to increase by 1200 between 1993-94 and 1996-97, at an approximate cost of £30m. It will be for the private contractors to decide the staffing of the new prisons.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current year's budget for each London prison; how much will be spent in the current year in each London prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated December 1993:

Budgets of London Prisons

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the current year's budget for each London prison and how much will be spent in the current year.

The position is set out in the following table:

Establishment	*Annual budget year 1993-94 £*	*Forecast outturn year 1993-94 £*	*Outturn as percentage of budget*
Belmarsh	20,931,948	20,722,799	99·1
Brixton[1]	21,226,193	20,732,800	97·6
Holloway	15,194,894	14,917,646	98·1
Latchmere House	2,199,317	2,174,693	98·8
Pentonville	15,292,359	15,183,192	99·2
Wandsworth	21,022,124	20,859,075	99·2
Wormwood Scrubs	20,029,785	19,776,811	98·7

[1] Includes the addition of £376,000 for plated meals because the kitchen has been closed.

The figures suggest that there will be an underspend at each of the London prisons but the forecast totals are likely to increase as the prison population is rising during the second half of the financial year. Adjustments may be made to allocations in the year.

DNA Genetic Profiling

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will estimate the number of individuals who will provide a non-intimate sample for DNA genetic profiling purposes by the year 2000, 2010 and 2020 under his proposals; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The numbers will depend upon the extent to which police forces make use of the powers that the Government propose to give to them.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what period he intends that DNA genetic profiles will be retained; and whether the length of time will be affected by the nature of the offence.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government do not propose to set any statutory limit on the period during which the DNA records of those convicted of recordable offences can be retained.

Prisons (Hospital Beds)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of hospital beds at each of the London prisons on 15 November; and what was the number of prison inmates being held in each of the prison hospital wings.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated December 1993:

I have been asked to reply to your recent Question about prison hospital beds at each of the London prisons on 15 November.

I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his earlier Question on 2 December 1993 (column 671).

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how costs are borne in respect of inmates treated at the hospital of a prison other than the one on whose roll they are counted.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about costs in respect of inmates treated at the hospital of a prison other than the one on whose roll they are counted.

When a prisoner is transferred to another prison for medical reasons, the accommodation, treatment and related costs are customarily borne by the receiving prison. The transport costs are borne by the sending prison.

Baroness Thatcher

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of police security provided for Baroness Thatcher to sign copies of her memoirs at bookshops.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not held centrally.

Car Boot Sales

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which police forces regularly patrol car boot sales where the sale of stolen goods is suspected.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Decisions about the deployment of officers are operational matters for chief officers.

Computer Pornography

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the most frequent means of distribution of computer pornography to children.

Mr. Maclean: I am aware of reports of cases where computer disks containing pornography have exchanged hands in school playgrounds, although it is impossible to estimate reliably how many children may have been exposed to computer pornography in this way. In such cases the police are able to act under the Obscene Publications Acts 1959 and 1964. There is also evidence of pornographic material being transmitted along public telephone lines from computer bulletin boards. Such activity is an offence under the Telecommunications Act 1984.

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements he has made for the current year's review of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989; and how observations from interested persons or organisations should be submitted for consideration.

Mr. Howard: I am glad to say that Mr. J. J. Rowe QC, this year's chairman of the Bar Council, has accepted my invitation to succeed Viscount Colville of Culross QC in carrying out this annual review. Viscount Colville has performed this task with great dedication and integrity and has deservedly won widespread respect. I am extremely grateful to him for this invaluable public service.

Written observations about the operation of the Act should be submitted to Mr. Rowe, c/o Room 647, Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT by 15 January 1994.

Prison Deaths

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the death of Nauwit Zinzuwadia at Her Majesty's prison Welford road, Leicester;

(2) how many deaths there have been in each year and in which prisons in each of the last 15 years; what percentage of those deaths have been suicides; and what other categories of death have been registered;

(3) what steps he is taking to reduce the number of deaths in prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Keith Vaz, dated December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your three recent Parliamentary Questions about deaths in custody.

Death of Nauwit Zinzuwadia at Leicester Prison

You asked for a statement about the death of Mr. Zinzuwadia in Leicester prison on 16 June this year. I will endeavour to explain the sequence of events, but may I say at the outset how very saddened we in the Prison Service are by this tragedy.

Mr. Zinzuwadia was received into Leicester prison from Leicester Magistrates' Court on 24 July 1991 charged with burglary, threats to kill, affray, and having an imitation firearm with intent.

Upon reception, Mr. Zinzuwadia did not display any suicidal tendencies although he did report a history of alcoholism, and treatment for depression at Leicester General Hospital.

Mr. Zinzuwadia was granted bail on 11 September 1991. On 7 January 1992 he was committed for trial to Leicester Crown Court, and on 5 October 1992 he was convicted of affray and possessing an imitation firearm with intent, and was remanded for pre-sentence reports.

On 30 October 1992 he was sentenced to 30 months' imprisonment, and on 10 November 1992 he was transferred to Ashwell Prison.

At Ashwell Mr. Zinzuwadia was treated for various minor physical complaints, but did not show any psychiatric symptoms until 18 May 1993, when he was diagnosed as depressed and paranoid but not suicidal. Anti-depressive medication was prescribed and Mr. Zinzuwadia was to be seen again the following day.

It appears from the medical records that Mr. Zinzuwadia expressed dislike of the open regime at Ashwell. On 19 May consideration was given to transferring Mr. Zinzuwadia to Leicester after his condition was reviewed and continued to cause concern. Initially, Dr. de Silva at Leicester was not prepared to accept Mr. Zinzuwadia due to pressure on accommodation in the small health care centre at that prison. After discussions with the Duty Principal Medical Officer, however, the transfer was agreed. On arrival at Leicester Mr. Zinzuwadia was located in the ward and he was seen by Dr. de Silva on 20 May. Mr. Zinzuwadia indicated that he was being "got at" by other inmates at Ashwell and felt unable to cope with prison. He displayed no suicidal

Mr. Zinzuwadia settled well at Leicester and associated normally with other prisoners. On 24 May his medical condition was reviewed. He was assessed by Dr. de Silva as stable, level in mood and displaying no evidence of serious mental disorder or suicidal ideation, and was returned to Ashwell. His symptoms are ascribed to cannabis abuse, and he was warned about this.

On 15 June Mr. Zinzuwadia became disturbed, assaulted a member of staff and had to be restrained using Control and Restraint techniques. He appeared to have become paranoid about staff. Dr. Moore, the medical officer at Ashwell, was concerned about Mr. Zinzuwaida's disturbed mental state and contacted Dr. de Silva to see whether Mr. Zinzuwadia could be returned to Leicester. She considered he needed further psychiatric assessment at the parent health care facility at Leicester. It was agreed that Mr. Zinzuwadia was suitable for transfer. On arrival back at Leicester Mr. Zinzuwadia was placed in single furnished accommodation in the health care centre under normal observation.

At 8.30 hours on 16 June Mr. Zinzuwadia made a phone call to his wife, and was permitted to make further calls on the official line as his phonecard had been used up. A Health Care Officer noted that the phone conversation seemed normal.

Later that morning Dr. de Silva interviewed Mr. Zinzuwadia and concluded that he was displaying symptoms of an acute paranoid psychosis. He prescribed 100mgs of Largactil to be taken three times a day. No suicidal tendencies or fears of injury from anyone else were identified. Mr. Zinzuwadia was located in single accommodation as a precaution, as he had recently been displaying paranoid tendencies and had assaulted staff only 24 hours previously.

Later on 16 June Mr. Zinzuwadia requested a family visit for the following day, and this request was agreed by Dr. de Silva, who noted that he did not seem in a depressed mood at this time. Dr. de Silva saw him again on the landing of the health care centre at around 15.30 and noted no signs of distress.

At 18.30 on 16 June both a Health Care Officer and an inmate cleaner spoke to Mr. Zinzuwadia after the evening meal and he gave no obvious indications of any distress, although the Health Care Officer formed the view that Mr. Zinzuwadia "didn't seem talkative".

At 19.10 on 16 June the same Health Care Officer looked in to Mr. Zinzuwadia's cell and saw that he was standing against the window bars, opposite the cell door. He was looking towards the floor, and his arms were hanging down by his side. The Health Care Officer spoke to Mr. Zinzuwadia, who did not reply, so he entered the cell and established that Mr. Zinzuwadia was hanging from the window bars by a ligature made of white cord. He supported Mr. Zinzuwadia by using his own body to wedge Mr. Zinzuwadia's body against the window bars while he unhooked the ligature from around the neck. He carried Mr. Zinzuwadia to the bed, shouted for help, and began resuscitation. No pulse was detected.

An inmate responded to the shouts, ran to the cell and at the Health Care Officer's request ran to the office to summon help. The inmate also collected a resuscitation box from the treatment room.

Another officer then arrived with Dr. Chahal, and resuscitation was continued. An external ambulance crew also arrived and attempted to monitor Mr. Zinzuwadia's respiration. After discussion between Dr. Chahal and the ambulance crew, resuscitation was discontinued, and Mr. Zinzuwadia was pronounced dead at 19.30 hours.

At the inquest, the jury concluded that he died from suicide whilst the balance of his mind was disturbed. There was no finding of any lack of care on the part of the Prison Service.

Deaths in custody 1978-1993

You asked for a breakdown of deaths in custody by Prison Service establishment since 1978, distinguishing suicides from other deaths. The information is set out in the attached tables. Information about suicides includes all apparent self-inflicted deaths.

Measures to reduce deaths in prisons

There are generally around 70-80 deaths in Prison Service custody each year. A little over half of these (41 in 1992) are self-inflicted. Most of the remainder are by natural causes. I shall assume that our interest lies principally in self-inflicted deaths.

Suicide is a very complex problem, to which there is no simple or single solution. There are many vulnerable people in prison, and we cannot remove all the causes of distress which lead to emotional crisis. Identifying prisoners at risk is an imprecise science, and much depends on the willingness of prisoners to confide their feelings in staff or volunteer befrienders. It is also extremely difficult, without resort to oppressive measures, to prevent a prisoner who is absolutely determined to kill himself from doing so.

The Prison Service is, however, committed to the care of prisoners and we are taking a wide range of measures to enhance the quality of care. Our strategy involves both "primary care" to create an environment which helps prisoners to cope with problems, combined with "special care" to identify and support prisoners in times of crisis. The strategy aims to minimise the risk of suicide though it cannot eliminate it.

The key elements of primary care are good relationships between staff and prisoners, active regimes, decent physical conditions and maintaining a safe and ordered environment. This includes action to reduce bullying: one of the main causes of suicidal crisis, particularly among young prisoners. We issued an anti-bullying guide to establishments in June.

Personal officer schemes have now been introduced into the vast majority of establishments. The relationship between the personal officer and the prisoner is the crucial first line of help with the prisoner's problems.

Our approach to the provision of special care is multi-disciplinary. Suicide is far from being simply a medical problem and we aim to involve the whole prison community. All establishments have Suicide Awareness Teams which meet regularly to review local policy, monitor incidents and develop new ideas. They also maintain staff and prisoner awareness and identify training needs. We have a dedicated Suicide Awareness Support Unit in Prison Service Headquarters to develop national policy and spread good practice.

Branches of the Samaritans are represented on local Suicide Awareness Teams and at most establishments visit prisoners regularly. Some also have special phone links. Samaritan services to prisoners are co-ordinated by a national liaison officer.

"Listener" Schemes, in which selected prisoners are trained by the Samaritans to befriend other prisoners in distress, are now established in 40 prisons and planned in many others. You may be aware that Leicester prison is currently introducing a Listener scheme.

Staff training in suicide awareness has been reviewed in the light of new research, and a new package recently issued to establishments, together with a video ("Misadventures") which was produced in collaboration with the Samaritans.

We have also carried out a thorough review of our procedures and documentation for managing prisoners identified as at risk. This review has taken as its starting-point Judge Tumim's conclusion in his report of 1990 that the existing procedures relied too heavily on medical assessment and treatment. New procedures, which will be introduced by 1 April 1994, aim to improve communication and teamwork, and particularly to make greater use of the skills of prison officers in identifying, counselling and supervising those at risk.

A new screening form will also be introduced, aimed at improving the way prisoners' health care needs—both physical and mental health—are identified on reception. Assessment of suicide risk will continue to be part of the new reception procedure.

The provision of specialist health care services remains an important aspect of the strategy, particularly where suicide risk is related to treatable psychiatric problems. The Director of Health Care is carrying out a comprehensive programme of development aimed at ensuring that prisoners have access to the same standards of health care in prison as people in the community. Where prisoners are suffering from mental disorders under the Mental Health Act 1983 the policy of the Government is that they should be cared for within the NHS rather than the penal system.

The Prison Service, the Criminal Department of the Home Office and the Department of Health are together taking a range of measures aimed at diverting mentally disordered people from prison, improving the psychiatric assessment of prisoners and facilitating transfers to hospital under the 1983 Act in appropriate cases.

As the tables accompanying this letter are too lengthy to be produced in Hansard, copies have been placed in the House of Commons Library.

SCOTLAND

Common Fisheries Policy

13. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last attended a meeting of the Fisheries Council to discuss developments in the common fisheries policy as they affect the Scottish fleet; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: I attend Fisheries Councils regularly, the most recent being the Luxembourg Council in October, and will do so again on December 20.

Hospital Waiting Lists

14. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the health service in Scotland to discuss hospital waiting lists.

Mr. Stewart: My noble and learned Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health last discussed hospital waiting lists with health board chairmen on 25 June. Departmental officials last discussed the matter with health board general managers on 27 October.

Sport and Recreation

16. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for the development of sport and recreation in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: The Government's policies for sport and recreation in Scotland are implemented principally through the Scottish Sports Council, which receives annual grant-in-aid from my right hon. Friend. The council's objectives are to increase participation and improve performance in sport and recreation at all levels.

Education (Administration)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in respect of each local education authority area in Scotland in each year since 1986 the number of people who are *(a)* wholly engaged in administration, *(b)* engaged in administration and teaching and *(c)* wholly engaged in teaching.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* The table details the full-time equivalent number of lecturers and teachers employed in Scottish local education authority areas as at March in the respective years. No information is held centrally on the number of lecturers, teachers and other staff who, either wholly or partly, carry out an administrative role. The information is taken from the joint staffing watch, a survey run jointly by the Scottish Office and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. Specific information on the numbers of school teachers can be found in the statistical bulletin "Pupils and Teachers in Education Authority Primary and Secondary Schools".

Lecturers and teachers, by local education authority area in Scotland
March 1986 to March 1993

Full-time equivalents

	1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Borders	1,202	1,187	1,190	1,178	1,189	1,225	1,252	1,281
Central	3,358	3,301	3,310	3,307	3,208	2,956	2,959	2,951
Dumfries and Galloway	1,753	1,748	1,748	1,722	1,696	1,713	1,713	1,713
Fife	4,287	4,228	4,248	4,259	4,247	4,264	4,215	4,443
Grampian	5,888	5,871	5,827	5,571	5,898	5,878	6,205	6,015
Highland	2,396	2,632	2,657	2,644	2,703	2,786	2,859	2,892
Lothian	7,787	7,970	7,856	7,868	7,855	7,887	7,705	7,912
Strathclyde	27,643	27,746	27,396	27,286	28,102	27,442	27,389	27,351
Tayside	4,609	4,580	4,634	4,711	4,820	4,733	4,618	4,630
Orkney	260	267	263	281	287	286	291	302
Shetland	398	398	400	409	421	442	451	481
Western Isles	501	513	517	488	495	472	476	444
SCOTLAND	60,083	60,441	60,045	59,724	60,919	60,085	60,133	60,415

Health Care (Glasgow)

17. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet the chairman of the Greater Glasgow health board to discuss health issues in the Glasgow area.

Mr. Lang: I refer the Gentleman to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway).

22. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet the chairman and the board of Greater Glasgow health board to discuss health matters in Glasgow; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I would be happy to meet the chairman of Greater Glasgow health board on a mutually convenient date to discuss health matters in Glasgow.

Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh

18. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the starting date of the proposed new Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh.

Mr. Stewart: Lothian health board's acute services strategy, which includes proposals for a new Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, is currently out to public consultation. My right hon. Friend looks forward to considering the proposals in detail once public consultation is complete and the board has submitted its final plans to him for approval.

Jetstream Factory, Prestwick

19. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with other Departments concerning the future of the Jetstream factory at Prestwick; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The Scottish Office has been in close touch with colleagues in other Departments, in particular the Department of Trade and Industry, about Jetstream Aircraft. The Government's commitment to the future development of the Prestwick manufacturing factory is evidenced by a substantial offer of regional selective assistance—one of the largest offers ever made in Scotland.

Structural Plans

20. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy on accepting or amending draft structural plans from regional councils.

Mr. Lang: Policy guidance on structure plans is set out in SDD circular 32/1983 and planning advice note 37, a copy of which is available in the Library.

European Regional Development Fund

21. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total value of grants that Scotland has received from the European regional development fund since its inception.

Mr. Stewart: Since the inception of the European regional development fund in 1975, Scotland has benefited from awards totalling almost £1·2 billion.

Scottish Enterprise

23. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the budget of Scottish Enterprise.

Mr. Stewart: Scottish Enterprise's budget for 1993-94 stands at £451·3 million. My right hon. Friend shall be announcing shortly Scottish Enterprise's budget for 1994-95 in his statement on public expenditure in Scotland.

Drugs-related Deaths (Glasgow)

24. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will establish a full public inquiry into drugs-related deaths in Glasgow.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. A conjoined fatal accident inquiry was held into four of these deaths on 1 and 2 November. To enable consideration to be given to the wider policy issues, the Crown Office has made available to the Scottish Office information collected by the procurator fiscal about these four and other similar deaths during the past two years. This information is being studied by the drugs task force under the chairmanship of my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State which is currently reviewing policies to tackle drug misuse in Scotland.

Salmon

25. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further measures he proposes to take to assist the Scottish salmon farming industry.

Sir Hector Monro: The minimum import price for Atlantic salmon introduced by the European Commission with effect from 20 November provides a temporary floor to the EC market. I hope that the industry will respond quickly to the Commission's invitation to update the information it submitted in 1991 in support of allegations of dumping on to the EC market by Norwegian exporters, so as to allow a further investigation to proceed. In addition, Scottish Office officials have met the Commission Services about the introduction from 1 January 1994 of a reference price for salmon to provide a basis for any future safeguard action, as well as discussing with the industry the possible establishment of producer organisations and other measures to reduce cyclical fluctuations and market imbalance for salmon.

34. **Mr. Kynoch:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of rod-caught Salmon on Scottish east coast rivers in the last recorded year and five years ago.

Sir Hector Monro: My Department's catch statistics show that 64,124 salmon and grisle were caught by rod and line on Scottish east coast rivers in 1992 as compared with 69,439 in 1988.

Set-aside

26. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the European Union set-aside rules and payments for Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: Since the introduction of the arable area payments scheme my right hon. Friend and I have received representations about the set-aside rules and about payments from a number of organisations and individuals.

32. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the arable set-aside scheme.

Sir Hector Monro: The main purpose of the set-aside element of the arable area payments scheme is to reduce arable production in all member states. It therefore has an important role to play in meeting the objectives of reform of the common agricultural policy.

River Clyde (Dredging)

27. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when his officials last met representatives of Clydeport Ltd. to discuss the dredging of the River Clyde.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Office officials meet Clydeport Ltd. from time to time. Such contacts cover a range of topics.

Local Government (Monklands)

28. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last discussed the standard and quality of local government in the Monklands area of Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: My colleagues and I continue to take a close interest in the provision of local government in the Monklands area, as elsewhere in Scotland.

Howie Report

29. **Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress is being made with regard to the consideration of the Howie report in view of the representations which have been received.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am still considering the Howie committee's proposals for the reform of upper secondary school awards in Scotland in the light of the representations which have been received. Decisions will be announced as soon as possible.

House Building

30. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many public sector houses were built in Scotland last year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is contained in table 5 of the Scottish Office Statistical Bulletin (Housing Series) No. HSG/1993/8—"Housing Trends in Scotland"—which is available in the House Library.

Industrial Waste

31. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for making safe sites contaminated by industrial waste; and what will be the cost to the Exchequer.

Sir Hector Monro: Responsibility for dealing with contaminated sites rests with the site owners. Any Government contribution towards the cost of decontamination is likely to come mainly through the Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise networks, which have between them £95 million to devote to environmental activity, including decontamination work. The level of priority and resources to be allocated to such work is a matter for the local enterprise companies to decide.

As far as local authorities are concerned, the capital allocation to their general services budget is not targeted and it is for each council to determine its own priorities for expenditure on any such work.

Homelessness

33. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further steps he is taking to tackle homelessness in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Housing authorities have the statutory responsibility for dealing with homelessness. On 1 December I announced £4·35 million extra resources for expenditure on 36 homelessness projects by housing authorities in 1993-94.

This is in addition to the £513 million allocated to housing authorities in March for investment in public and private housing in 1993-94. Homelessness is one of the three priorities which housing authorities have been asked to address in their housing strategies and output targets.

Agriculture

35. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the National Farmers Union to discuss current financial problems in Scottish agriculture.

Sir Hector Monro: I have regular meetings with the National Farmers Union of Scotland at which we discuss current issues and prospects for the farming industry. The last such meeting took place on 13 October. My right hon. Friend last met the SNFU on 24 November.

Fatal Accident Inquiries (Payment)

36. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now review the regulations and rules governing eligibility for payment from public funds to those represented at fatal accident inquiries.

Mr. Lang: I have no plans to do so.

Irvine Development Corporation

37. **Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further consideration he has given to the wind-up programme for Irvine development corporation.

Mr. Stewart: The consultation exercise on the making of wind-up orders for Irvine, Cumbernauld and Livingston development corporations has now been completed. After giving careful consideration to the responses received, I have now made wind-up orders for all three corporations. These orders will come into effect on 1 January 1994 and will provide for the wind-up of the corporations to commence on 1 January 1994 and be completed by 31 December 1996. They also include provision for the revocation of the corporations' special development orders on 31 March 1996 with protection to preserve the effect of any certificate of authorised development for a further period of five years.

Firth of Forth (Road Bridge)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what public consultation he proposes to hold on whether a second road bridge should be built across the Firth of Forth at Queensferry; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The proposal for a new bridge across the Firth of Forth is part of a package of proposals which includes improvements to road, bus and rail services in the cross-Forth and west of Edinburgh areas.

Other proposals were identified in the Government's paper "Setting Forth" which was the subject of wide-ranging public consultation in 1992. A scheme to build a new bridge would be subject to the usual statutory procedures, which would include formal consultation before a possible public inquiry.

Forestry Commission Land

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in respect of which areas of Forestry Commission land assurances have been issued that they will not be privatised; and according to what criteria these decisions are made.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 November 1993]:* Ministers will await the advice of the Forestry Review Group before considering what action, if any, should be taken in respect of the ownership and management of Forestry Commission woodlands.

Mr. Laurence Peterken

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what conditions were attached to the appointment of Mr. Laurence Peterken to the NHS executive.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* A condition of Mr. Laurence Peterken's appointment as special projects director was that he agreed not to pursue any action against Greater Glasgow health board.

DEFENCE

Eurofighter 2000

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what stage of development has been reached in the Eurofighter 2000 project; and if he will make a statement with particular reference to the partnership between the Government and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Aitken: I met my German opposite number, State Secretary Schönbohm, in Munich last month. We reviewed the progress of the EF 2000 development programme with the senior management of the German and United Kingdom partner companies in the Eurofighter consortium, and were assured that first flight would occur in April 1994 and that there are no major technical problems affecting this or other aspects of the development programme. We agreed on the importance of the project to both countries.

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has incorporated the code of practice for information security management, published by the British Standards Institution, into relevant contracts with information technology suppliers.

Mr. Aitken: The code of practice for information security management has been developed by, and established for use by, commercial organisations; it does not specifically address the requirements for the protection of official information. The security requirements for IT systems and services used by central Government Departments have been developed specifically for use within Government, and are reviewed regularly to ensure best practice.

Defence Radiological Protection Service

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the unclassified reports produced by the Defence Radiological Protection Service since January 1992; and if he will place copies of each unclassified report in the Library.

Mr. Hanley: The list of reports is given:

Title	*Report number*
Marine Environmental Radioactivity Surveys at Nuclear Submarine Berths in United Kingdom—1991. ISBN 0 11 772746 6 (Available from HMSO at £10·50)	
Survey of the Garden at 1 and 2 Repository Road, Woolwich	1/92
DRPS Compendium of PQs and Answers for 1990 and 1991	2/92
Marine Environmental Radioactivity Survey—Hong Kong	3/92
HMNB Chatham—Dose Statistics 1970-1989	4/92
Marine Environmental Radioactivity Survey of the Falkland Islands	5/92
Determination of the Neutron Sensitivity of Thermoluminescent Detectors	6/92
Response of the MD 3 Radiac Instrument	7/92
Marine Environmental Radioactivity Survey—Gibraltar 1992	12/92
MOD Tritium Inventory	13/92
DRPS RADON Dosimetry Service—Investment Appraisal	14/92
Acceptance Testing of Temperature Controlled Baths	15/92
Laboratory Support to RAF St. Athan	16/92
RPA Group Performance Indicators	17/92
Laboratory Support to RAF Carlisle—12/92	1/93
RAF Carlisle Clearance Survey	2/93
Laboratory Support to RAF Carlisle—1/93	3/93
Laboratory Support to RAF Brize Norton 2/93	4/93
Generic and Inherited Effects of Radiation	5/93
Marine Environmental Radioactivity Survey—Bermuda 10/92	6/93
Radiofrequency Survey of Little Content Farm	7/93
Laboratory Support to RAF Carlisle—3/93	8/93
Marine Environmental Radioactivity Survey of Holy Loch 1992. ISBN 0 11 772764 4 (Available from HMSO at £8·50)	
Marine Environmental Radioactivity Survey—Diego Garcia 11/92	10/93
Dose Statistics 1992	11/93
Training of Health Physics at DRPS	12/93
Investigation to Determine Background Levels of Radon in DRPS Radon Dosimetry Laboratory	14/93
Laboratory Support to RAF Carlisle—8/93	15/93
Etch Envelope Investigation for Radon CR-39 Elements	16/93
Ditton Park Surveys	17/93 18/93 19/93
Laboratory Support to INM Training	20/93
Flushing of CR-39 Storage Cabinets	21/93

Title	*Report number*
Marine Environmental Radioactivity Surveys at Nuclear Submarine Berths in United Kingdom—1992	[1]—

[1] To be published by HMSO at end of 1993.

I will arrange for copies to be placed in the Library.

Radioactivity Surveys

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statment on the findings of *(a)* the marine environmental radioactivity survey of Gibraltar, DRPS report 12/92, *(b)* the marine environmental radioactivity survey of Hong Kong, DRPS report 3/92, *(c)* the marine environmental radioactivity survey of Bermuda, DRPS report 10/92 and *(d)* the marine environmental radioactivity survey of Diego Garcia DRPS report 11/92.

Mr. Hanley: The reports referred to are part of a routine programme of environmental radioactivity surveys which is carried out by the Defence Radiological Protection Service around all berths in the United Kingdom and dependent territories that are used by nuclear powered warships. In each case, the findings demonstrate that there has been no radiological hazard to any member of the public as a result of nuclear powered warship operation.

Sea Harrier Squadrons

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for Royal Navy Sea Harrier squadrons to request participation in flag exercises in north America.

Mr. Hanley: There are no plans to request participation by Royal Navy Sea Harriers in flag exercises in north America.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for Royal Navy Sea Harrier squadrons to conduct training at Canadian forces base Goose Bay.

Mr. Hanley: There are plans for Royal Navy Sea Harriers to conduct training at Goose Bay.

RAF Aircraft (Goose Bay)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many weapons, and of what types, were dropped by Royal Air Force aircraft during training from Canadian forces base Goose bay in each year since 1989.

Mr. Hanley: Numbers of practice weapons dropped in the southern low-level training area weapons range are as follows:

	1992	*1993*
Inert 1,000 lb bombs	285	100
Inert 28 lb practice bombs	315	180

There is no regulatory requirement to hold records of weapons expended for more than one year; details of weapons dropped in the years before 1992 are therefore not available.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the requirements of *(a)* Royal Air Force Tornado GR1 units and *(b)* Royal Air Force Tornado F3 units for use of medium level airspace for training at Canadian forces base Goose bay.

Mr. Hanley: The RAF's principal requirement for training at Goose bay is to enable Tornado GR1s to practice operational low flying and to conduct day/night, all-weather, terrain-following radar operations. There is, therefore, no requirement for Tornado GR1s to operate in medium-level airspace other than on the rare occasions when aircraft require an air test. Tornado F3s deployed to Goose bay would not plan to operate regularly at medium level, although they may do so from time to time in support of the low-level training sorties of other aircraft.

Military Aircraft (Practice Interceptions)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what are the minimum horizontal ranges to which a military aircraft carrying out a practice interception on a non-co-operating civil aircraft is permitted to approach its target;

(2) if he will make a statement on the changes made to procedures for practice interceptions of civil airliners, following the aircraft proximity hazard incident off Fife on 22 October 1992;

(3) what instructions are contained in the group air staff orders of No. 11 Group Royal Air Force, concerning the procedures to be followed by RAF aircraft conducting practice interceptions of non-co-operating civil aircraft.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 29 November 1993, *Official Report,* column *369.*

Armed Forces (Commitment)

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made on the ability of the armed forces, on the completion of "Options for Change", to meet all the commitments in NATO, Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Falklands, Cyprus and emergency duties; what areas will have priority; and which areas will have to be reassessed.

Mr. Hanley: The Government's plans for force restructuring are set out in "Defending Our Future", the 1993 Statement on the Defence Estimates. They are kept under constant review to ensure that Britain's armed forces remain well placed to meet our commitments at home and overseas. We have demonstrated our readiness to make adjustments to our plans to ensure that this remains the case.

Fife (Aircraft Proximity Hazard Incidents)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what access the joint airmiss working group had to the recordings of radio communication between the RAF Buchan air defence radar unit and the RAF Tornado involved in an aircraft proximity hazard incident with an Air UK BAe 146 aircraft off Fife on 22 October 1992, for the purposes of their investigation into that incident.

Mr. Hanley: The joint airmiss working group did not investigate this incident, which was reported under the parallel aircraft proximity hazard—APHAZ—scheme. APHAZ reports are investigated initially by the Civil Aviation Authority and analysed by an independent body of aviation, civil and military specialists known as the joint APHAZ assessment panel—JAAP. In this case, the JAAP had no access to the radio recordings or transcripts from RAF Buchan since these were classified. The JAAP did, however, receive reports from RAF Buchan and RAF Leuchars, the home base of the Tornado aircraft involved in the incident.

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the operation of his Department's sensitive documents unit; how many staff are employed in its operation; and approximately how many documents per annum come within its purview.

Mr. Hanley: MOD records are reviewed for continuing sensitivity in accordance with the guidelines set out in the open government White Paper—Cm 2290.

There are 27 mostly part-time reviewers—equivalent to 15 full time—five of which—three full time—are employed on sensitivity review. Records reviewed are accounted for in linear footage. In the 12 months to 31 October 1993, some 340 linear feet of records were examined by the sensitivity reviewers.

Nitro-cellulose and Nitro-glycerine

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there is a strategic requirement for the United Kingdom to retain the capability to produce nitro-cellulose and nitro-glycerine for small arms ammunition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: We do not regard the maintenance of this capability in the United Kingdom as a strategic necessity. As with all elements of the defence industrial base, however, we monitor developments in the industry carefully.

Bosnia

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many vehicles are currently in use by British forces in Bosnia; how many offer full armoured protection to the occupants; and how many are soft skinned.

Mr. Hanley: There are currently 917 vehicles of all types deployed in the United Kingdom within the former Yugoslavia. Of that number 190, including 65 Warriors, are armoured, giving all-round protection. The remaining 727 vehicles consist of trucks, bulk fuel vehicles, Land Rovers, engineers' plant and mechanical handling equipment. Not all of those vehicles will be in use at any one time.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what requests he has received to provide assistance in the investigation of alleged war crimes in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: None, although British forces in Bosnia have facilitated investigation by providing armed escorts and armoured transport to United Nations investigators of alleged war crimes. They gave similar assistance to Dame Anne Warburton during her investigation earlier this year into the treatment of Muslim women in the former Yugoslavia.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy regarding the provision of assistance by British forces in the investigation of allegations of war crimes in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: British forces in Bosnia provide assistance where possible to the United Nations or other official investigators of alleged war crimes on request.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which units have been identified to replace United Kingdom forces currently serving in Bosnia when their tours of duty expire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: No decisions have been taken about a further roulement of British forces in Bosnia in April-May next year. As a matter of sensible contingency planning, however, the 2nd Battalion, Royal Anglian Regiment has been identified and warned off as a possible replacement for 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards, if a further six months deployment were to be undertaken.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information on alleged war crimes committed in Bosnia has been gathered by British forces deployed in the area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Any information British forces come across during the course of their duties is passed to the relevant United Nations authorities for investigation.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what policy developments have occurred in relation to the provision of assistance by British forces in the investigation of allegations of war crimes in bosnia in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: None.

Defence Support Agencies

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the criteria that he uses to assess the quality of work carried out by defence support agencies.

Mr. Hanley: The quality of the service delivered by defence agencies is measured in a number of ways which are tailored to the particular circumstances of each agency. Typically, these include key performance targets and agency reports and accounts, all of which are published annually, and the close involvement of the end user either through customer satisfaction surveys or formal boards, where representatives can ensure that their requirements are met and highlight any concerns. In some cases, defence agencies have achieved accreditation to BS5750 or have adopted a total quality approach to their activities—both giving my Department additional measures or quality or performance.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide a list of all the performance targets that have been established for defence support agencies.

Mr. Hanley: This is a matter of public record.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what defence support agencies he intends to establish in the next 12 months.

Mr. Hanley: Areas under review for defence agency status in the next 12 months are the Ministry of Defence police; RAF Training Group; the Fleet Maintenance and Repair Organisation; the Naval Marine Services Organisation; Army Logistic Information Systems; Army Engineer Services; RAF Signals; test and evaluation; Sales (Disposals); Service Children's Schools abroad but outside the Service Children's Schools (North West Europe) defence agency.

This process will involve, inter alia, consideration of operational implications and of prior options, including privatisation and contracting out. Final decisions will be taken case-by-case if it is clear that the best solution is to retain the activity within the Ministry of Defence.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the weighted number of allied quality assurance publication non-conformances by the Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation defence support agency in 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: This matter falls within the responsibilities of the chief executive of the Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation defence agency under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Captain D. Symonds, Royal Navy, to Dr. David Clark dated 7 December 1993:

In response to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence concerning the weighted number of allied Quality Assurance publication Non-conformances by the Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation Defence Agency (NARO DA) in 1992-93:

The weighted number of allied Quality Assurance publication non-conformance by the NARO DA in 1992-93 was:

	Number
Fleetlands	548
Almondbank	124
NARO Total	672

The ratio of weighted non-conformances per audit showed a 19·6 per cent. improvement over the year in 1992-93.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what policy developments have occurred in respect of defence support agencies in the last two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: In 1992 the Department conducted an internal review of next steps in the Ministry of Defence. Four main conclusions were reached: that greater attention needed to be paid to the Department's ownership role vis-a-vis its agencies; that programmes of training and education needed to be developed; that reviews for agency status should place much greater emphasis on strategic and management planning; and that resources should be provided for the development of agency accounting and management information systems.

Action has been taken or is in train under each of these headings. In addition, it was decided that the distinction formerly drawn between executive agencies in defence and defence support agencies had become counterproductive as it meant that agencies were viewed as falling into one or the other and as defence support agencies report to the Secretary of State through military or management channels of command rather than directly, this led to the retention of unnecessary central control. Accordingly, all next steps agencies in defence are known as defence agencies.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details of all of the penalties that he has imposed on defence support agencies for non-performance in each of the last two years.

Mr. Hanley: Each year all the defence agencies are set clear and challenging key targets. They are required to demonstrate their performance against targets in their annual report. In the assessment of performance and setting of revised targets a judgment is made by agency owners as to whether the targets set for the previous year have been too demanding or not challenging enough. The question of imposing penalties has not arisen.

Devonport and Rosyth

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when he intends to take decisions about ownership restrictions relating to the sale of Devonport and Rosyth dockyards;

(2) if he will publish full details of ownership restrictions relating to the sale of Devonport and Rosyth dockyards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I have nothing to add to my answer of 2 November to the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson), *Official Report,* column *132*, and my right hon. and learned Friend's comments to the House on 18 October, *Official Report,* column 41.

Ammunition and Propellant

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which foreign companies currently supply the armed services with ammunition and propellant.

Mr. Aitken: My Department does not procure propellant separately. Overseas companies who currently supply the Ministry of Defence with ammunition are:

GIAT, France;
Hirtenberger, Austria;
Muiden Chemie, The Netherlands;
Simmel, Italy;
Borletti, Italy;
De Kruithoorn, The Netherlands;
Nico, Germany; and
La Crox, France.

Married Quarters

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Ministry of Defence married quarters were empty on *(a)* 30 September 1993, *(b)* 30 September 1992, *(c)* 30 September 1991, *(d)* 30 September 1990 and *(e)* 30 September 1989.

Mr. Hanley: The number of vacant Ministry of Defence married quarters on the dates requested was as follows:

	Vacant Service MQs	Surplus MQs in the process of sale
30 September 1993	10,124	1,106
30 September 1992	9,167	1,560
30 September 1991	9,834	1,461
30 September 1990	10,934	1,711
31 July 1989[1]	13,505	1,798

[1] Figures in 1989 were collected over a different reporting period.

The majority of vacant quarters at any one time are either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work or modernisation, held for future developments or already allotted to service families who are due to move in shortly.

Operation Deny Flight

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the cost of British participation in Operation Deny Flight.

Mr. Hanley: The additional cost to the Defence budget for this financial year is currently estimated to be about £30 million.

NAAFI

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 2 December, *Official Report,* column 686, what *(a)* management and *(b)* disciplinary action was taken as a result of the letter to Aims of Industry sent by James Rucker of 14 March 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: None. Mr. Rucker's letter indicated correctly that NAAFI is a non-political organisation and could have no relationship with Aims of Industry.

Mine Clearance

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people were trained by the British Army mine clearance training team during its participation in the recent United Nations operation in Cambodia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The United Kingdom's mine clearance training team trained a total of 42 Cambodians. The United Nations assigned the team to an area dominated by the Khmer Rouge, which withdrew its co-operation with the United Nations operation at an early stage and refused to permit further training. By the time the United Kingdom team had been relocated, this first training stage of the United Nations mine clearance operation was largely complete. The United Kingdom team was, however, able to participate fully in the subsequent United Nations supervision of mine clearance work by Cambodian teams which cleared over 45,000 mines and pieces of unexploded ordnance.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of deploying the British Army mine clearance training team as part of the recent United Nations operation in Cambodia.

Mr. Hanley: It is not possible to identify costs for specific elements of the British contingent deployed to Cambodia. The final cost of the United Kingdom deployment is not yet available, but to the end of September, some £2·5 million has been reported for the current financial year.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the source of financing for the deployment of the British Army mine clearance training team as part of the recent United Nations operation in Cambodia.

Mr. Hanley: The cost of British military involvement in the United Nations peacekeeping operation in Cambodia is in accordance with established interdepartmental arrangements whereby the Foreign and Commonwealth Office meet the extra costs of any deployment for the first 12 months and the full costs thereafter. The United Nations has overall financial responsibility and reimburses admissible national costs.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the future deployment of mine clearance training teams; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Government remain ready to consider requests for help with mine clearance training, as with all other forms of assistance in peace support operations.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with United Nations officials about the level of international demand for mine clearance training teams; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: None, but the United Nations has appointed a demining expert with whom the military adviser to the United Kingdom mission to the United Nations has had general discussions, as have officials from my Department and their counterparts at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Morale

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his assessment of changes in general service morale over the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: There is no evidence of any significant change in service morale over the past three years. This has been a period of considerable uncertainty for service personnel, but they continue to carry out their duties in a thoroughly professional manner. We aim to relieve uncertainty by making early announcements, whenever possible, of decisions concerning their future.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his assessment of the current state of morale amongst the chiefs of staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The chiefs of staff accept the need for changes in the size and shape of our armed forces, and the reasons behind those changes. They recognise the considerable challenges posed by the changes and have a number of understandable concerns about the magnitude of the task and the uncertainties for their services. They are nevertheless fully committed to the Government's objective of preserving front-line capability through improvements to the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of its support.

Officers and Other Routes

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what assessment he has made of the change in the ratio between officer and other ranks between 1980 and 1992; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the ratio of officers to other ranks in each of the three armed services in 1970 and 1979.

Mr. Hanley: The ratios of officers to other ranks on the dates specified are as follows:

Date	*RN*	*Army*	*RAF*	*All*
1 April 1970	1: 6·60	1: 7·79	1: 4·55	1: 6·25
1 April 1979	1: 6·23	1: 8·11	1: 4·92	1: 6·54
1 April 1980	1: 6·10	1: 8·33	1: 5·06	1: 6·64
1 April 1992	1: 5·15	1: 7·43	1: 4·71	1: 5·92

These figures exclude locally enlisted personnel.

The ratios are based on strengths and reflect the requirement for officers and other ranks at the particular time. In the 12 years between 1980 and 1992 there has been a substantial restructuring of the armed forces to reflect changing requirements, notably those arising from the end of the cold war. This restructuring continues and further proposals may result from the defence costs study which is currently examining all aspects of support to the front line. The Ministry of Defence does not use officer:other ranks ratios as a control mechanism.

Racial Harassment

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he holds centrally of the number of complaints of racial harassment in the armed forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Army and Royal Air Force maintain central records of complaints of racial discrimination and ill-treatment involving a racial element. During the period 1 January 1993 to 30 November 1993, there were five such complaints in the Army and two in the Royal Air Force. One complaint in the Army has been resolved and the remaining four are under investigation. Neither of the complaints in the Royal Air Force was substantiated. The Royal Navy expects to introduce a system to record complaints involving a racial element by spring 1994.

Expenditure

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy regarding the release of information on future expenditure plans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Defence expenditure plans are published annually in the Financial Statement and Budget Report and cover the next financial year and the two following.

Arms Transfers

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith), of 29 November, *Official Report*, column *370*, what criteria have been agreed with the EC and P5 concerning the export of defence equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Copies of the EC criteria and P5 guidelines concerning the export of defence equipment have been placed in the Library.

Release of Information

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what policy developments in relation to the release of information have occurred in the last 18 months.

Mr. Hanley: The Ministry of Defence is committed to the open Government initiative, and releases as much information into the public domain as possible without compromising security. Major examples include: the December 1992 announcement that, in future, service board of inquiry reports will be released to next of kin; the ongoing review of closed departmental records to assess suitability for release to the Public Records Office—some 2,500 have been released to date—and the implementation this August, in conjunction with members of the media, of a new defence advisory notices system, replacing the old D notice system. This year's Statement on the Defence Estimates, "Defending Our Future", also represents a significant step forward in increasing openness, giving unprecedented access to the defence planner's perspective and to the way in which force structures are determined.

Light Armoured Vehicles

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent progress has been made on the planned procurement of a new range of light armoured vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Our future light armoured vehicle programme is still in its early stages. Feasibility studies are currently being carried out by three consortia for a new tactical reconnaissance armoured combat vehicle—TRACER. Our requirements and procurement strategies for other future vehicles have yet to be determined.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions his officials have had with foreign companies regarding the planned procurement of a new range of light armoured vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The most recent discussions about our future light armoured vehicle programme, involving representatives of foreign companies, have been progress meetings between officials and the consortia who are carrying our feasibility studies for the tactical reconnaissance armoured combat equipment requirement—TRACER.

Reserve Forces

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library copies of all of the representations he has received relating to his proposals on new legislation for the reserve forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Our consultative document "Britain's Reserve Forces: A Framework for the Future" was published on 12 October 1993. The period for responses closed on 23 November, but late replies are still arriving. By Monday 6 December, some 133 responses had been received. Many of the letters reveal the private addresses and service affiliations of individuals, and it would therefore be inappropriate to publish them. I will, however, arrange for a factual summary of the responses, supported by appropriate extracts from the replies themselves, to be placed in the Library.

Separately, more than 400 further replies have been received by Sir Alexander Graham, the chairman of the National Employers' Liaison Committee for the Reserve Forces, in response to a request from him to employers for views. He has undertaken to prepare a consolidated response from NELC which will also be placed in the Library.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has regarding the policies of other NATO countries towards their reserve forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The policy of NATO countries towards their reserve forces is a matter for their respective Governments. All member countries, except Iceland which has no armed forces, are able to mobilise their reserve forces in times of crisis and war.

There are, however, regular exchanges of views between representatives of the reserve forces of member countries under the auspices of the Confederation Inter-Alliée des Officiers de Réserve, and between the respective heads of the reserve forces in the National Reserve Forces Committee.

Conservative Party Conference

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what costs were incurred on defence votes in respect of staff from non-Defence Ministers' private offices visiting Blackpool during the Conservative party conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: None.

Ethnic Origins

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to monitor the ethnic origins of those leaving the armed forces.

Mr. Hanley: The ethnic origins of personnel leaving the armed forces will be monitored as part of the ethnic monitoring of all regular serving personnel.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz), *Official Report*, 29 November, column *364*, if his proposed survey of the ethnic origins of serving personnel will provide a detailed breakdown of *(a)* rank and *(b)* regimental or other unit affiliation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: It will be possible to produce a breakdown of the ethnic origins of serving personnel by rank, regiment or unit from the information obtained in the ethnic origin survey. It is our intention to publish a breakdown by service and rank in defence statistics in due course.

Nuclear Tests

Sir Paul Beresford: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what announcements he has to make about nuclear tests following the United States Government's anouncement on 7 December.

Mr. Aitken: The United Kingdom has carried out no secret nuclear tests. However, a British nuclear test at the Nevada test site on 25 September 1964 did not proceed as planned and did not produce a nuclear yield. For this reason it has not been included in lists of nuclear tests carried out by the United Kingdom.

RAF Training (Germany)

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current training arrangements for the RAF based in Germany, what training areas are used; how many flying hours are planned per month and how many are achieved; how often and where alternative training takes place; and how often training runs fail to take place due to shortage of spares.

Mr. Hanley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 9 December 1993

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Myodil (Compensation)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will hold an urgent investigation into the legal aid position for those suffering from arachnoiditis following treatment by Myodil and who are seeking compensation from Glaxo.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No. Decisions on individual legal aid applications are entirely a matter for the legal aid board.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

India

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Indian Government following the recent clashes between the Narmada Bachao Andolan and police during peaceful opposition of the surveying of villages due to be submerged in the Narmada valley in India.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are concerned about human rights abuses in India, including the excessive use of force by police. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs regularly raises human rights issues with the Indian Government, most recently in his talks with the Indian Prime Minister on 15 November. We have welcomed the recent establishment of the Indian Human Rights Commission which we hope will look into incidents of this type.

International Disarmament Fund

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he has made to President Kravchuk's proposal in January for an international disarmament fund.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have offered Ukraine practical help with missile dismantling, and we have made around £37 million available to help the process of arms reduction in the former Soviet Union. These efforts are closely co-ordinated with other major donors and we do not believe that the creation of an international fund for these purposes would increase the effectiveness of the programmes concerned.

Ukraine

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action the Government are now proposing to take to assist the dismantling and destruction of strategic warheads and intercontinental ballistic missiles in Ukraine.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have offered Ukraine technical help with the safe disposal of toxic liquid fuel from missiles remaining in Ukraine.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications of the exclusion of article V of the Lisbon protocol by the Ukrainian Parliament for the success of the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The nuclear non-proliferation treaty, NPT, now has 162 states party—more than any other arms control agreement in history. We deeply regret the Ukrainian Parliament's specific exclusion of article V of the Lisbon protocol in its resolution on the ratification of the strategic arms reduction talks—START 1. We have noted that the Government of Ukraine has affirmed Ukraine's intention to abide by her commitments to non-nuclear weapon status, and we have called upon the Government of Ukraine to take all necessary steps towards full implementation of the START 1 treaty and accession to the NPT, as a non-nuclear weapon state, without further delay.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Next Steps

Mr. Moss: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the progress of the next steps initiative.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government today published the fourth next steps review—Cm 2430. It brings together information on the 92 agencies within government, and the executive organisations of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and the Inland Revenue which now constitute 60 per cent. of the civil service.

Within central Government, agencies are leaders in delivering the citizens charter commitment to customer service and value for money. The review highlights how the focus on the needs of users has been reinforced and gives examples of what individual agencies have achieved. It reports on the steps taken to enable agencies to deliver improved performance, better value for money and greater openness and accountability by, for example, clarifying the responsibilities of Ministers and chief executives, increased delegation, and sharpening the aims and objectives of agencies; financial arrangements and pay and grading systems which are tailored to the work of individual agencies; and the application of the competing for quality initiative.

The arrangements are therefore now in place to enable agencies to deliver real benefits to customers and the taxpayer and these are becoming increasingly evident. The review reports for Parliament and the public on the targets set for agencies and their performance against them in 1992-93 and lists key targets for 1993-94. In 1992-93 agencies met around 77 per cent. of their key targets. This represents a small improvement over the proportion of targets met last year. In general, targets have been made progressively tougher year on year. However, further progress will have to be made, particularly in the area of efficiency. There is a continuing need for Ministers to ensure that the targets they set are challenging and that they have appropriate arrangements in place for overseeing the performance of their agencies. For both tasks they may need to draw on expert advice.

The Government's aim is that every public service should be provided in the most appropriate and cost-effective way. All the executive functions of the civil service are therefore being tested against the following criteria: first, whether they need to continue to be performed at all; secondly, whether they need to remain the responsibility of Government; thirdly, whether they should be market tested or contracted out; and, fourthly, whether they should become the responsibility of an agency within Government, itself subject to the Government's competing for quality initiative. The review reports substantial further progress in this work.

Once established, agencies are subject to a systematic periodic review, normally after three years of operation. The review lists the current position on these reviews. The Government want to ensure that, in this process, the widest possible range of views are taken into account. In future, therefore, we have decided that reviews will be publicly announced, including through the next steps review, to enable all those with an interest in the agency and its work to contribute to the discussion of its future organisation and status.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensions

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will list the criteria for deciding what amount of any surplus in pension funds of privatised industries are split, once the actuarial assessment of the amount needed to meet the pension benefits of past and present employees has been made;

(2) if he will list the criteria for deciding who receives any surplus of pension funds in privatised industries, after the actuarial assessment of the amount needed to meet the pension benefits of past and present employees has been made.

Mr. Hague: In all occupational pension schemes, including those of privatised industries, the application of any scheme surplus is a matter to be determined in accordance with the terms of the scheme rules. Pension arrangements on privatisation accordingly depend upon the particular circumstances of the scheme concerned.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will issue the discussion papers on occupational pensions that he announced on 3 November; and who they will be available to.

Mr. Hague: The first five papers in a series of discussion papers on non-state pensions were published on 3 December 1993. Copies of the papers have been placed in the Library, sent to interested parties, and are available on request.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has for altering the guidelines given to the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The Government have always made it clear that the policy will be kept under review. We are looking at the recommendations of the Social Security Select Committee and other comments and concerns which have been raised, and testing them against the basic principles of the child support scheme. If, after examination, we think we can improve the scheme, we will do so.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what the estimated first year running costs of the Child Support Agency are;

(2) what the set-up costs of the Child Support Agency were.

Mr. Burt: The total cost of setting up the Child Support Agency was around £146 million. This figure includes the 1992-93 cost of liable relative work, transferred in April 1992 from the Benefits Agency to the child support unit —as the shadow agency was known before its launch in April 1993.

The costs of the agency in 1993-94 are as follows:

	£ million
Running costs	99·1
Capital	6·8
Other current costs	13·9
Total	119·8

Source: Winter Supplementary Estimate, November 1993.

Disability

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what additional measures have been taken by his Department to assist the operation of the independent tribunal service since the introduction of disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: I am advised by the independent tribunal service that, since the introduction of disability living allowance, its budget for running costs has been increased by over £21 million. It has been authorised to increase its staff by 357 posts.

Fraud

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are engaged in his Department in combating fraud; and at what annual cost.

Mr. Hague: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on 23 November at columns *83-85.*

NORTHERN IRELAND

Communications

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what communications have been received from or sent to any terrorist organisation or Sinn Fein since 29 November.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: For the reasons I explained to the House on 29 November, *Official Report,* columns 785-812, while it is useful to have a means of communication by which messages could be exchanged indirectly between the Government and the provisional movement, such a chain could function only if its secrecy was respected on both sides. Accordingly, we do not propose to divulge any further information about messages sent or received or to comment further, save to give the assurance that any communications from Her Majesty's Government will be consistent with their publicly stated policies.

Comptroller and Auditor-General

Mr. Roy Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements have been made to appoint a new Comptroller and Auditor-General for Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Her Majesty the Queen has graciously approved the appointment of Mr. John Michael Dowdall as Comptroller and Auditor-General for Northern Ireland in succession to Dr. W. H. Jack CB who is due to retire on 17 February 1994.

WALES

Youth Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his policy for the youth service.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 27 April 1993, *Official Report*, column *363*.

I reaffirmed the Welsh Office's continued support for the Welsh youth service in my keynote speech to the national youth service conference in Cardiff on 3 December.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are employed in the youth service in each of the counties of Wales; and how many were in post in 1983.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not collected centrally.

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the operation of his Department's sensitive documents unit; how many staff are employed in its operation; and approximately how many documents per annum come within its purview.

Mr. Redwood: My Department does not have a separate unit for handling sensitive documents. This function is subsumed in the general records management operation. A record of the number of such documents is not maintained.

Health Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* clerical and administrative staff and *(b)* nurses and doctors are employed in each of the hospital trusts in Wales; how many clerical and administrative staff are employed in the NHS; and how many were employed in 1990.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information relating to administrative and clerical and nursing and midwifery staff in each NHS trust at 30 September 1993 is given in the table.

The latest information on medical staff in the hospital and community service relates to 30 September 1992. At that time, there were 2,805 medical staff in the NHS in Wales—whole-time equivalents, including eight hospital practitioners and 146 clinical assistants. The equivalent figure for 1990 was 2,634—including 12 hospital practitioners and 138 clinical assistants. In 1992, there was only one NHS trust in Wales—Pembrokeshire—which employed 87 medical staff—including five clinical assistants.

Staff in post (whole-time equivalents) as at 30 September 1993

Trust	*Administrative and clerical*		*Nursing and midwifery*		
	Managerial[2]	*Other*	*Other*	*Learners*[3]	*Total*[3]
Bridgend and District	29	275	1,254	—	1,254
Carmarthen	21	195	581	21	602
Ceredigion	16	107	419	16	435
Clwydian Community Care	53	283	1,537	—	1,537
Glan Clwyd Hospital	27	271	869	—	869
Glanhafren	40	451	1,660	1	1,661
Gwent Community	49	260	1,273	1	1,274
Llandough	20	266	764	—	764
Llanelli/Dinefwr	17	131	522	22	544
Pembrokeshire[1]	1	107	544	21	565
Powys Health Care	37	196	1,009	23	1,032
Swansea	15	232	809	—	809
Wrexham Maelor Hospital	27	234	837	—	837
All NHS[4]	1,028	8,577	25,206	1,033	26,239

Staff in post (whole-time equivalents) as at 30 September 1990

All NHS[4]	416	7,653	25,018	3,075	28,093

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[1] The use of locally devised pay scales from 1991 onwards may affect the comparability of figures as staff on such scales cannot be allocated centrally to a specific staff group and are not, therefore, included above. This particularly affects figures for the Pembrokeshire NHS trust.

[2] May include some managers previously classified in staff groups other than administrative and clerical.

[3] Since 1991 student nurses have been classified as students and are no longer included in the NHS staff figures. Staff included here are students finishing courses started before this date.

[4] Includes staff employed by the Welsh Health Common Services Authority, NHS trusts and those family health service authorities using district health authority payroll systems. Administrative and clerical staff employed by the South East Wales ambulance trust are not included in the 1993 figures.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairmen of the Welsh health authorities and trusts in relation to the signing of contracts between purchasers and providers within this financial year; what guidelines he has issued or will issue in relation to recommended final dates for publishing draft prices for 1994-95; what expectations of advancement he has of the time of signing contracts between purchasers and providers between 1993-94 performance and 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Signing contracts is a matter for health authorities and provider units, although early agreement and signature are encouraged.

Following discussions with the NHS in Wales, a timetable for planning services and completing the contracting process was issued in August this year. Health authorities and provider units will be expected to sign contracts in accordance with this published schedule.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to issue his final allocation letter to the health authorities in Wales for the current financial year.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The initial revenue and capital allocations to health authorities for 1993-94 were announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 4 March, *Official Report*, columns 252-58, and this was followed by detailed allocations from the director of the national health service in Wales on 10 March.

Allocations are always subject to adjustment throughout the financial year as funding is released for centrally sponsored developments.

The latest allocation adjustments were notified to health authorities on 15 November. Further adjustments will be issued during the remainder of the year as provision held in reserve for centrally funded service developments is claimed by authorities.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the proportion of imports and exports for each year through Welsh sea ports, contained at table 6.12 of the "Digest of Welsh Statistics" 1993, page 103, which comprise hazardous or toxic wastes.

Mr. Redwood: As information on the import of hazardous waste is available only from 1988, figures for 1981 comparable to the data given in table 6.12 of the "Digest of Welsh Statistics" cannot be supplied. Data for 1990, 1991 and 1992 are shown in the table. Information on the export of hazardous waste is not collected centrally.

Imports of hazardous waste into Welsh ports for disposal in England and Wales[1]

Tonnes[2]

	1990	*1991*	*1992*
Near and short sea trading areas:			
Irish Republic	2,313·2	848·9	426·4
Germany	113·3	154·6	—
Benelux	—	—	—
France	—	—	—
Italy	—	—	—
Scandinavia and Baltic	—	25·1	—
Iberia and Mediterranean[3]	176·3	—	301·9
TOTAL[4]	5,505·5	1,991·0	1,623·6
Deep sea trading areas:			
Africa	—	—	—
India and Persian Gulf	—	—	—
Far East	—	—	—
Australasia	—	—	—
America	—	—	—
TOTAL	—	—	—
All overseas trading areas	—	—	—

Source: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

[1] As reported to HMIP.

— indicates no waste reported.

[2] Includes crates and packaging. Therefore not directly comparable with the "Digest of Welsh Statistics," table 6.12.

[3] Excludes Italy.

[4] Includes Austria, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary which are not included separately.

Forestry

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future of the freedom to roam on any forestry land currently available in the forests and woods of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have no plans to change our policy of allowing "freedom to roam" on forestry land managed by the Forestry Commission. Arrangements have been in place since October 1991 to secure continued public access to Forestry Commission woodlands in the event of their disposal, through the commission offering local authorities the opportunity to enter into access arrangements prior to sale.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the value of the forests of the Forestry Commission in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The latest published valuation of the Forestry Commission's forests, as at 31 March 1992, included a figure of £632·8 million for its forests in Wales. An estimate of the value of the forests at 31 March 1993 will be published in the commission's annual report and accounts early in the new year, once the accounts have been examined and certified by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Shell Fishing

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements exist for examining the environmental implications of licence authorisations for shell fishing in inshore waters.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Under the terms of the Sea Fisheries (Wildlife Conservation) Act 1992, Ministers and sea fisheries committees are required, in discharging their functions to have regard to the conservation of marine flora and fauna.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the number of tonnes of cockles harvested since 8 October from Traeth Lafan, Conwy bay, and the proportion taken from the site of special scientific interest.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This is a matter for the North Western and North Wales sea fisheries committee.

Grant-Maintained Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the grant-maintained schools and those schools seeking grant-maintained status in each of the local education authorities of Wales, giving the amount of extra cash grants for each of the grant-maintained schools; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

Local education authority and school

Clwyd
- Ysgol Emrys ap Iwan Comprehensive
- The Maelor School Comprehensive
- Ysgol Derwen Primary
- Eirias High School
- Ysgol Pen-y-Bryn Primary
- Ysgol Bryn Elian Comprehensive[1]

Dyfed
- None

Gwent
- Cwmcarn Comprehensive
- Brynmawr Comprehensive
- St. Alban's Comprehensive[1]
- Our Lady and St. Michael's Primary[1]

Gwynedd
- Ysgol Caergeiliog Primary

Mid Glamorgan
- None

Powys
- Ysgol Llanerfyl Primary

South Glamorgan
- Stanwell Comprehensive
- St. Cyres Comprehensive[1]
- Mary Immaculate Roman Catholic High School[2]

West Glamorgan
- Bishop Vaughan Catholic Comprehensive

[1] Approved for grant-maintained status with effect from 1 January 1994.

[2] Proposals currently under consideration.

As regards the funding of grant-maintained schools, I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply of 6 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *47*.

New Hospital, Cardiff

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the South Glamorgan health authority in relation to the proposed construction of a new neighbourhood hospital on the site of the closed St. David's hospital, Riverside, Cardiff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None.

Training and Enterprise

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much he plans to spend on training and enterprise in Wales in 1994-95.

Mr. Redwood: I plan to spend over £147 million on training and enterprise in Wales in 1994-95. This provides for anticipated levels of training demand to be met and for the introduction of a modern apprenticeship scheme in manufacturing engineering. Detailed allocations to particular programmes will be made in due course.

Teacher Training

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many students were recruited to courses of intial teacher training in Wales in 1993.

Sir Wyn Roberts: A survey undertaken by the Department shows that, in Wales, 2,573 students entered courses of initial teacher training this year, an increase of nearly 5 per cent. over 1992. Recruitment to primary courses was about the same as last year, but recruitment to secondary courses was up by almost 15 per cent. I welcome in particular the increase in secondary intakes as many of these students are pursuing courses in the shortage areas including Welsh.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the Ministers in his Department who since June 1987 have visited *(a)* Saudi Arabia, *(b)* Malaysia, *(c)* Singapore and *(d)* South Africa on official business; and which such visits included party political activities in addition to official duties.

Sir John Cope: The Economic Secretary visited Kuala Lumpur to attend a meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers from 7 to 11 October 1991. No party political activities were included in the visit.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much the Treasury has received from capital gains tax in each year since 1979; and how much capital gains tax has cost to collect in each of those years.

Mr. Dorrell: The figures for capital gains tax yield and the costs of administering the tax for each year since 1979 are:

£ million

	Capital gains tax[1]	
	Net receipts	*Cost of administration*[2]
1979-80	431	9·5
1980-81[3]	508	13·2
1981-82[3]	526	13·7
1982-83	632	15·3
1983-84	671	14·7
1984-85	730	14·2
1985-86	908	15·4
1986-87	1,064	17·7
1987-88	1,379	25·1
1988-89	2,323	26·6
1989-90	1,854	34·3
1990-91[4]	1,852	39·0
1991-92[4]	1,140	43·3
1992-93[4]	982	38·4

[1] The figures quoted exclude tax on gains made by companies included in corporation tax. Some of the costs associated with companies, however, cannot be separately identified and are therefore included in the cost figures for capital gains tax rather than for corporation tax.

[2] Costs are based on total departmental expenditure.

[3] The breakdown of receipts between 1980-81 and 1981-92 is estimated. The receipts figures for both years were affected by industrial action between March 1981 and July 1981.

[4] Manpower usage and costs of administration for 1989-90 have been

adjusted to reflect a new basis of costing. Direct comparison of these and later figures with those of earlier years may be misleading. More detail regarding this adjustment is given in the board's report for the year ending 31 March 1991.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the reduction in annual liability to capital gains tax, in 1993-94 as against the 1978-79 indexed regime, specifying in each case the total and average reduction per taxpayer as well as the number of taxpayers in each year, in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that the requested estimates of the difference between the capital gains tax liability on the current regime and on the 1978-79 indexed regime are not available, as indicated in my replies to the hon. Member on 25 February 1992, *Official Report,* columns *435-36,* and 15 March 1991, *Official Report,* columns *700-701.*

The number of capital gains taxpayers with liabilities in 1993-94 under the current tax regime, excluding gains realised by companies is estimated at 110,000.

Economic Growth

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the principles upon which he is basing his strategy for economic growth.

Mr. Nelson: Economic growth is generated by businesses and their employees, not by Governments. The Government's responsibility is to ensure that markets work properly and that the regulatory and tax burden on business is kept to a minimum. It also has the essential task of establishing a macroeconomic framework which provides the stability that businesses need to plan for the future. The Government therefore direct monetary and fiscal policy towards two key objectives: low inflation on a permanent basis and sound public finances.

Taxation

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest estimates of how many people with gross incomes of over £100,000 pay *(a)* a national insurance contributions bill and *(b)* a total income tax and national insurance contributions bill, of less than (i) 35 per cent., (ii) 30 per cent., (iii) 25 per cent., (iv) 20 per cent., (v) 15 per cent., (vi) 10 per cent. and (vii) 5 per cent. of their gross incomes, in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: Available figures relate to the estimated 180,000 taxpayers in 1993-94 with gross incomes of £80,000 and above. Nearly all these taxpayers pay less than 5 per cent. of their gross income in national insurance contributions. Estimates of combined income tax and national insurance contribution liabilities are that 70,000 have an effective rate above 35 per cent, 90,000 have an effective rate between 30 and 35 per cent., 10,000 have an effective rate between 25 and 30 per cent., and the remaining 10,000 have an effective rate below 25 per cent.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for how many people who pay tax have earnings below the upper earnings limit in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: It is estimated that in 1993-94 about 16·5 million tax-paying employees have earnings below the upper earnings limit.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has as to how much tax remained uncollected at the end of the last fiscal year; and what estimate he has as to the amount which will remain uncollected at the end of the current year.

Mr. Dorrell: The amount of tax which remained uncollected at the end of October 1992, the last year for which figures are available, is £3·737 billion.

These figures are produced for the Inland Revenue's accounting year, to 31 October, rather than on a fiscal year basis.

Estimates for the year ended October 1993 will not be available until the end of January 1994.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people paid tax in each year since 1978-79, giving the numbers on basic rate and higher rate tax.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest estimates for 1991-92 onwards based on a projection of the survey of personal incomes are given.

Figures for earlier years are available in table 2.1 of Inland Revenue Statistics 1993.

Millions

	Taxpayers liable at			
	Lower rate only	*Basic rate but not higher rate*	*Higher rate*	*Total*
1991-92	0·0	24·1	1·6	25·7
1992-93	3·9	19·4	1·8	25·1
1993-94	4·8	18·4	1·9	25·1

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many families with children are estimated to have taxable incomes below the income tax threshold; and what proportion this represents of all families with children.

Mr. Dorrell: It is estimated that in 1993-94 approximately 1·9 million single parents and married couples with children have no income tax liability. These represent about a quarter of all families with children.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total yield from VAT in 1978-79.

Sir John Cope: The yield from VAT in the financial year 1978-79 was £4,837·5 million.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much he estimates the average family's tax bill will rise following the VAT changes outlined in the March 1993 Budget.

Sir John Cope: Standard rate VAT on domestic fuel and power applied to the average household's existing fuel bill would cost about £2·30 a week.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the proportion of consumer spending subject to the standard rate of VAT, exempt from VAT and subject to a zero rate of VAT.

Sir John Cope: The latest data show that some 58 per cent. of consumer spending is standard rated, 24 per cent. is exempt and 18 per cent. is subject to a zero rate of VAT.

Non-taxpayers

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for how many *(a)* working and *(b)* non-working people do not pay tax in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: Of the estimated 21 million people aged 16 or over who are non-taxpayers in 1993-94 about 3·6 million are working and 17·4 million are non-working.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many single people and married couples do not currently pay tax.

Mr. Dorrell: It is estimated that in 1993-94 there are about 8·9 million single people aged over 16 not liable to income tax and about 3·8 million married couples where neither spouse is liable to tax.

Allowances

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people receive *(a)* the married couple's allowance, *(b)* the additional person's allowance and *(c)* the widow's bereavement allowance.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest estimates are in the table:

Number of individuals benefiting from allowance in 1993-94

	(Thousands)
Married couple's allowance	10,200
Additional personal allowance	750
Widow's bereavement allowance	150

Visible Trade

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the deficit on visible trade for the first seven months of the year compared with the same period in 1992.

Mr. Nelson: The latest information is available in the Central Statistical Office first release balance of United Kingdom visible trade—August 1993, 12 November 1993. It is also available on the CSO database, which can be accessed through the House of Commons Library; the identifier is AIMA.

Inheritance Tax

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what sanction exists in respect of inheritance tax waived in respect of works of art to be made available to the public when the works are not so made available.

Mr. Dorrell: The owner of works of art which are conditionally exempt from inheritance tax must undertake to preserve them, keep them in the United Kingdom and provide reasonable public access. If an owner breaks an undertaking and the issue cannot be resolved in discussion between the Inland Revenue and the owner, inheritance tax is charged on the current value of the works of art. This provides a powerful incentive for the owner to honour the terms of the undertakings.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total inheritance tax yield, in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in the latest year for which information is available.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest year for which information is available is 1992-93. Inheritance tax net receipts in this year were £1,211 million for the United Kingdom, of which £86 million was collected in Northern Ireland. Much of the tax collected in Northern Ireland related to deaths in England and Wales.

Cigarettes

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average cost of a packet of cigarettes, and the average amount of total tax on a packet of cigarettes, in the last financial year.

Sir John Cope: The available data are for a typical packet of cigarettes. Two prices applied in the financial year 1992-93 as manufacturers increased their prices in the autumn. Both prices are given in the table.

Period covered	*Typical price (pence)*	*Tax content (pence)*
April to October	221	168
November to March	227	170

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount of tax received from cigarettes in the last financial year.

Sir John Cope: Receipts of excise duty and value added tax on cigarettes are estimated to have been £6,970 million in 1992-93.

Privatised Companies

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish those numbers of individual shareholders retaining shares in each of the concerns privatised since 1979, indicating where Her Majesty's Government have retained a shareholding.

Mr. Dorrell: The table shows the latest figures available for shareholdings in privatised companies. Where the Government retained a shareholding—including details of any subsequent disposals—this has also been shown.

Shareholdings[1] in privatised and former Government-controlled companies

Company	*Date of privatisation*	*Size of share register*			*Proportion of shares retained by Her Majesty's Government*	*Proportion and dates of subsequent disposals*
		Initial	*Highest since privatisation[3]*	*Current*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
British Petroleum	December 1977[2]	n/a	—	513,569 (31 December 1992)	51·0	[4]5·17/November 1979; 7·12/September 1983; 31·5/September 1987; 0·09/October 1990
British Aerospace	February 1981	27,179	120,200 (December 1986)	92,631 (12 November 1993)	48·43	48·43/10 May 1985
Cable and Wireless	October 1981	27,320	210,994 (31 March 1986)	158,481 (31 March 1993)	50·64	27·54/November 1983; 23·1/December 1985
Amersham International	February 1982	10,051	—	5,264 (28 May 1993)	nil	—
NFC	February 1982	10,300	—	60,000 (December 1993)	nil	—
Britoil	November 1982	37,257	245,556 (31 December 1985)	Owned by BP	49	49/8 August 1985
Associated British Ports	February 1983	37,205	—	14,000 (December 1993)	48·5	48·5/17 April 1984
Enterprise Oil	June 1984	13,695	14,166 (June 1985)	9,794 (31 December 1992)	nil	—
Jaguar	July 1984	125,000	—	Owned by Ford	nil[5]	—
BT	November 1984	2,139,520	—	3,371,207 (10 November 1993)	49·8	0·8/December 1987; 25·9/November 1991; 20·7/July 1993
British Gas	December 1986	4,407,079	—	2,036,826 (31 December 1992)	3·3	1·6/January 1990; 1·6/July 1990
British Airways	February 1987	1·2 million	—	252,016 (10 May 1993)	2·5	1·0/June 1987; 1·0/March 1990
Rolls-Royce	May 1987	1,988,966	—	564,318 (31 December 1992)	0·4	0·4 sold during 1987
BAA	July 1987	2,187,500	—	561,759 (28 May 1993)	4·36	1·42/August 1990
British Steel	December 1988	650,553	—	252,000 (December 1993)	0·05	0·04 disposed of during 1989
Water and Sewerage Companies	December 1989	2·65 million	—	1,106,564[7] (27 June 1991)	1·62	—
Regional Electricity Companies	December 1990	8·86 million[6]	—	2,975,119[7] (7 August 1992)	1·5	—
Generating Companies	March 1991	1·67 million[8]	—	1·3 million[7] (November 1992)	40	—
Scottish Electricity Companies	June 1991	1·8 million[9]	—	1·4 million[7] (15 March 1993)	3·5	—
Northern Ireland Electricity	June 1993	437,414	—	298,734 (1 December 1993)	4	—

[1] For single company privatisations, these figures are not an exact guide to the number of shareholders because some shareholdings are held jointly in more than one name —for example, for members of employee share schemes only the trustees are shown on share registers.

[2] Her Majesty's Government obtained a majority holding in 1914 but this never reached 100 per cent. The 1977 sale is shown as the first disposal of recent times.

[3] Where the largest register of shareholdings was not immediately following privatisation—this usually followed a secondary offer.

[4] These proportions do not sum to 51 per cent. because of rights issues.

[5] Subsidiary of BL plc.

[6] The offer allowed for holdings by individuals in any or all of the companies in the offer and therefore holders may appear on more than one register.

[7] Shareholders may appear on the register of more than one company.

[8] The offer required public applicants to apply for shares in both companies and the figure shown is that of allocation in the offer.

[9] The offer required non-customer public applicants to apply for shares in both companies and the figure shown is that of allocation in the offer.

Personal Pensions

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what study his Department has made of compliance by the personal pension sector with the Financial Services Act 1986 as it affects the selling of pensions; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what estimate he has as to the number of people who were advised to transfer to a personal pension and would have been better off to have remained in occupational schemes since 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 8 December, *Official Report*, column *234*.

Finance Bill

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Finance Bill will be published.

Mr. Dorrell: The Finance Bill will be published on Tuesday 11 January 1994.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Members

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison), representing the Church Commissioners, which Church Commissioners are also members of Her Majesty's Government; and which meetings of the commissioners, on how many occasions, were attended by each such member in the last three calendar years.

Mr. Alison: Seven out of 95 Church Commissioners are members of Her Majesty's Government: the Lord Chancellor; the First Lord of the Treasury; the Lord President of the Council; the Secretary of State for the Home Department; the Chancellor of the Exchequer; the Attorney-General; and the Solicitor-General. The Lord President of the Council attended the commissioners' annual general meeting in 1991 and 1993. The Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General attended that meeting in 1992.

The Second Church Estates Commissioner is included under the heading "Her Majesty's Government" in the list which appears from time to time in *Hansard*, but the appointment is not an executive Government post and it carries no salary.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Overseas Visits

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the Ministers in his Department who since June 1987 have visited *(a)* Saudi Arabia, *(b)* Malaysia, *(c)* Singapore and *(d)* South Africa on official business; and which such visits included party political activities in addition to official duties.

Mr. Howard: The following official visits have been made, during none of which do we have any record that party political activities were undertaken:

(a) *Saudi Arabia*
The right hon. Douglas Hurd CBE MP— Home Secretary —
April 1989.
(b) *Malaysia*
None.
(c) *Singapore*
The right hon. and noble Earl Ferrers—Minister of State—
31 December 1991 to 3 January 1992.
(d) *South Africa*

None.

Prisons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with prison governors in England and Wales on the recent policy statements that he has made as to the running of penal establishments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 3 November, my right hon. and learned Friend made a speech about imprisonment to the Prison Service conference, to which senior governors are invited. My right hon. and learned Friend also discussed prison issues with governors during visits to Prison Service establishments.

Justice Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what matters were discussed and what decisions were taken at the Justice Council in Brussels on 29 to 30 November.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer to the answer which I gave the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 7

Manchester United Supporters

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what report he has received from the Greater Manchester police about the treatment of Manchester United fans in Turkey; and if he will make the findings public.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have seen a copy of an internal document prepared by the Greater Manchester police officers who were present in Turkey as part of the normal liaison arrangements which occur when English teams play abroad. It includes many references to individuals which it would not be right to make public.

We have passed on copies of the relevant parts of the report to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has written to the Turkish authorities taking up some of the points which have been raised by those who were detained in and deported from Turkey.

Civil Servants

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of people employed, *(b)* the total number of black people and *(c)* the total number of Asians.

Mr. Howard: The figures requested are given in the table which sets out, by grade, the total number of non-industrial Home Office staff, including those in agencies, on outward secondment or on maternity or special leave, and the number of respondents belonging to black or Asian ethnic groupings. The current response rates to ethnic surveys is 85 per cent. for the main Home Office and 99 per cent. for the Prison Service; the latter includes management classification. The answer does not include those respondents in other ethnic minorities. The information was generated from the Home Office personnel system on 6 December 1993.

	Total	*Asian*	*Black*
Administrative Assistant	2,164	168	157
Administrative Officer	4,453	361	252
Administrative Trainee	8	1	—
Assistant Chief Officer	3	—	—
Assistant Director	9	—	1
Assistant Divisional Officer	4	—	—
Assistant Immigration Officer	42	6	2
Assistant Information Officer	7	—	—
Assistant Inspector of Fire Services	29	—	—
Assistant Librarian	13	—	—
Assistant Scientific Officer	91	—	—
Assistant Statistician	1	—	—
Assistant Storeperson	110	—	—
Church of England/Roman Catholic Chaplain (P/T)	130	—	1
Church of England Chaplain	99	1	2
Chaplain General Prisons	1	—	—
Chief Education Officer	1	—	—
Chief Immigration Officer	360	—	2
Chief Inspector-Animals S.P. Inspector	1	—	—
Chief Typing Manager	4	—	—
Commandant	1	—	—
Comms. Officer 2	1	—	—
Comms. Officer 3	8	—	—
Consultant Voluntary Services Unit	2	—	—
Divisional Officer 1	1	—	—
Divisional Officer 2	1	—	—
Executive Officer	2,126	66	50
Farm Manager 1	6	—	—
Farm Manager 1A	15	—	—
Farm Manager 2	11	—	—
Farm Manager 3	26	—	—
Farm Manager 4	19	—	1
Farms and Gardens Officer	4	—	—
Fireground Supervisor	1	—	—
Governor 1	38	—	—
Governor 2	86	—	—
Governor 3	113	—	—
Governor 4	306	1	1
Governor 5	455	2	—
Governor 5 (APS)[1]	22	—	—

	Total	*Asian*	*Black*
Grade 1 (PUSS)	1	—	—
Grade 2 (DUSS)	8	—	—
Grade 3	26	—	—
Grade 4	—	—	
Grade 5	96	—	—
Grade 6	102	—	1
Grade 7	614	4	—
Graphics Officer	14	—	—
Graphics Technical Grade	1	—	—
Head of Department 3	1	—	—
Head of Department 4	1	—	—
Head of Department 5	1	—	—
Head of Department 6	1	—	—
Head Pharmacist	1	—	—
Higher Executive Officer (Development)	26	—	—
Higher Executive Officer	1,174	16	10
Higher Graphics Officer	1	—	—
Higher Instructional Officer	28	—	—
Higher Professional and Technical Officer	134	3	—
Higher Psychologist	43	—	—
Higher Scientific Officer	181	1	—
Higher Telecommunications Technical Officer	41	2	—
HM Chief Inspector of Fire Services	1	—	—
HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary	1	—	—
HM Inspector of Fire Services 1	2	—	—
HM Inspector of Fire Services 2	7	—	—
HM Inspector of Constabulary	4	—	—
Immigration Officer	2,114	57	19
Information Officer	18	—	—
Inspector (Immigration Service)	70	--	1
Inspector—Animals S. P. Inspector	19	1	—
Instructional Officer I	1,036	7	7
Instructional Officer II	2	—	—
Interpreter	7	5	—
Lecturer 2	24	—	—
Legal Officer	3	—	—
Librarian	8	—	—
Matron Housekeeper	1	—	—
Medical Officer	80	36	4
Medical Officer (P/T)	111	31	2
Night Patrol	956	9	24
Nursing Grade A	5	—	1
Nursing Grade C	61	2	9
Nursing Grade D	108	1	11
Nursing Grade E	94	1	2
Nursing Grade F	118	7	11
Nursing Grade G	29	1	1
Nursing Grade H	6	—	—
Personal Secretary	490	12	34
Pharmacist	19	1	—
Pharmacy Technician	22	1	3
Principal Lecturer	3	—	—
Principal Medical Officer	6	—	—
Principal Officer	1,371	—	4
Principal Officer (APS)[1]	36	—	—
Principal R. C. Chaplain	1	—	—
Prison Auxiliary	1,561	9	28
Prison Officer	18,974	121	211
Prison Officer (APS)[1]	37	—	1
Professional and Technology Officer	99	4	3
Psychological Assistant	41	1	—
Psychologist	1	—	—
Psychologist-Graduate Trainee	29	—	—
R. C. Chaplain	15	—	—
Regional Catering Manager	6	—	—
Research Officer (Social Science)	16	—	—
Scientific Officer	117	3	3
Senior Assistant Statistician	8	—	—
Senior Divisional Officer	1	—	—
Senior Executive Officer	431	6	4
Senior Information Officer	10	—	—
Senior Inspector-Animals S.P. Inspector	3	—	—
Senior Instructional Officer	1	—	—
Senior Lecturer	4	—	—
Senior Legal Assistant	2	—	—
Senior Librarian	1	—	—
Senior Medical Officer	40	12	1
Senior Officer	3,398	10	17
Senior Personal Secretary	43	—	2
Senior Pharmacist	1	—	—
Senior Professor and Technical Officer	167	1	1
Senior Psychologist	49	—	—
Senior Research Officer (Social Science)	11	—	2
Senior Scientific Officer	194	2	—
Senior Telecoms Technical Officer	1	—	—
Shop Assistant	1	—	—
Shop Manager	1	—	—
Staff Principal Pharmacist	5	—	—
Storeperson	460	1	3
Stores Officer Grade A	1	—	—
Stores Officer Grade B	2	—	—
Stores Officer Grade C	11	—	—
Stores Officer Grade D	12	—	—
Support Grade Band 1	150	1	10
Support Grade Band 2	736	18	54
Support Manager 1	1	—	—
Support Manager 2	4	—	—
Support Manager 3	14	—	1
Technical Grade 1	16	—	—
Technical Grade 2	8	—	—
Telecom Engineering Technician	195	—	1
Telecom Technical Engineer II	58	—	1
Telecoms Technical Officer	2	1	1
Temporary Prison Officer	4	—	—
Territorial Inspector	5	—	—
Trainee Graphics Officer	1	—	—
Trainee Statistician	1	—	—
Trainee Typist	1	—	—
Typing Manager	32	1	3
Typist	763	17	27

[1] APS = Accelerated Promotion Scheme.

Mentally Disordered Prisoners

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what effect periods spent in hospitals for the mentally disordered has on the original sentence of category A prisoners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Any period of time spent in hospital by a prisoner transferred there under the Mental Health Act 1983 counts towards the serving of the sentence of imprisonment imposed by the court in his case.

Police Investigations

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce arrangements to compensate county police forces which incur exceptional costs in the course of official investigations into other police forces.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. Arrangements already allow for a police force's cost in conducting an investigation on behalf of another force to be covered by the force concerned. The costs are determined between the respective chief officers.

Rukhasana Tufail Fakir

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the case of Rukhasana Tufail Fakir.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Mrs. Tufail has applied to the Court of Appeal for leave to move for judicial review of the decision to deport her. Her case will be reviewed in the light of the outcome of these proceedings and any further representations made on her behalf.

Financial Fraud

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are engaged in his Department in combating fraud in financial institutions; and at what annual cost.

Mr. Maclean: No officials in my Department are directly so engaged. The Home Office is responsible for the criminal law as it relates to fraudulent activity, but it has no direct involvement in its investigation or prosecution.

Dogs

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to require owners of breeds of dogs involved in serious attacks on children and adults to muzzle such dogs when in a public place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 provides that all exempted dogs—that is, fighting dogs such as the pit bull terrier—must be muzzled when in a public place. The Act also gives the courts powers to impose a muzzling order on a dog of any breed or type which they judge potentially or actually dangerous.

In addition, my right hon. and learned Friend has a reserve power under section 2 of the Act to impose restrictions relating to muzzling, leashing and abandoning any breed or type of dog which, after having taken advice, he considers presents a serious danger to the public. The need to use this power is kept under review.

Market Testing

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria are used to select a Home Office function for market testing.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office approach to market testing accords with Government policy as set out in the White Paper "Competing for Quality: Buying Better Public Services", Cm 1730. Priority is being given to market-testing activities where the costs are substantial and it seems likely that comparable services could be provided satisfactorily by external suppliers under contract.

Prison Visits

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many queries from the police and probation service were processed by the prisoner location unit in Birmingham during the last four weeks for which figures are available; and what was the average time taken to process each application;

(2) how many complaints were received from members of the public about the processing of prison visit applications in the year prior to the establishment of the assisted prison visits unit;

(3) what additional resources will be made available in the next financial year to investigate possible fraudulent claims at the assisted prison visits unit;

(4) how many staff were employed at the assisted prison visits unit in Birmingham;

(5) when sufficient resources will be made available to the assisted prison visits unit to pay applicants twice per month;

(6) when the assisted prison visits unit records will be computerised;

(7) how many applications were dealt with last year by the assisted prison visits unit; and what is the average time taken to process each application;

(8) how many complaints were received from the public about the processing of the assisted prison visits unit applications last year;

(9) what checks are currently made to detect fraudulent claims at the assisted prison visits unit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the operation of the Assisted Prison Visits Unit, including the Prisoner Location Unit.

The Assisted Prison Visits Unit (APVU) currently operates with 37 members of staff, five of whom are dedicated to work arising on the Prisoner Location Unit. The APVU processed 79,370 applications last year with an average turn round time of seven working days. The Prisoner Location Unit received 4,263 calls from the police and the probation service during November 1993. On average the Unit took 24 hours to process each claim, although the vast majority were dealt with on the same day.

Current administrative procedures provide that there should be systematic checks with prison establishments to confirm that visits have been made, and with the Benefits Agency to ensure that applicants qualify on low income. Where evidence of any fraudulent claim comes to light these are referred to the police for investigation. The advent of computerisation within the APVU, the first phase of which is scheduled to come on line in March 1994, will enhance the detection of fraudulent claims and their investigation.

You also ask about the proposed extension of the Assisted Visits scheme to cover the second statutory monthly payment. The White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice" includes a commitment to consider extensions of the scheme as resources allow. We have also indicated in the Prison Service Business plan that the extension should take place this financial year. No final decision on this matter has been taken. It will be necessary to do so in the light of the resources available to the Prison Service and it is not possible to say when payment of the second monthly visit will be initiated.

Lastly, you also ask about the number of complaints which were received from members of the public in the year prior to this function being transferred from the then DHSS to the Prison Service and similarly, the number of complaints from the public about processing of applications which the APVU received last year. I am afraid that we do not have any records relating to the performance of the DHSS. Statistics on the number of complaints received by the APVU are not held in the form requested and could be obtained only by inspecting individual case files.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 will apply to the market testing of the assisted prison visits unit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated December 1993:

The Home Secretory has asked me to reply to your recent Question about whether the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 will apply to the market testing of the Assisted Prisons Visits Unit.

We have identified the Unit as one of our candidates for market testing. Work on a scoping study, which is the first stage in the process, will start in the new year. This will examine in detail the suitability or otherwise of the Assisted Prisons Visits Unit for competitive tendering against the private sector. If competitive tendering follows we will expect bidders to consider the implications of the Regulations.

As in all market tests, whether the Regulations apply will depend on the circumstances of the particular case and the way that bidders respond to the invitation to tender. To assist in this the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster issued advice on the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 on 11 March 1993 (HWA col. 648).

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria were used to select the assisted prison visits unit and the prisoner location unit for market testing.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the criteria used to select the Assisted Prisons Visits Unit and the Prisoner Location Unit for market testing.

The White Paper 'Competing for Quality' identified promising areas for market testing. These included such functions as payment of grants, grant administration and advisory services. APVU, which at present subsumes the Prisoner Location Unit, carries out these functions.

A scoping study due to start in the new year will examine the suitability or otherwise of the Unit for competitive tendering.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the scoping report into the proposed market test of the assisted prison visits unit will be made available to staff.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about whether the Scoping Report into the proposed market test of the Assisted Prisons Visits Unit will be made available to staff.

Staff in the Unit will be consulted fully throughout the scoping study and a copy of the scoping study report will be made available to them.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the decision was made to market test the assisted prison visits unit; and when the staff association was informed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about when the decision was made to market test the Assisted Prisons Visits Unit; and when the Staff Association was informed.

The Prisons Board Executive Committee decided on 26 July 1993 to include the Assisted Prisons Visits Unit as one of our candidates for market testing. Staff in the Unit were told by their Head of Division on 6 August 1993. Prison Service Trades Unions and Staff Associations were advised at the same time. This has been followed up with briefing by senior line management and our Market Testing Section.

Work on the first stage of the process will start in the new year. This will examine in detail the suitability, or otherwise, of APVU for competitive tendering against the private sector.

Primates

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the areas of research or categories of product involving the use of primates in *(a)* toxicity and *(b)* non-toxicity tests for the intention of registration of medical or dental products under the Medicines Act 1968 and equivalent international legislation in 1992;

(2) what assessment he has made of the increase in the number of primates used in scientific procedures required by the Medicines Act 1968 and the equivalent international legislation during 1992.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answers 7 December 1993]:* The increase in the number of primates used in scientific procedures in 1992 was attributable principally to a general increase in the number of pharmaceutical products submitted for chronic toxicity testing.

Total numbers of primates used increased from 4,518 in 1991 to 5,018 in 1992, as shown in table 14 of the "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals in Great Britain 1992", Cm 2356.

Table 7 provides information on procedures for toxicity tests on the basis of broad areas and relates to the use of animals in the final stages of regulatory testing when the purpose is to identify any unexpected or adverse effects in body systems immediately prior to use of medicine by humans.

Table 4 relates to information presented to regulatory authorities and derived from animal testing at an earlier stage of product development.

To list individual areas of research or categories of product would be in breach of the requirement of section 24(1) of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 which provides for the protection of confidential information.

Citizenship Applications

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the current duties of police detective officers in the processing of British citizenship applications; what is his estimate of the total police time devoted to these duties in the current year to date; and what plans he has to transfer these duties to other staff.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 7 December 1993]:* The duties of police officers are to interview where necessary on behalf of the Home Office applicants for naturalisation and their referees in order to help determine whether the statutory requirements for citizenship are met and whether discretion should be exercised to grant it. The amount of police time spent on these duties is currently being collated and I shall write to the hon. Member. Consideration is currently being given to the feasibility of the nationality division conducting a proportion of these interviews itself.

HEALTH

Management Costs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to reduce the management costs of health authorities and trusts.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has announced proposals for streamlining the structure and slimming down the management of the national health service outside hospital provider units. NHS trusts are free to determine the mix of staff required to deliver services but must do so within what they can afford from health care contracts.

Primary Care

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has for developing equal opportunities in primary care; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Family health services authorities continue to make good progress with the Opportunity 2000 initiative. Their action plans are submitted to regional health authorities and have concerned their own directly employed staff. We believe that the principles of Opportunity 2000 can be pursued to good effect within general medical practice. Although general practitioners are independent contractors and responsible for their own staff, they may look to FHSAs for support and expertise.

Steroids

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths of children were caused or partially caused by steroids in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: In the last five years one report of a fatality in a child has been received by the Committee on Safety of Medicines, through the United Kingdom's voluntary spontaneous adverse drug reaction reporting scheme, in association with corticosteroid therapy. The receipt of a report does not necessarily indicate that a specific drug caused the reaction, as many other factors may have contributed.

Smear Tests

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of women currently receive the results of a smear test within one month; and what is *(a)* the average and *(b)* the longest time for receiving the results for those cases outside of one month.

Mr. Sackville: Information is not available centrally in the form requested. Health authorities must aim to return the results of cervical smear tests to the doctor who undertook them within one month. The most recent review indicates that, in most cases, health authorities are meeting the one-month target time for cervical smear reporting.

General Practitioners

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make a statement on the creation of incentives for general practitioners to work in the inner city;

(2) what plans she has to encourage *(a)* women general practitioners and *(b)* general practitioners generally into working in the inner city.

Dr. Mawhinney: The 1990 general practitioner contract introduced the deprivation payments scheme in recognition of the potential higher work load faced by GPs in urban areas. The contract also introduced explicit recognition for part-time working and job-sharing arrangements to assist doctors, including women, who wish to combine a career in general practice with other commitments.

As outlined in "Making London Better", we are currently exploring the scope for more flexible approaches to general medical services within the London initiative zone, including arrangements to strengthen the recruitment of GPs. We will assess subsequently the potential for wider application of any new arrangements which are introduced.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to adjust allocation of budgets given to general practitioner budget holders to take into account census and household survey data.

Dr. Mawhinney: General practitioner fundholder budget setting guidance for 1994-95 is given in EL(93) 93, a copy of which is available in the Library. Work is being undertaken to identify any new data which may usefully be taken account of in future guidance.

Abortions

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many abortions were performed on a private fee-paying basis in 1991 in each region;

(2) how many abortions were performed on a private fee-paying basis by regional health authority in each year from 1985 to 1990.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is published in "Abortion Statistics", Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, AB Nos. 12-18, table 20, copies of which are available in the Library.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths per year are caused by carbon monoxide poisoning.

Mr. Sackville: This information is shown in the table.

Number of deaths from carbon monoxide poisoning
England and Wales
1988 to 1992

International classification diseases number	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
E868.1 (Accidental poisoning by other and unspecified utility gas)	9	5	5	4	16
E868.2 (Accidental poisoning by motor vehicle exhaust gas)	35	33	26	29	25
E868.3 (Accidental poisoning by carbon monoxide from incomplete combustion of other domestic fuels)	22	10	11	25	20
E868.8 (Accidental poisoning by carbon monoxide from other sources)	1	2	1	0	2
E868.9 (Accidental poisoning by unspecified carbon monoxide)	0	3	5	3	3
E982.0 (Poisoning by motor vehicle exhaust gas)	102	80	94	90	93
E982.1 (Poisoning by other carbon monoxide)	7	9	5	7	3
TOTAL	176	142	147	158	162

NHS Charges

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were national health service items for which a charge was made; and what was the revenue from charges in England in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The available information is shown in the table.

Charged national health service items and revenue from charges (£ million) in England between 1988 and 1993

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Family health services prescriptions	176·9	189·3	205·9	215·2	242·0
Family health service dental treatment	290·6	366·2	379·7	404·0	394·8
Road traffic accidents	8·7	9·3	9·1	[1]—	[1]—

[1] Information about revenue from road traffic accident charges has not been available centrally since 1990-91.

All national health service sight tests are free of charge. People who are entitled to help with the cost of spectacles receive this in the form of a spectacle voucher; the sale of spectacles is always a private transaction between patient and practitioner, even when an NHS voucher is used. Information about hospital prescriptions, the hospital eye service, and hospital orthotic services is not available centrally.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide details of estimates of receipts from NHS charges broken down by category of charge for 1994-95.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information for 1994-95 will be published in the Department of Health's main Supply estimates in March 1994.

Incontinence Pads

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the number of purchasers that are restricting either the number of incontinence pads per patient or the total number of incontinence pads.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally.

NHS Chairmen

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the range of remuneration of the chairmen of boards of NHS health authorities and trusts for each of the last three years; and what is their projected income for the next year.

Dr. Mawhinney: The range of remuneration for chairmen of boards of national health service health authorities and trusts from April 1990 is shown in the table.

Chairmen volunteered to forgo any increase during the period when public sector pay settlements were restricted to the range of zero to 1·5 per cent. No decision has yet been made on future increases.

Date	*Regional Health Authorities* £	*District Health Authorities* £	*Family Health Services Authorities* £	*Trusts* £
1 December 1991	20,925	15,125-19,285	10,845-12,605	15,125-19,285
1 April 1991	20,545	14,850-18,935	10,645-12,375	14,850-18,935
1 January 1991	19,110	13,812-17,610	9,903-11,510	13,812-17,610
1 April 1990	18,921	13,674-17,437	9,805-11,395	13,674-17,437

NHS Numbers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to issue patients with NHS numbers.

Mr. Sackville: Every United Kingdom resident is issued with a national health service number. This happens either when the birth of a child is registered or when someone who comes to live here seeks to register with a general practitioner.

From July 1995 the NHS number will be issued in a new format suited to its wider use to identify patients within the NHS. This replacement number will continue to appear on the medical card patients receive when they register with a GP.

Junior Doctors

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes she plans to the new deal for junior doctors following publication of the Winyard report.

Dr. Mawhinney: We remain committed to implementing the "New Deal on Junior Doctors' Hours", copies of which are available in the Library.

Out-patients

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the changes in levels of out-patient attendance nationally in 1991-92 and 1992-93; and what assessment she has made of the connections between this and the development of primary care.

Mr. Sackville: There was a 1·7 per cent. increase in the number of out-patient attendances in England between 1991-92 and 1992-93.

The Government have identified a number of national health service priorities for research relating to the relationship between primary and secondary care. One of these priority areas is the appropriateness of out-patient follow-up, which accounts for the majority of all out-patient attendances. The role of primary care in reducing unnecessary out-patient attendances is among these areas to be explored.

Insulin Cartridges

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost of cartridges for use with insulin pens; and what action she is taking to ensure that general practitioner fundholders are able equally with non-fundholders to continue to prescribe insulin cartridges for use with pen devices.

Dr. Mawhinney: The cost of a pack of five insulin cartridges ranges from £6.44 to £27. All cartridges are available on national health service prescription and, therefore, all general practitioners including fundholders are able to prescribe them.

Terminal Care

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of doctors specialising in terminal care in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The available information is shown in the table.

Doctors specialising in palliative medicine (terminal care)
by whole-time equivalents
England—at 30 September

Year	*All doctors in palliative medicine*
1989	22·2
1990	26·3
1991	31·2
1992	55·5

Notes:

Statistics on the number of doctors specialising in palliative medicine were collected for the first time in 1989.

In addition, doctors in anaesthetics, radiology and the surgical specialties will also have a role in terminal care in terms of pain relief and life-prolonging surgery.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of nurses specialising in terminal care in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Coronary Care

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many coronary care beds and high-dependency beds there were in England in each of the last 14 years.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. A study into intensive care provision showed that in 1991-92 there were at least 356 high-dependency beds and at least 879 coronary care unit beds in England; this is the only year for which such information is held centrally.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the difference between an acute ward and a coronary care unit; and what research has been undertaken in relation to outcome for patients with the same heart condition placed on these two types of wards.

Mr. Sackville: An acute ward is a medical ward taking the range of medical admissions. A coronary care unit is a small ward specially staffed and equipped for the care of acutely ill patients who have suffered or are suspected of having suffered a heart attack. Any hospital that takes acute admissions will have coronary care facilities, and if a patient needing those facilities cannot be accommodated in a coronary care unit for any reason they will normally be accommodated in an acute medical ward where they will receive the same treatment and care as they would in a coronary care unit. No information is available centrally of any study into outcomes for patients with the same heart condition placed on these two types of wards.

Cancer Patients

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to ensure that cancer patients are included in clinical trials in the national health service; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The national health service supports cancer research funded by a number of bodies including the Medical Research Council which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and cancer charities. The recruitment of patients to clinical trials is a matter for those conducting and funding individual studies. The funding and support of research and development in the NHS are currently under review.

NHS Registers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what items of personal data will be contained in NHS registers; whether the computers containing such registers will be linked; what statutory protection will be afforded to the registers; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The national health service administrative register will consolidate information held today by the NHS in England and Wales, to facilitate seamless health care provision and support the business needs of health service bodies.

The register will comprise a number of networked, locally managed databases and will contain basic administrative details only such as name, age, address, sex, NHS number and name of the family doctor.

There will be no statutory regulations governing the register; access to and use of the register is being determined in consultation with the clinical professions and in conformance with the Data Protection Act 1988.

NHS Trusts

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many non-executive directors of trusts have not been given a further term; and how many have voluntarily stood down in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of non-executive directors of national health service trusts who have not been appointed for a further term, for whatever reason, or who have voluntarily stood down, in 1991, 1992 and 1993 is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1991	1
1992	31
1993	51

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which element of the rationalisation of national health service trust facilities at Aintree, Liverpool is being put out for private tender.

Mr. Sackville: The Aintree hospitals national health service trust has recently gone out to open tender for a 100-bed low dependency unit, a conference suite and a kitchen and dining complex.

Asthma (Pollution)

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *587*, when she expects the findings of the sub-group of the Committee on the Medical Effects on Air Pollutants, investigating the links between asthma and air pollution to be published.

Mr. Sackville: The work of the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants' sub-group on asthma and air pollution is at an early stage. It is therefore difficult to predict with accuracy when it will be able to publish its report, but it hopes to be in a position to do so in the late summer or autumn of 1994.

Admiral Sir Godfrey Milton-Thompson

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was paid to Admiral Sir Godfrey Milton-Thompson in the out-of-court settlement.

Dr. Mawhinney: An ex-gratia payment of £12,500 was made to Sir Godfrey Milton-Thompson in order to settle legal proceedings. The settlement carried with it no admission of any liability.

City and East London Family and Community Health Services Unit

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations she has had with the North East Thames regional health authority prior to the establishment of the City and East London family and community health services unit; if she will give its terms of reference; if she will give the names of its chairman, board and principal officials; to whom it is accountable; if she intends it to assume the responsibilities of the family health service authority for its area; and if it will be eligible for future trust status.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to my reply by letter of 30 November—copies of which are available in the Library—in response to his earlier question about the City and East London family and community services.

Departmental officials have been in discussion with North East Thames regional health authority about CELFACHS. In respect of community health responsibilities, CELFACHS is a directly managed unit, accountable to East London and the City health authority. As such, it does not have a chairman or a management board. Its project director is Ms Hilary Scott. She is also to be employed by the family health services authority, whose responsibilities remain unchanged. Through these arrangements, CELFACHS will support the district and family health authorities in co-ordinating the management of family and community health services and in considering possible national health service trust configurations in east London. Whether or not any unit is eligible for trust status depends on compliance with relevant legislation governing NHS trusts and successful completion of the rigorous assessment process.

Hospital League Tables

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what categories of measurement are to be used for the compilation of hospital league tables;

(2) what statistical or other techniques will be used in judging outcomes for use in hospital league tables.

Dr. Mawhinney: The chief executive of the national health service management executive has asked NHS hospitals and ambulance authorities, in an executive letter, dated 20 July 1993—EL(93)64—copies of which are available in the Library, to provide information on the following categories:

Accident and Emergency

The percentage of patients seen and assessed for treatment within five minutes of arriving in the accident and emergency department.

Out-patient Appointments

The percentage of patients seen within 30 minutes of their out-patient appointment time.

Day Surgery

The percentage of elective episodes—waiting list and booked—by selected procedures for NHS patients not requiring an overnight stay. The indicator is based on the first episode in the provider spell.

Waiting Times

The percentage of NHS patients by selected specialties admitted within three months and within 12 months of being put on a waiting list.

Operations

The number of patients not admitted within a month of their second cancelled operation.

Ambulance Speed of Response

The percentage of emergency—999 calls—ambulances arriving within 14 minutes—urban area—or 19 minutes—rural area.

Statistical or other techniques to be used in judging outcomes for use in hospital league tables are still under discussion.

Chaplaincy Facilities

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance has been issued by her Department to NHS purchasing bodies regarding the need to ensure adequate provision of chaplaincy facilities for those patients who require them.

Mr. Sackville: Guidance issued in January 1992, HSG(92)2, copies of which are available in the Library, reminded purchasing authorities and provider units of the need to make adequate provision for the spiritual needs of patients and staff.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average cost to health authorities and general practitioner fundholders of a visit by an NHS hospital chaplain to one patient.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Health Education Authority

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to announce the results of the review of the Health Education Authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: The final report of the review of the Health Education Authority undertaken by Mr. John Lee and his team is expected shortly.

Prisoners (HIV)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list each Department of Health commissioned study of HIV prevalence among prison inmates.

Mr. Sackville: To date, only one Department of Health funded study has taken place and was commissioned jointly with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department. This was an anonymised survey of HIV prevalence in three London prisons and took place earlier this year. The results will be published as soon as possible.

Job Seeker's Allowance

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to exempt claimants of the proposed job seeker's allowance from prescription and dental charges *(a)* for the first six months after they first claim the allowance and *(b)* for the next six months.

Dr. Mawhinney: No decision has yet been made.

AIDS

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has as to research into the spreading of AIDS through insect bites.

Mr. Sackville: The possibility that biting insects could be involved in the transmission of HIV has been raised many times in the past. The evidence from epidemiology and knowledge of the ways in which insects bite and transmit other infectious agents indicate that insects play no part in this process.

Epidemiological studies in Africa and in the United States have investigated the hypothesis that HIV is spread by insects and found no evidence to support it. In addition, there is no evidence that hepatitis B, which has similar epidemiological features to HIV, can be transmitted by mosquitoes.

Laboratory experiments have been unable to demonstrate replication of HIV in bed bugs or mosquitoes. Thus biological transmission, where the virus multiplies in the insect and is injected into a person when bitten, would not be possible. The possibility of mechanical transmission, by which the insect transfers fresh blood directly from one person to another when interrupted during feeding, is thought to be remote because the proboscis or mouth of the insect would not hold sufficient blood to provide an infectious dose of virus.

NHS Supplies Authority

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been *(a)* the total cost of the new corporate look given to the NHS Supplies Authority and *(b)* the cost for (i) stationery, (ii) publications, (iii) signage and (iv) livery.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* The cost of the logo design was £5,500.

Stationery artwork for 176 relevant sites amounted to £61,000—£367 per site—publications to launch the new organisation cost £67,000; replacement of 376 signs at 245 sites cost £40,000—£106 per sign—replacement livery costs for 37 vehicles was £20,000—£540 per vehicle.

EDUCATION

Sex Education

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when the consultative draft on guidelines to schools on the new arrangements for sex education will be issued; how long the consultation period will be for these guidelines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Consultative draft guidance on the new arrangements for sex education in schools in England was published on 6 December 1993, inviting comments by 18 February 1994. The draft guidance places sex education in schools firmly within a moral framework. Copies have been placed in the Library. We intend to issue the guidance in final form to schools next spring.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement about the operation of his Department's sensitive documents unit; how many staff are employed in its operation; and approximately how many documents per annum come within its purview.

Mr. Sproat: My Department does not have a "sensitive documents unit".

EMPLOYMENT

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers; and how many vehicles are involved.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In the 1992-93 financial year, the latest year for which annual costs are available, the Department spent £216,352 on ministerial cars. The Department has a call on four official vehicles for use by its Ministers.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In the 1990-91 financial year, the Department spent £171,198 on ministerial cars. At that time, the Department had a call on four official vehicles for use by its Ministers.

Access to Work Scheme

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the proposed budget for 1994-95 for the access to work scheme; and what were the 1993-94 budgets for the special aids to employment, personal reader service, fares to work, and adaptions of premises and equipment schemes.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Andrew Miller, dated 9 December 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to him about the Access To Work budget for 1994-95 and the 1993-94 budgets for the special aids to employment, personal reader service, fares to work, and adaptions of premises and equipment schemes.

The information you have asked for is as follows:

1994-95—Proposed budget (subject to final allocation):

Access to work=£12·6 million.

1993-94—Budgets:

	£
Special aids to employment	6,837,000
Personal reader service	1,430,000
Fares to work	2,352,000
Adaptations to premises and equipment	465,000

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Employment Agencies

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what grounds are taken into account by him in refusing a grant for a licence for an employment agency.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The main grounds for refusing a licence under the Employment Agencies Act 1973 are the unsuitability of the applicant, or any person to be associated with the agency, because of misconduct or other sufficient reason. Factors taken into account when considering whether or not to grant a licence include information from an applicant's or an associated person's previous agency activity, employment history or references, convictions or adverse judgments involving fraud or other dishonesty and objections made by interested parties.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement about the operation of his Department's sensitive documents unit; how many staff are employed in its operation; and approximately how many documents per annum come within its purview.

The Attorney-General: There are no dedicated sensitive documents units in the Department for which I am responsible. The handling of sensitive documents forms part of the responsibilities of the departmental records officer for each of the Departments and they carry out their duties in accordance with the guidelines in chapter 9 of the open government White Paper.

Mr. Roger Levitt

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Attorney-General when the Serious Fraud Office (1) first suggested to the counsel to Mr. Roger Levitt that he plead guilty to only some of the charges; and if he will list the charges concerned;

(2) what reasons underlay the decision of the Serious Fraud Office not to proceed with the theft charges against Roger Levitt;

(3) what was the estimated cost to public funds of the Roger Levitt case;

(4) what actions the Serious Fraud Office took in the Roger Levitt case which were subsequently described as wholly illegal by the trial judge;

(5) whether the Serious Fraud Office knew when it accepted the guilty plea by Roger Levitt that the judge would impose a non-custodial sentence.

The Attorney-General: In every complex fraud matter it is necessary to ensure that the counts in the indictment are the minimum reasonably necessary for the proper and effective presentation of the case. No counts of theft were in fact alleged in the indictment, although there were a number of counts other than fraudulent trading including counts of obtaining property by deception. An initial decision to proceed on a single count of fraudulent trading was taken in the light of general guidance given by the Court of Appeal and reviewed after the trial judge had given directions limiting the scope of the evidence. A subsequent application to re-join several substantive counts was refused.

No such suggestion of the nature referred to by my hon. Friend was made by or on behalf of the Serious Fraud Office. The offer by Roger Levitt to plead guilty to fraudulent trading on the basis upon which he in fact pleaded was first made on Monday 22 November 1993 by his leading counsel to leading counsel for the Crown.

The Serious Fraud Office was not aware that the judge would impose a non-custodial sentence when it informed the defence that the proposed plea of guilty by Roger Levitt was acceptable. Sentencing is a matter entirely for the judge. The prosecution can never change its mind about accepting a plea on the grounds that a sentence is too lenient.

The trial judge never described any action by the Serious Fraud Office as "wholly illegal" and never criticised the SFO in any way at all.

The best estimate of the cost of the Serious Fraud Office arising from this case as yet available is approximately £1·4 million. I have at present no information about other costs and will write to my hon. Friend.

TRANSPORT

Marine Safety

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the first report of the National Marine Safety Steering Committee was published; and what proposals he intends to bring forward to tighten safety regulations for powered recreational marine craft, and to control the use of jet skis in the vicinity of bathing beaches.

Mr. Norris: The first report of the National Marine Safety Steering Committee—NMSSC—was issued on 21 October 1993. The report includes a number of recommendations referred to the NMSSC from the district marine safety committees which relate to the regulation and safe operation of recreational craft generally. Those recommendations are now under consideration.

Satellites

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when a decision is to be announced on differential geostationary positioning satellites;

(2) when his Department expects to publish the feasibility report on monitoring the integrity of the United States Norstar global positioning satellite system;

(3) if he will list the representations he has had about differential geostationary positioning satellites;

(4) when non-encrypted differential geostationary positioning satellites will be available to the leisure market in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norris: The global positioning system—GPS—is a method of determining position based upon signals from satellites. The system has been developed by the United States of America Department of Defence. It has not yet been declared fully operational. Encrypted differential global positioning system—DGPS—signals are transmitted from the United Kingdom and from the Republic of Ireland. Such signals can improve the accuracy of the position found. Those signals are provided on a commercial basis by Scorpio Marine, under the terms of a 1991 contract with the three general lighthouse authorities—GLAs. The Department recently received representations from Trinity house, on behalf of the GLAs, to consider the case for transmitting unencrypted signals. Officials from the Department are to meet the GLAs shortly to consider both that proposal and also a draft study by the GLAs on monitoring the integrity of GPS signals.

Electronic Charting

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce a recognised standard for electronic charting.

Mr. Norris: The standards for electronic chart data and information systems—ECDIS—will be announced when performance specifications are adopted by the International Maritime Organisation. We support this move and hope that the standards will be accepted by the IMO's maritime safety committee next May.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about electronic notices to mariners and electronic chart updating.

Mr. Norris: The International Maritime Organisation is developing performance standards for electronic chart display and information systems—ECDIS. It is anticipated that the standards will call for the promulgation of essential information by appropriate means including notices to mariners.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates he has made of the export potential for British technology in electronic charting; and what discussions he has had with the hydrographic department.

Mr. Norris: Although discussions have been held with the hydrographic department, particularly within the marine navigational equipment committee on the development of international standards for electronic charting, no estimate has been made of the export potential for the technology.

Thames Rescue Arrangements

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to reviewing his decision to reject the recommendations of the report of the

Hayes inquiry into river safety—Cm 1991—that there should be an early review of the rescue arrangements and equipment on the Thames.

Mr. Norris: The Government gave careful consideration to this recommendation, which suggested an early review of the rescue arrangements and equipment on the Thames at the time that the report of the inquiry into river safety by John Hayes was published. It was concluded then that a further review of this kind would not be justified. Action has, however, been taken to ensure that appropriate lessons have been learned.

The Home Office has advised that replies from the main agencies involved in River Thames rescue operations confirmed that contingency planning has been adjusted in the light of lessons learned from the Marchioness-Bowbelle disaster.

In addition, a review of rescue arrangements and equipment on the River Thames between Teddington and the Thames barrier has been completed by the relevant district marine safety committee, and a new working group for the lower Thames was set up on 14 July 1993, with the initial task of assessing rescue arrangements on this lower section of the river. The district marine safety committee is also proposing to establish a sub-working group to consider life-saving appliances and escape from water up vertical walls on the banks of the Thames.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of the authenticated transcript of the radio-telephone conversation between the Port of London authority Thames navigation service and the vessels involved in the collision between the Marchioness and the Bowbelle on the night of 29 August 1989.

Mr. Norris: I am arranging for a transcript of the recording made in the early hours of 20 August 1989 to be placed in the Library. The recording was made by the Port of London authority, of communications on VHF channel 14 which were broadcast or received by the Thames navigation service at Woolwich.

Car Crash Tests

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy towards the use by *(a)* the Transport Research Laboratory or *(b)* any other transport research centres funded by his Department of human corpses in car crash tests.

Mr. Key: The Department has never carried out car crash tests using human corpses. Crash tests are a widely used techique to establish the safety of vehicle designs, but the United Kingdom always uses instrumented mannequins or dummies to measure the impact forces on the occupants. The Department is aware that tests using human corpses are carried out in a number of countries, but not in the United Kingdom. The information derived from them is available worldwide.

Rail Services (Cornwall)

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last discussed with the chairman of British Rail its plans for railway services in Cornwall.

Mr. Freeman: I discussed BR's proposals for services to Cornwall, among other things, with the chief executive of British Rail on 23 September. These are operational matters for BR and I have therefore asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member. However, I understand from British Rail that, from May 1994, it proposes to replace the 06.45 InterCity service from Penzance with a Regional Railways service to provide an 06.40 service from Penzance, connecting at Bristol with the InterCity service to Paddington. The May 1994 timetable will continue to include sleeper services. Discounted fares policy is, of course, a matter for British Rail, which has received representations on the applicability to the 05.19 service and is considering the matter.

Catalytic Converters

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has of the effect on morbidity of catalytic converters fitted to cars.

Mr. Sackville: I have been asked to reply.

We are not aware of any epidemiological evidence that catalytic converters fitted to motor cars or any other vehicles with internal combustion engines influence morbidity. The converters reduce the emissions of pollutant gases and particles, which would be expected to be beneficial, but emit very low levels of the catalytic metals. The level of metals emitted are likely to be so low as to have minimal, if any, effect on morbidity.

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the operation of his Department's sensitive documents unit; how many staff are employed in its operation; and approximately how many documents per annum come within its purview.

Mr. Norris: The Department's record service employs four staff to register and manage classified files. The total number of documents processed each year is not currently known, but the Department of Transport's file list is being computerised, which will enable analysis of files held.

Donaldson Inquiry

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date he expects the Donaldson inquiry to report its findings and recommendations.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on 24 November, column *64*.

Klondyker Ships

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the full marine accident investigation branch report into the Klondyker incidents in Shetland during October and November this year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The accidents are being investigated, and the marine accident investigation branch has issued five interim recommendations addressed to Lerwick harbour trust and the Department of Transport. When the investigations are complete, a report will be produced, but it is too early to say when it will be available.

Borodinskoe Polye

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list, in respect of the Borodinskoe Polye the *(a)* salvage costs, *(b)* oil pollution recovery costs and *(c)* other costs incurred by his Department.

Mr. Norris: The salvage, oil recovery and counter pollution costs in respect of the Borodinskoe Polye are estimated to be in excess of £770,000 and other costs incurred are estimated at £12,000.

MV Braer

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date he expects to publish the marine accident investigation branch report into the sinking of the Braer.

Mr. Norris: It is hoped that the report will be published in January.

River Safety

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now reconsider the decisions made not to establish a public inquiry into the Marchioness disaster of comparable scope to those already conducted into the disasters at King's Cross and Clapham.

Mr. Norris: When the then Secretary of State considered the need for a public inquiry he concluded that the holding of a formal investigation was unnecessary given that a full, thorough and comprehensive inquiry had been carried out by the marine accident investigation branch—MAIB. Subsequently, the view has remained that a formal investigation would be unlikely to add to the inspector's findings, or to the 27 safety recommendations made in the MAIB report. The position was not changed by anything said in the Hayes report, which made no suggestion that a further inquiry into the accident was needed. I therefore remain of the view that the case for a formal inquiry has not been made.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has anything to add to his answer to the hon. Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) of 19 July, *Official Report*, column *78*, concerning universal applications of all the recommendations of the Hayes report on river safety.

Mr. Norris: The Hayes report concerns river safety. The Department publishes an annual schedule, giving details of progress on each recommendation, copies of which are placed in the Library of the House. The next schedule is due to be published in July 1994. In the meantime, action continues on all of the 22 recommendations.

PRIME MINISTER

European Community Expenditure

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Prime Minister what was the level of EC expenditure in the United Kingdom disaggregated by parliamentary constituency and EC programme, in each year since 1988-89.

The Prime Minister: The information requested is not available. Details of public sector receipts by Government Department were published in table 11.4 of the 1993 Chancellor's departmental report. This table covers the outturn for the years 1987-88 to 1991-92, estimated outturn for 1992-93 and plans for 1993-94 to 1995-96. Departments' latest forecast of EC receipts will be published in the 1994 Chancellor's departmental report, early next year.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 9 December.

The Prime Minister: I am travelling to Brussels for the European Council meeting and other meetings.

Political Donations

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister if he will introduce legislation to require all political parties to compile and publish annually comprehensive accounts showing the source of all donations and the extent of all expenditure; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so.

No. 10 Downing Street

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions he has used No. 10 Downing street premises for functions of the Conservative party; what is the cost to public funds; and what was the purpose of each occasion.

The Prime Minister: When charitable or other non-official events are held at No. 10 Downing street, the organisers are responsible for all catering and staff costs as well as other miscellaneous direct costs.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister in what circumstances the premises of No. 10 Downing street are available for hire by outside organisations; and at what cost.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 30 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *420*.

War Anniversaries

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what plans the Government have with its wartime allies to mark *(a)* the 50th anniversary of the D-Day operation and *(b)* the 50th anniversary of the end of the war in Europe.

The Prime Minister: Plans for a series of events to mark the 50th anniversary of the D-Day landings, both in the United Kingdom and in France, are now well advanced. These plans have been made in close co-operation with other Governments. An announcement will be made shortly.

Plans for events to mark the end of the second world war are being considered at present. An announcement will be made next year.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Fireworks

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures his Department currently takes to ensure that fireworks manufactured abroad and imported into Britain meet British safety standards.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Health and Safety Executive —HSE—authorises the importation of fireworks only if they comply with British Standard 7114:1988 on firework safety. Also, local trading standards officers use BS7114 as a benchmark, in exercising their powers under the Consumer Protection Act 1987, to ensure that fireworks on sale to the public are safe.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the cost of firework accident advertising and the number of recorded accidents in 1993; and what was the comparable figure for each of the preceding 10 years.

Mr. McLoughlin: The costs of firework accident prevention work falling on the Department's safety awareness budget and the numbers of fireworks accidents requiring hospital treatment were as follows:

	£000	*Accidents*
1984	35	778
1985	40	968
1986	51	846
1987	78	960
1988	57	877
1989	64	800
1990	111	805
1991	74	723
1992	84	942
1993	160	n/a

The firework accident figures cover accidents occurring in the three weeks preceding 5 November and in the week immediately following it. This is the period of availability of fireworks under the voluntary agreement on retail supply with the fireworks industry. The 1993 statistics will not be available until spring 1994.

Imported Coal

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he proposes to take to protect householders from the dangers of imported house coal.

Mr. McLoughlin: There is no reason to believe that imported coal is any more dangerous than that produced in the United Kingdom, although preparation is important. Information on quality standards and on the safe burning of solid fuel is available from the Domestic Coal Consumers Council and through the approved coal merchants scheme.

Post Office Users National Council

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the current members of POUNC for the south Yorkshire area; what were their qualifications; when their current term of office is due to expire; and when nominations to this organisation will next be advertised.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Post Office Act 1969, under which the Post Office Users National Council—POUNC—was set up, provides for the appointment of persons likely to be concerned with matters within the competence of the council. At the same time, it stipulates that regard should be given to the desirability of having members who are familiar with the special requirements and circumstances of particular parts of the British islands.

Within this framework, the interests of all users of post office services in the United Kingdom are represented on the council. There is no specific member for the south Yorkshire area. However, the interests of post office services users in the south Yorkshire area are also served by the appropriate non-statutory local post office advisory committees—POACs.

Several POUNC members' terms of appointment will expire at the end of 1994. In reviewing those appointments, consideration will be given to future representation in consultation, as appropriate.

Details of council membership, together with post office advisory committees are listed in POUNC annual reports, copies of which are sent to Members of Parliament on an individual basis.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if the hon. Member for Don Valley may be sent a copy of the reply sent on 22 September on behalf of the Prime Minister, in answer to the letter handed to the Prime Minister on 15 June by a Japanese group in respect of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant.

Mr. Eggar: A copy has been sent to the hon. Member, and I have today also placed a copy in the Library of the House.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consideration has been given to the possibility of contracts between British Nuclear Fuels plc and customers of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant being varied or annulled in his deliberations as to the start-up of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant.

Mr. Eggar: Details of reprocessing contracts are a matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc and its customers. For the Government's consideration of the possibility of changes being made to contracts, I refer the hon. Member to the statement of Government policy on reprocessing and operation of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield, paragraphs 62-68, which was made available as one of the public consultation documents on 4 August 1993. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what arrangements are made for him or officials from his Department to read signed contracts between British Nuclear Fuels plc and customers of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is in regular contact with British Nuclear Fuels plc on a wide range of issues.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps the Government have taken to validate British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.'s estimate of costs of decommissioning the thermal oxide reprocessing plant.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 7 December 1993]:* Estimates of decommissioning costs are a matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc.

Car Boot Sales

Mr. French: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has on the sale of counterfeit goods at car boot sales.

Mr. McLoughlin: My Department has no statistics concerning the sale of counterfeit goods at car boot sales, although it has received considerable evidence about the damage caused by the trade in counterfeit goods at such markets. The Trade Marks Bill, which has just been introduced, will help to combat counterfeiting, including at car boot sales.

Mr. French: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received about dangerous electrical items being sold at car boot sales.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have received representations on a number of issues concerning car boot sales, including the safety of second-hand electrical goods.

We have considered carefully all the issues relating to car boot sales and have concluded that the existing powers of enforcement authorities to address these concerns are sufficient. The safety of second-hand electrical equipment sold in the course of business, whether at a car boot sale or otherwise, is adequately regulated by the Low Voltage Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1989.

Fraud

Mr. Cryer: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many people are engaged in his Department on combating fraud in financial institutions; and at what annual cost.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Responsibility for combating fraud in financial institutions is shared between a number of bodies. Within my Department, staff in the investigations division currently total 210. The division's direct costs in 1993-94 are £16 million, including the cost of private sector inspectors and investigators. The division carries out investigations under the Companies Acts and other legislation throughout the corporate sector, where there are grounds for suspicion of wrongdoing and it brings criminal proceedings in respect of a wide range of offences, mainly reported to it by the Insolvency Service or brought to light by its own investigations. It also takes other action to protect the public, including action to disqualify directors and to wind up companies. Cases involving fraud in financial institutions constitute only a small part of the work of investigations division and no statistics are maintained which would separately identify resources devoted to this work.

Telecommunications

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library a copy of the detailed explanation given by the Director General of Telecommunications for the K value of telecommunications services.

Mr. McLoughlin: The latest relevant statement by the Director General of Telecommunications, entitled "Future Controls on British Telecom's Prices", was published in June 1992. A copy of this has been placed in the Library of the House.

Satellite Launch Facility

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the initiative announced by AEA Technology to develop a satellite launch facility at the Dounreay nuclear establishment in Caithness.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for the Atomic Energy Authority.

Regional Development Organisations

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total budget allocated by his Department to regional organisations in 1992-93 in (i) the northern region and (ii) the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department's Invest in Britain Bureau paid £1,410,000 in grant in aid to the Northern Development Company for inward investment purposes in the financial year 1992-93 from a total budget of £5 million for the five regional development organisations in England.

Local Enterprise Agencies

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total amount spent by his Department on local enterprise agencies in 1992-93 in *(a)* the northern region and *(b)* the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. McLoughlin: The total amount of DTI funding to local enterprise agencies in *(a)* the northern region and *(b)* the United Kingdom is not available.

Lloyd's

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent representations he has received as to the solvency of Lloyd's of London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: A proportion of the letters that I receive from right hon. and hon. Members and from members of the public about Lloyd's touches on questions of solvency. The statement and certificates demonstrating Lloyd's solvency for the year ended December 1992, which are required by part IV of the Insurance Companies Act 1982, were received by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade at the end of August 1993. My Department monitors the solvency of Lloyd's closely, as it does for insurance companies to which the 1982 Act relates.

Small Firms

Mr. Dunn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the future of consultancy support for small firms provided by his Department.

Mr. Heseltine: Consultancy support for small and medium-sized businesses will continue beyond the life of the present enterprise initiative consultancy scheme in the form of a flexible consultancy and diagnostic service.

As I announced in the House on Tuesday, *Official Report*, columns 145-55, I shall publish a prospectus and guidelines for this service in January, inviting training and enterprise councils to submit proposals on behalf of business link partnerships to deliver the new service on a pilot basis in 1994-95. I expect the service to become nationally available from 1995-96, as the business link network is completed.

This new service will provide businesses with high-quality support, available locally and tailored to their individual needs. It will build and improve on the existing and highly successful enterprise initiative consultancy scheme.

In addition, I intend to trial a new consultancy brokerage service from January 1994, for introduction nationwide later in the year. This will open up to all businesses the considerable wealth of data and project management experience which has been accumulated on UK business consultants for the EI consultancy scheme.

These new services will be developed and introduced alongside the present scheme to ensure a smooth transition from the old to the new.

I have decided therefore that the present EI consultancy scheme will no longer close on 31 March 1994. It will instead remain open until we have received another 10,000 applications. This means we shall be supporting 10,000 projects beyond the previously announced closure date.

At current rates of demand that should enable us to continue accepting applications until well into next year, by which time new arrangements for consultancy support through business links will be in place.

Supervisory Bodies

Mr. Dunn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the outcome of his review of the monitoring procedures of the recognised supervisory bodies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: When the supervisory bodies for company auditors were granted recognition under the Companies Act 1989, it was agreed with them that they would review jointly with my Department this year the operation of their procedures for monitoring compliance by their members with their rules.

I have, therefore, asked the bodies to report to me on how their monitoring regimes have been operating, and to propose changes for the future.

I have also asked Professor Peter Moizer, Professor of Accounting at the university of Leeds, to provide me with an independent assessment of the state of monitoring.

I intend to publish the conclusions of the review early next year.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what requirements his Department places upon Nuclear Electric to provide data on the isotopic composition of plutonium produced in its nuclear plants.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* For the purpose of compiling the annual plutonium figures published by my Department, Nuclear Electric plc provides, for each of its sites, in respect of reactor discharges and dispatches from site, estimated percentages of fissile plutonium. In addition, the company supplies information to Euratom on the isotopic composition of plutonium in spent fuel shipped from each of its sites. This information is supplied via my Department.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what definitions his Department uses to describe different qualities of plutonium arising from civil nuclear reactors.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* As in the annual plutonium figures published by my Department, the quality of plutonium is normally described by reference to its fissile content. The estimated percentage of fissile plutonium is the sum of the masses of the plutonium 239 and 241 isotopes expressed as as percentage of the sum of the masses of all plutonium isotopes.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information his Department is provided by *(a)* Nuclear Electric, *(b)* British Nuclear Fuels plc and *(c)* the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority on the amounts of plutonium produced in each of their respective reactors.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* For the information supplied by Nuclear Electric plc, British Nuclear Fuels plc, BNFL, and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, UKAEA, to meet the requirements of Euratom safeguards regulation 3227/76, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 9 June 1993, *Official Report,* column *251.* For the purpose of compiling the annual plutonium figures published by my Department, Nuclear Electric plc provides figures for plutonium production and reactor discharges for each of its stations.

Patent Office

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to make an announcement on the future of the Patent Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 7 December 1993]:* The current review of the role of the Patent Office is expected to be completed by the end of the year. I hope to announce our conclusions following that review shortly thereafter.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will make a further statement on the progress towards establishing a RECHAR 2 programme from January 1994;

(2) what recent discussions he has held with the European Commission about *(a)* the objective 2 programme and *(b)* the RECHAR programme under the European regional development fund programme from January 1994.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 8 December 1993]:* I saw the responsible Commissioner on 30 November about the Government's proposals for objective 2.

On RECHAR, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) on 2 December, *Official Report,* column *736.*

Accounts Services Agency

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to privatise the Accounts Services Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 8 December 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire North (Mr. Heald) on 29 October, *Official Report*, column *805*. The review of the Accounts Services Agency has yet to be concluded. In due course, a decision will be taken and an announcement made.

SCOTLAND

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the operation of his Department's sensitive documents unit; how many staff are employed in its operation; and approximately how many documents per annum come within its purview.

Mr. Lang: My Department does not have such a unit. Documents are regularly reviewed by branches in accordance with centrally agreed procedures.

Crime Victims

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration is being given to measures to reduce the stressfulness for victims of crime of attendance at court; and if he will a make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The stress of appearing as a witness is partly caused by a fear of the unknown. The new measures being taken to provide information to victims and to make them familiar with the court and its procedures can help to allay such fears. The physical surroundings are also important and steps are taken, where possible, to separate Crown witnesses from accused persons and defence witnesses. Court staff make regular visits to witness rooms to provide progress reports, and will take appropriate action if a victim complains about intimidation or other pressure.

Where children are the victims of crime, a number of courts have facilities to take evidence by live television link, so that, if the court so orders, they do not have to confront the accused face to face. The use of screens to provide a barrier between a victim and an accused is also currently being evaluated.

Although there are certain rules of evidence designed to protect witnesses from particular types of questioning, going to court is inevitably stressful for many victims of crime. Two recently published reports, on the review of criminal evidence and on court programming, contain a number of recommendations which, if implemented, are likely to lead to a reduction in that stress and in the number of times victims have to attend court. Any new procedures must also, however, be fair to accused persons and so any proposals require careful consideration.

Volunteers from the Scottish Association of Victim Support Schemes aim to accompany as many victims to court as possible. The association provides some training to volunteers to assist them in helping victims through the court process. In 1993-94 SAVSS will receive a grant of £764,000 from the Scottish Office, of which £546,351 goes to fund local victim support schemes.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration is being given to improving the availability to victims of crime of information on the operation of the courts and the prosecution system; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A number of initiatives are being made in the spirit of the justice charter for Scotland. Procurators fiscal are making efforts to provide more information, and improved leaflets are now sent to all witnesses before coming to court. More information about the progress of cases is being given to witnesses waiting at court to give their evidence, and special arrangements, including pre-trial visits to the courtroom, exist for giving information to vulnerable witnesses. The very successful illustrated leaflet for children is also being updated. In one particular initiative the procurator fiscal provides information through local victim support schemes, and receives in return information about any special difficulties which victims may have. The Scottish Association of Victim Support Schemes has made an approach seeking funding support to produce a new information leaflet for victims of sexual offences. This is intended to provide relevant information and to inform them about aspects of the prosecution system and operation of the courts.

Football Stadia

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will bring forward legislation to ensure that all Scottish stadia are all-seater by August 1994.

Sir Hector Monro: I have no immediate plans to do so. We are satisfied from our regular contacts with the football authorities, through the Scottish Stadia Committee, that the voluntary undertaking given to Ministers in 1990 by the authorities remains at present the most appropriate basis for Government to secure acceptable safety standards at football grounds. That position is, however, kept closely under review.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the closure of facilities in Ayrshire Central and Ravenspark hospitals by the Community Health Care NHS trust since its establishment in April; and what changes in service provision have been made.

Mr. Stewart: The trust has closed three pavilions at Ravenspark hospital since patient referrals have diminished following the contract with Ayrshire and Arran health board. In addition, the trust has transferred the geriatric assessment facility from Ravenspark to Ayrshire Central. The contracts which Ayrshire and Arran health board has with the trust do not require the trust to provide the same number of beds as previously existed.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the closure of facilities in Crosshouse hospital by the North Ayrshire and Arran NHS trust since its establishment in April; and what reasons have been given for reductions in services.

Mr. Stewart: There has been no reduction in services. More patients have been treated in the first six months of the trust's existence compared with the same period last year and the trust is to be congratulated on its achievements. This increased activity has been achieved by changes in service delivery patterns which make better use of the facilities. Some wards are no longer required and have been closed but without any reduction in the service.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the refurbishment of the foyer of Crosshouse hospital by the North Ayrshire and Arran NHS trust; how much the refurbishment is costing; from where the funding for this refurbishment is being made available; and what similar work was carried out in Crosshouse hospital prior to the North Ayrshire and Arran trust being established this year.

Mr. Stewart: The main entrance of Crosshouse hospital has been refurbished with the creation of enhanced shop and tea bar facilities and the provision of new facilities for admissions, the patient welcoming service, a mother and baby room and toilets for disabled persons. The total cost is £150,000 of which £75,000 has been provided by the trust and the balance donated by the WRVS. The entrance has not been upgraded since the hospital opened in 1982.

Timber

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the United Kingdom's timber requirement is grown in the United Kingdom.

Sir Hector Monro: About 14 per cent.

Sheep Quota

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to make a statement on the arrangements for allocation of sheep quota from the national reserve.

Sir Hector Monro: The arrangements of applying to the national reserve of sheep quota were announced by the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department on Tuesday 7 December. Application forms are now available from the Department's area offices for producers in the first two categories of those eligible for an allocation from the reserve. This will not affect the position of producers in the other categories, arrangements for whom will be announced later.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he proposes to take to expedite the administrative procedures for allocation of sheep quota from the national reserve when the necessary orders are laid.

Sir Hector Monro: The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department has invited producers falling within the first two categories of the seven categories of eligible producer to submit their applications now. This will enable the Department to speed up the processing of applications and permit allocations to be made as quickly as possible without affecting the position of producers in the other categories.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he gives to sheep producers awaiting allocations of quota from the national reserve about the short-term financial problems they face as a result of the delayed allocation of quota.

Sir Hector Monro: I advise them that the legislation relating to the national reserve has been laid and certain producers can therefore now apply for an allocation of quota from the reserve; that payment of the advance of sheep annual premium to these producers will be made as soon as possible after quota has been allocated from the reserve; and that this is expected to take place in about two months' time.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set up a tribunal with powers to award sheep quota allocations to hear cases of genuine hardship for sheep producers denied allocation of quota from the national reserve.

Sir Hector Monro: The legislation governing the allocation of quota from the national reserve sets out precisely the definition of the categories of producer eligible to apply to the reserve. There is no scope for making discretionary allocations to producers falling outwith those categories. I therefore have no plans to set up a tribunal.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many recorded phone messages his Department has received from sheep producers seeking information about allocation of quota from the national reserve.

Sir Hector Monro: The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department has received several hundred telephone calls from producers on a variety of subjects relating to sheep quotas. It is not possible to identify separately the number concerned specifically with allocations from the national reserve or recorded messages from other telephone calls.

Court Service

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the future of the Scottish court service.

Mr. Lang: After consultation with the senior judiciary, I have decided that the Scottish court service, part of the Scottish courts administration, should be considered as a candidate for executive agency status, under the next steps initiative.

Castlehill Primary School

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he received an application for the opting out of Castlehill primary school in Ayr; from whom the application was received; what representations he has received for and against such a proposal; what is his estimate of the costs involved if the school is allowed to proceed with opting out; what consideration he has given to the request; and when he expects to make an announcement on his decision in this matter.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 8 December 1993]:* The application for self-governing status for Castlehill primary school was submitted by the school board in June 1993. Three representations were received in support of the application and one representation was received opposing the application. As regards costs, it is premature to make any estimate. The results of the consideration currently being given to the application by my right hon. Friend will be announced shortly.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what ethnic monitoring he carries out of the Scottish Office work force; how many black and ethnic minority personnel are employed; and at what levels.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* Following earlier surveys of the ethnic origins of staff, all new entrants are invited to complete a questionnaire. We have achieved a 92 per cent. response rate. As at 1 October 1993, 34 staff have described themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority. These staff are employed in grades ranging from messenger to grade 6.

Child Patients

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the percentage of children in hospital admitted to adult wards.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* It is estimated that 2·5 per cent. of children in hospital in Scotland are admitted to adult wards, where there is no separate accommodation for children.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions in 1991-92 a children's intensive care unit has refused admission to a critically ill child; and for what reasons.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* This information is not held centrally.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what number and percentage of children receiving intensive care were cared for in *(a)* children's wards, *(b)* adult intensive care units and *(c)* children's intensive care units.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* The number of children receiving intensive care in children's wards is not available centrally.

The number of children aged zero to 14 years receiving care in adult intensive care units in general hospitals in 1992 was 138 or 21·5 per cent. of all children in the age group receiving care in an intensive care unit.

Intensive care units provided specially for children are not identifiable centrally except in children's hospitals. The number of children receiving care in intensive care units in children's hospitals in 1992 was 503, or 78·5 per cent. of all children in the age group receiving care in an intensive care unit.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the shortfall of paediatric intensive care unit beds.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 December 1993]:* Intensive care units provided specially for children are not identifiable centrally, except where they are provided in designated children's hospitals.

Forestry

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he proposes to take to ensure no loss of public access following disposal of any land owned by the Forestry Commission.

Sir Hector Monro: Arrangements were introduced in October 1991 for securing continued public access to woodlands sold by the Forestry Commission by means of prior agreements entered into between the commission and local authorities. These arrangements are currently being reviewed to see if any changes are needed.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what statutory conservation measures apply to private forestry land previously belonging to the Forestry Commission.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 8 December 1993]:* There are several statutory conservation measures which apply to privately owned forestry land, whether or not it previously belonged to the Forestry Commission. These include the designation of woodlands as sites of special scientific interest and special protection areas. Private woodlands are also protected by the felling licensing regulations.

DEFENCE

British Nuclear Fuels

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the value of contracts placed by his Department with British Nuclear Fuels in each year since 1989.

Mr. Aitken: For security reasons it is not our practice to disclose the value of contracts placed with British Nuclear Fuels.

Atomic Energy (US-UK Agreement)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what variation has been made to article 2 of the amendment of 5 December 1979—Cmd 7976—to the United States-United Kingdom agreement on the uses of atomic energy for mutual defence purposes of 1958—Cmd 4119.

Mr. Aitken: None.

Overseas Visits

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the Ministers in his Department who since June 1987 have visited *(a)* Saudi Arabia, *(b)* Malaysia, *(c)* Singapore and *(d)* South Africa on official business; and which such visits included party political activities in addition to official duties.

Mr. Aitken: Official visits by Ministers to the countries listed have been as follows:

Saudi Arabia
Secretary of State—1988, 1990—three times—1991, 1992—twice
Minister (Armed Forces)—1990
Minister (Defence Procurement)—1988, 1993—twice
Malaysia
Secretary of State—1987, 1988, 1989, 1991, 1993
Minister (Armed Forces)—1988, 1990—twice
Minister (Defence Procurement)—1991
Under-Secretary of State—1992, 1993
Under-Secretary of State (Armed Forces)—1991
Singapore
Secretary of State—1987, 1991, 1993
Minister (Armed Forces)—1988
Under-Secretary of State (Defence Procurement)—1987, 1989, 1990
South Africa
None.

All of these visits were for official purposes. My Department is unaware of any party political activities on these visits.

Toxic Chemicals

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations have been made to his Department by SubSea Offshore Ltd. and AEA Technology Ltd. concerning the location, identification, monitoring and recovery of toxic chemicals.

Mr. Aitken: SubSea Offshore Ltd. and AEA Technology Ltd. have had exploratory discussions with the chemical and biological defence establishment, Porton Down.

Greenham Common

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the deregulation of Greenham Common in order to offer it for sale to the private market.

Mr. Hanley: Newbury district council has recently published a draft planning brief in respect of Greenham Common that provides inter alia for public open space on the "green areas" including the runway.

The district council has stated in the draft that it would not object to an application by MOD to remove the former Greenham Common from the county register and officials have been instructed to proceed with the application for deregistration so that the land can be made available for public open space.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much income his Department received from the letting of Greenham Common for each month between January and November 1993.

Mr. Hanley: The income generated by short-term lettings at Greenham Common is a matter between the MOD and the parties concerned and as such must be treated as commercial in confidence.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department paid for the maintenance and security at Greenham Common for each month between January and November 1993.

Mr. Hanley: It is not possible to provide the information in the form requested but the total cost of maintenance and security from 1 January to 30 November 1993 was of the order of £1,000,000, the large majority of which is accounted for by the salaries and deployment costs of the Ministry of Defence Police presence on the site.

Helicopters

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many helicopter flying hours are allocated per month in Northern Ireland; at what stage in the month, on average, this allocated is used up; and what are the arrangements when demand exceeds the official allocation of helicopter flying hours.

Mr. Hanley: It is not the practice to provide detailed operational information about such matters as the allocation of helicopters flying hours. Allocation of helicopter flying hours for all operations, including Northern Ireland, is made centrally by the MOD on an annual basis commensurate with the requirements of individual theatres. Within individual theatres, arrangements are made to match the allocation with operational needs. If demands arise which cannot be met from within allocated hours, additional hours may be requested by the theatre concerned.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many troop-carrying helicopters were permanently assigned to each helicopter-equipped RAF air transport squadron on *(a)* 1 January, *(b)* 1 April and *(c)* 1 July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The numbers of aircraft are as follows:

Squadron	*1 January 1993*	*1 April 1993*	*1 July 1993*
7 Squadron[1]	15 Chinook	15 Chinook	12 Chinook
18 Squadron[1]	5 Chinook 5 Puma	4 Chinook 5 Puma	5 Chinook 5 Puma
28 Squadron	8 Wessex	8 Wessex	8 Wessex
33 Squadron	12 Puma	12 Puma	12 Puma
60 Squadron	9 Wessex	9 Wessex	9 Wessex
72 Squadron	15 Wessex	15 Wessex	15 Wessex
230 Squadron	15 Puma	15 Puma	15 Puma
The Queen's Flight	2 Wessex	2 Wessex	2 Wessex

[1] The RAF Chinook force has been undergoing a mid-life update and therefore the numbers vary against 7 and 18 Squadrons.

Mr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many anti-tank helicopters are premanently assigned to each Army air corps regiment.

Mr. Hanley: Lynx helicopters, equipped with TOW missiles, in the anti-tank role are established with the Army Air Corps as follows:

	Number of Aircraft
1 (United Kingdom) Armoured Division	
1 Regiment	18
3 (United Kingdom) Division	
9 Regiment	18
24 Airmobile Brigade	
3 Regiment	12
4 Regiment	12

In addition, the Army Corps Centre at Middle Wallop holds 14 helicopters, and 3 Commando Brigade has six helicopters which are operated by the Royal Marines.

Departmental Land

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much land, by acreage, his Department owns in each of the counties of Wales, and in each of the regions of Scotland.

Mr. Hanley: The land owned in areas by the Ministry of Defence in each of the counties of Wales and in each of the regions of Scotland is set out in the table.

	Acres
Wales	
Clwyd	796
Dyfed	16,596

	Acres
Gwent	1,646
Gwynedd	1,967
Mid Glamorgan	20
Powys	29,798
South Glamorgan	988
West Glamorgan	2
Total	51,813
Scotland	
Borders	Nil
Central	193
Dumfries and Galloway	11,727
Fife	3,267
Grampian	5,130
Highland	6,884
Lothian	2,854
Strathclyde	13,791
Tayside	3,568
Orkney Isles	10
Shetland Isles	84
Western Isles	3,254
Total	50,762

Figures are at 1 April 1993—the latest date for which records are available—and relate to freehold landholdings, including foreshore, for which deeds were held. Acquisitions or disposals which may have been completed but where deeds had not been transferred by 1 April 1993 are not included.

Boxing

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what part boxing plays in training and physical education in the armed services.

Mr. Hanley: In the Royal Navy, including Royal Marines, and Royal Air Force, boxing is an entirely voluntary sporting activity, playing no part in training or formal physical education.

In the Army, the initial phase of new entry recruit training includes—for male recruits only—six periods of instruction in basic boxing skills. The regimental physical training instructor class 2 course, held at the Army school of physical training, includes a 22-period Army unit coach award course to qualify instructors to teach the basic skills covered in the six periods of new entry training.

In all three services, boxing is available as a sporting activity on a voluntary basis. Each service has a Boxing Association, which is affiliated to the Amateur Boxing Association Ltd.; all organised boxing sporting activities are conducted in accordance with that national governing body's regulations, including its medical rules.

Budgets

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are *(a)* the current budgets and *(b)* the previous budgets of all the higher level budget holders with the exception of GOC Northern Ireland, DG General Intelligence (Eurasia), DG Management and Support of Intelligence, DG of Strategic and Technical Intelligence and DG Intelligence (Rest of World); and if he will list the planned budgets for all the same budget holders for (i) 1993-94, (ii) 1994-95 and (iii) 1995-96.

Mr. Hanley: The budgets for higher level budget holders are now published annually in Defence Statistics, available in the Library of the House. The budgets for financial year 1992-93 are shown in table 1.3A on page 10 of Defence Statistics, 1992 edition, and the budgets for 1993-94 in table 1.3 on page 9 of the UK Defence Statistics, 1993 edition. We do not publish details of planned budgets as approval to commit expenditure is subject to formal endorsement through Ministers and the parliamentary supply system.

Army Costs

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the annual running cost of *(a)* an armoured regiment, *(b)* an infantry battalion and *(c)* an artillery field regiment stationed in the United Kingdom; and what changes have occurred in this figure since 1989-90;

(2) what is the annual running cost of *(a)* an armoured regiment, *(b)* an infantry battalion and *(c)* an artillery field regiment stationed with the British Army of the Rhine; and what changes have occurred in this figure since 1989-90.

Mr. Hanley: Since 1991, when new management strategy was introduced, the basis for costing Army units has changed. In addition, the current methodology does not distinguish between UK and Germany-based units, and cannot be compared with figures for 1989-90. Estimates for this financial year, at current prices, are as follows:

(£ million)

Unit	*Costs*
Armoured regiments	23
Infantry battalion (Armoured)	23
Artillery field Regiment (AS90)	22

These figures include manpower, fuel, ammunition, training and spares costs.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current annual cost of *(a)* a regular Army soldier, *(b)* a Territorial Army soldier, *(c)* a Royal Navy sailor, *(d)* a Royal Naval Reserve sailor, *(e)* a Royal Naval Auxiliary Service sailor, *(f)* a Royal Air Force airman or woman, and *(g)* a Royal Auxiliary Air Force airman or woman.

Mr. Hanley: The information which can be provided without disproportionate cost is shown in the table. The figures are an average cost per person, taken for all ranks, commissioned and non-commissioned, in 1992-93. The figures for the regulars include pay, earnings-related national insurance contribution, allowances and superannuation. The figures for the Reserves include allowances and, except for the Royal Naval Auxiliary Reserve, pay, ERNIC and training bounties.

No account has been taken of any other costs—for example, equipment development, production and maintenance, fuel, ammunition, accommodation and utilities, food or transport.

1992-93 average pay bill cost of service personnel[1]

	£
a. Regular Army[2]	25,400
b. Territorial Army[3]	1,900
c. Royal Navy[4]	30,000
d. Royal Naval Reserve[5]	2,100

	£
e. Royal Naval Auxiliary Service[6]	900
[illegible] Royal Air Force	27,100
g. Royal Auxiliary Air Force	2,400

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[1] Rounded to the nearest £100.

[2] Including the Home Service full-time element of the Royal Irish Regiment, and the non-Regular permanent staff of the Territorial Army. Excluding Gurkhas, and locally enlisted personnel overseas.

[3] Not including the Home Service part-time element of the Royal Irish Regiment.

[4] Excluding the Royal Marines, and locally enlisted personnel overseas.

[5] Not including the Royal Marines Reserve.

[6] Excluding permanent staff.

Maintenance Backlog

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total maintenance backlog of *(a)* unavoidable and essential repairs and *(b)* urgent repairs on the defence estate at 1 April in each year since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Since the untying from the Property Services Agency on 1 April 1990, the information requested has been held by 23 separate top-level budget holders within the Ministry of Defence. It would, therefore, involve disproportionate cost to acquire the information.

Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what British contribution is made to the reaction force planning staff at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The United Kingdom contributes six officers and two other ranks to the Allied Command Europe Reaction Force Planning Staff—ARFPS—whose total strength is 48 officers and 13 other ranks.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements have been made for funding the new NATO rapid reaction force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The nations assigning forces to the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps—ARRC—will meet the costs of their national contingencies. The costs of the headquarters will be shared between the participating nations and NATO on terms presently under negotiation.

Belize

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current annual running cost of *(a)* the Army detachment and *(b)* the RAF detachment stationed in Belize; and what changes have occurred in these figures since 1989-90.

Mr. Hanley: It is not possible to attribute the total costs of the Belize garrison to the Army element or to the RAF element except for manpower costs. A significant cost element is for services common to both detachments and covers areas such as the garrison headquarters, works services, utilities and locally employed civilians. The costs of the garrison for the 1991-92, 1992-93 and an estimate for 1993-94, split into directly identifiable Army and RAF costs and common costs, are given. Comparable data for 1989-90 are not available.

£ million

	1991-92	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Army manpower	21	18	24
RAF manpower	5	6	5
Common costs	12	10	10
Total	38	34	39

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the issue of compensation for nuclear test veterans.

Mr. Hanley: Compensation would be sympathetically considered for any British nuclear test veteran who could be shown to have suffered injury or illness as a result of radiation from the nuclear tests. No such case has yet been found. The report of the National Radiological Protection Board—NRPB—published in 1988 found no overall excess of death or malignant disease among test veterans: this position is confirmed in the NRPB follow-up study to be published this week. A copy will be placed in the Library.

Dr. Liam Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the follow-up report by the National Radiological Protection Board being published in the *British Medical Journal* on mortality and cancer among nuclear test veterans.

Mr. Hanley: The joint National Radiological Protection Board/Imperial Cancer Research Fund—NRPB/ICRF—study into Mortality and Cancer incidence among nuclear test participants, commissioned by the Ministry of Defence, will be published on Saturday 11 December in the *British Medical Journal* after having successfully completed independent peer review. There will also be an accompanying NRPB report.

The NRPB is an independent statutory body which was set up to give advice on radiation protection. The ICRF is a charitable organisation which plays a leading role in cancer research. The authors of the report include eminent scientists who have published widely in the field, among whom is the distinguished epidemiologist Professor Sir Richard Doll, OBE, MD, DSc, FRS, FRCP, Emeritus Professor of Medicine at the university of Oxford, who is well known for his work on smoking-related disease.

The Ministry of Defence accepts the findings of this independent report. The study concludes that participation in the nuclear weapon test programme has had no detectable effect on participants' expectation of life, or on their risk of developing cancer or other fatal diseases.

A report published by the NRPB in 1988 dealt with mortality and cancer up to 31 December 1983 among former test participants, compared with a control group of service and civilian personnel matched for age, sex and rank who served in tropical areas at the time of the tests but were not, themselves, participants in the atmospheric nuclear weapon test programme. This study found no overall excess of death, or of cancer, among former participants compared with national rates. Out of over 20,000 former test participants, about 1,600 had died, including 400 from cancer—no more than among the matched control group or the general population. Of these 400, 22 had died of leukaemia and six from multiple myeloma, figures higher than the control group but similar to those expected from national rates. The authors considered that one possibility was that these elevated levels simply reflected an unusually low incidence of myeloma and leukaemia among the control group.

The follow-up report to be published in the *British Medical Journal* includes cancer and mortality data to 31 December 1990. During the seven years between the end of 1983 and the end of 1990, about 1,200 further deaths occurred among former test participants, 370 of them from cancer. Again, these figures were no higher than among either the general population or the matched control group. Of the 370 further cancer deaths among participants, three were from multiple myeloma and six from leukaemia. The three deaths from myeloma were fewer than among the general population and the control group. Taken together with the figures from the previous study, for all deaths up to 31 December 1990 there was no increased incidence of multiple myeloma among participants compared with either the general population or controls.

The six deaths from leukaemia among participants between 1 January 1984 and 31 December 1990 were fewer than expected from national rates and fewer in veterans than among the controls. Furthermore, the total number of deaths for the entire period of both studies up to the end of 1990 from leukaemia was exactly the same as expected nationally. The excess of leukaemia in test participants compared with the control group found in the previous study is therefore likely to be a chance finding, although the report states that the possibility that test participation may have caused a small risk of developing leukaemia in the early years after the tests, cannot be completely ruled out. The study however, finds the evidence for a causal link to be weak for several reasons.

First, the highest increase amongst participants was not among men in groups whose duties gave them the potential for exposure to ionising radiation, nor among men employed by the atomic weapons research establishment or directly involved in the minor trials at Maralinga in whom undocumented inhalation or ingestion, if any, was most likely to have occurred. Secondly, the recorded doses of external radiation were very small and, on the best evidence now available, would have been estimated to cause not even one extra induced case of leukaemia. Thirdly, there was no evidence of an increasing risk with increasing dose as would be expected if caused by exposure to ionising radiation.

The Ministry of Defence has also compiled for the NRPB an environmental monitoring report for Christmas island. A copy has been placed in the Library. This report shows that measurements of radioactive fallout taken at the time of the tests were usually below the limit of detection. On the few occasions when radioactivity was detectable the levels were low, decayed or dispersed rapidly, and did not constitute a hazard or danger to test participants, visitors or inhabitants of the island. The dates when elevated levels were found were not associated with the detonation date of any particular United Kingdom device, but corresponded to the worldwide fallout pattern of the time. Such global fallout is part of background radiation to which we are all exposed.

I can also announce today that I have, in line with the Government's commitment to open government, and the Ministry of Defence's wish to open to public scrutiny any documents relating to the safety of test participants, declassified the yields of Christmas island tests. The figures are contained in the environmental monitoring report for Christmas island to which I have just referred. The corresponding figures for the Australian atmospheric nuclear weapon tests were declassified in 1985. The yield figures can be used to calculate doses from information readily available in the open literature. These calculations confirm the assertion that doses were vanishingly low at all points where participants were mustered at the instant of detonation.

I believe that this new NRPB/ICRF study confirms that there is no evidence to suggest that any cancer or other fatal disease was caused by exposure to ionising radiation from the tests.

A copy of the *British Medical Journal* article and associated report will be placed in the Library of the House.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of the total dwelling stock in each local authority area in England is *(a)* unfit for habitation and *(b)* in need of major renovation.

Sir George Young: Local authorities are requested to provide information in their annual housing investment programme—HIP1—returns on all dwellings in their area which are unfit, and on those not unfit but in need of renovation. However, there are doubts about the quality of the data provided by some authorities.

These doubts arise because of the substantial variations between neighbouring authorities in the proportions of dwellings reported as unfit or in need of repair, and also because of implausible changes between years in some of the reported figures.

The data reported by local authorities in England on total dwelling stock—column A15—and the numbers of dwellings reported as unfit—column A35—and not unfit but in need of renovation—column A45—from which the percentages requested can be calculated are in the 1993 "HIP1 All Items Print". A copy is available in the Library.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how his Department will be represented at the Salford inquiry on housing in the north-west to be held on 12 January 1994.

Sir George Young: Officials from the Department's north-west regional office will attend.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department spends annually on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising and *(c)* press advertising; and what were the corresponding figures for 1985 and 1979.

Mr. Gummer: In the financial year 1992-93, the Department spent £2,660,198·30 on press advertising and

£2,799,915·14 on television advertising. These costs include creative and production charges, value added tax, and other levies as paid.

The main campaigns were:

Helping the Earth begins at Home.
Right to Buy.
Council Tax Press Advertising March 1993.
Making a Corporate Commitment—to Energy Saving.
Halon Banking.
EMAS—Energy Management Assistance Scheme.

There was no expenditure on radio advertising in that financial year.

A breakdown of publicity expenditure is not available for the years 1985 and 1979.

Biodiversity

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the biodiversity action plan compiled in response to the biodiversity convention signed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr. Yeo: Work on the production of the biodiversity action plan is in its final stages, and publication will be after the House returns, in January.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on how Britain's impact on biodiversity in other countries will be addressed in the United Kingdom's follow-up to agreements made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr. Yeo: Britain's impact on biodiversity in other countries will be addressed in the biodiversity action plan and the sustainable development strategy as appropriate, both of which are due to be published after the House returns, in January.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements have been made for the ratification before the end of 1993 of the biological diversity convention by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Yeo: The convention on biological diversity was laid before Parliament in January of this year. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 2 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *654*.

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the operation of his Department's sensitive documents unit; how many staff are employed in its operation; and approximately how many documents per annum come within its purview.

Mr. Gummer: A large number of staff in the Department handle documents which may be regarded as sensitive. There is no special unit; all staff are required to handle sensitive documents according to standard rules.

Community Care

Mr. Nick Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the representations he has received concerning his proposals to reinstate certification 10 of the Housing Corporation's special needs procedure guide and the consequent withdrawal of revenue funding where a social services authority sponsors an individual under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend and I have received representations from the organisations listed below, or from hon. Members writing on their behalf, in connection with the application of the Housing Corporation's revenue funding rules beyond the current financial year. A further five hon. Members have written to us about the general issue.

Advance Housing and Support Ltd.
Association for Residential Care
Association of London Authorities
Bristol Churches Housing Association
Elfrida Rathbone Islington
London Borough Grants Committee
Look Ahead Housing Association
MacIntyre Care
MENCAP
Methodist Church and Centre
MIND
National Autistic Society
National Federation of Housing Associations
Oxford Cyrenian Community
Phoenix House Housing Association
Shaftesbury Society
Single Homelessness in London
Spastics Society
Special Needs Housing Association Group
St Anne's Shelter and Housing Action
Tower Hamlets Consortium Ltd.
Turning Point

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when current planning permission for the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield expires.

Mr. Curry: The planning permission, which is contained in SI 1978 No. 523, did not specify a final date by which the buildings must be completed and the plant brought into use.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what safeguards he has instituted in the local government review process to ensure that the trading standards departments are not adversely affected in the reorganisation process.

Mr. Baldry: The Local Government Commission's recommendations must enable adequate provision to be made for all existing local government functions, including the trading standards service. This is a matter we shall be looking at as we receive the commission's final reports for each area.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received about trading standards departments in relation to the local government review.

Mr. Baldry: This year, my right hon. Friend has received 24 representations on the general issue of trading standards in relation to the local government review.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements have been made to ensure the continued existence and development of a network of county record offices after the reform of local government authorities.

Mr. Baldry: The Local Government Commission's recommendations must enable adequate provision to be made for all existing local government functions, including the provision of archive services. This is a matter we shall be looking at as we receive the commission's final reports for each area.

Council House Sales

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what statutory provisions govern the requirement on borough councils to devote receipts from sale of dwellings to their tenants solely to redeem accumulated debt.

Sir George Young: Section 59 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires local authorities to set aside as provision for credit liabilities 75 per cent. of their receipts from the disposal of dwellings and 50 per cent. of other receipts; the remainder may be spent. Those percentages are varied for certain receipts by the Local Authorities (Capital Finance) Regulations 1990, as amended, and in particular are reduced to nil for virtually all receipts obtained between 13 November 1992 and 31 December 1993.

Section 64 of the 1989 Act provides that amounts set aside may be used to repay borrowing or discharge credit liabilities; they may also be used for capital expenditure on the strength of a credit approval. The regulations give authorities without long-term debt greater freedom to spend these amounts.

Grants (Day Visitors)

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, in the local government finance statement for 1994-95, how much extra grant Stockport metropolitan borough council will get as a result of the inclusion of day visitors in the formula; and how much of that extra will relate to visitors to Lyme park.

Mr. Baldry: Stockport metropolitan borough council would receive £0·264 million as a result of the inclusion of an allowance for day visitors to the authority within the proposed calculation of standard spending assessments for 1994-95. It is not possible to say how much of that amount is attributable to day visitors to specific attractions. Lyme park, however, is not within the Stockport metropolitan district and, therefore, visitors to the park would not be included in Stockport's figures.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account is taken of sites outside a borough but maintained by the authority in calculating grants for day visitors.

Mr. Baldry: The allowance within standard spending assessments for day visitors is designed to reflect the impact on services provided by local authorities of visitors to their area.

The services likely to be affected include street cleaning, refuse collection and environmental health.

It is not the intention that the allowance should compensate authorities directly for the cost of any recreational facilities which they choose to provide in the areas of other authorities.

Bolton Council

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will reply to Bolton council's request, dated 15 November, for ministerial consent to the sale of 24 shops with living accommodation over.

Mr. Baldry: The consent was issued on 6 December.

European Environment Agency

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department is taking following the decision to locate the European Environment Agency in Denmark; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The decision to site the European Environment Agency in Denmark was taken on 29 October. The regulation establishing the agency came into force on 30 October.

We have been pressing for a decision on location since the regulation to establish the agency was adopted more than three years ago. The decision means that the agency can now begin its work.

The EEA is an independent body which has been created to provide objective and reliable environmental information at the European level to help the EC and its member states formulate sound policies to protect the environment. The agency aims to achieve this through co-operation with those organisations in member states involved in environmental monitoring and research.

I am inviting all organisations which may wish to participate in the United Kingdom network, or to act as topic centres, to get in touch. To co-ordinate the network and liaise with the agency I have set up a national focus point within my Department.

The United Kingdom will, by 30 April 1994, notify the agency of the composition of its natural network and potential topic centre candidates. The network will include those organisations that regularly collect and supply environmental data within the United Kingdom.

Topic centres will undertake work on behalf of the EEA under contract and should have recognised research or technical expertise related to environmental monitoring and data analysis. Where appropriate, members of the national network can also be considered as topic centre candidates.

The United Kingdom attaches great importance to the development of the EEA. I hope that there will be considerable interest in the opportunities it offers. I would encourage all interested organisations to contact my officials for further details and a registration form as soon as possible.

Acid Rain

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in negotiations for a new United Nations agreement combating acid rain.

Mr. Gummer: While negotiations in Geneva are not yet complete, substantial progress has been made. It now seems likely that a widely acceptable text aiming at significant reductions of sulphur emissions, and which the United Kingdom expects to sign, will be opened for signature by the middle of 1994. The Government warmly welcome these developments, which will contribute to the progressive resolution of the acid rain problem.

The United Kingdom is prepared to reduce sulphur emissions by 70 per cent. by 2005 compared with 1980, and has indicated its willingness in principle to aim for reductions of 80 per cent. by 2010. The latest text, if agreed, will allow parties to achieve the targets in the most cost-effective and flexible way, taking account of national considerations.

The new protocol will build on the United Kingdom's achievements in reducing sulphur emissions by 30 per cent. by the end of this year from 1980 levels, thus complying with the requirements of the first sulphur protocol although we were not in a position to sign it at the time.

Direct Labour Organisations

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he took against those local authorities whose direct labour or services organisations made significant financial losses in 1991-92.

Mr. Baldry: I am very encouraged that, for more than 80 per cent. of the notices served in respect of 1991-92 DSO losses, further statutory action was not needed because authorities had already taken steps to address the losses. This is a very positive trend and I urge authorities to maintain their efforts here.

My right hon. Friend has now considered the responses of 15 authorities on which notices were served in June and September. He has today given directions under section 19B of the 1980 Act to Manchester city council, new construction work in excess of £50,000; and under section 14 of the 1988 Act to Bedfordshire county council, ground maintenance; Castlepoint borough council, ground maintenance; the London borough of Hillingdon, other catering; and South Bedfordshire district council, refuse collection. This brings the total number of directions given in respect of financial failure in 1991-92 to 11.

The effect of these directions is to require the authorities to seek the Secretary of State's consent if they wish to award the work, or elements of the work to their in-house labour force following re-tendering which is currently under way, planned or required by the direction.

He has decided to take no further action in respect of financial failure in 1991-92 by:

Barking and Dagenham, refuse collection; Corby, vehicle maintenance; Harrow, ground maintenance; Hillingdon, building cleaning; Leicestershire, ground maintenance; Northavon, vehicle maintenance; and Richmond upon Thames, ground maintenance; because they met financial objectives in 1992-93;

Hillingdon, school and welfare catering; and Kingston upon Hull, other catering; because despite recording losses in 1992-93, they have provided evidence that financial objectives will be met in 1993-94;

Ashford, ground maintenance and refuse collection; Brighton, other catering; and Castlepoint, other cleaning; because they have closed the DSO involved or are exploring other options, including privatisation;

Colchester, building maintenance; because the DLO now operates below the "de minimis" level.

Hillingdon and Kingston upon Hull have been asked to provide quarterly financial returns to the Department.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list, by authority, the surplus achieved since 1988 on trading accounts for *(a)* general highways work, *(b)* construction and maintenance of sewers, *(c)* works of new construction and *(d)* maintenance work, delivered by direct service or labour organisations in England under the terms of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980;

(2) if he will list by authority and service area, as defined by the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, the surpluses achieved by local authority direct service or labour organisations in England since 1988;

(3) if he will list, by authority, the surplus achieved since 1988 on trading accounts for *(a)* refuse collection, *(b)* street cleaning, *(c)* building cleaning, *(d)* schools and welfare catering, *(e)* other catering, *(f)* vehicle maintenance, *(g)* grounds maintenance and *(h)* sports and leisure management services delivered by direct service or labour organisations in England, under the terms of the Local Government Act 1988;

(4) if he will list by authority and service area, as defined by the Local Government Act 1988, the surpluses achieved by local authority direct service or labour organisations in England.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* One thousand eight hundred and sixteen of the local authority direct service or labour organisation accounts for 1991-92 received by my Department recorded surpluses. I shall send a detailed list to the hon. Member and place a copy in the Library. Information on 1992-93 is not yet complete. Figures for previous years could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Merseyside Housing

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the provision of the special needs allocation for housing on Merseyside; and how much money will be available for house improvements in the current and next financial year.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 8 December 1993]:* The future of the Housing Corporation's special allocation for Merseyside is being reviewed by officials from my Department and from the Housing Corporation. I expect to have recommendations before me in the spring.

In 1993-94, the specified capital grant allocation, which represents 60 per cent. of resources available for renovation grant activity, totalled £20·843 million for Merseyside. The allocation for 1994-95 will be announced later this month.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Council Of Ministers

14. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals she has made, in the light of the decisions of the European Councils in Edinburgh 1992 and Brussels 1993, to increase the transparency and accountability of decision-making, including the recording of votes of each member state, at meetings of European Community Councils of Ministers at which her Department is represented; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government fully support the conclusions reached at Edinburgh and Brussels on openness.

The Foreign Affairs Council agreed on 6 December that votes in all Councils on legislative decisions will be published automatically unless a majority of the Council oppose this.

This procedure is fully consistent with the conclusions of the Edinburgh European Council last December.

Voting details are now published by the Council secretariat after Council meetings; we shall ensure that this information is provided to Parliament.

Common Agricultural Policy

15. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is her latest estimate of the net cost of the common agricultural policy to British consumers.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There is a significant net cost to United Kingdom consumers, and indeed United Kingdom tax payers, from the CAP. For a number of reasons, of which the hon. Gentleman will be aware, it is not possible to be precise about the figure estimate.

16. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total annual cost of the common agricultural policy before the latest reforms were implemented; and what is the projected total cost in the current year and in 1994 and 1995.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Expenditure in 1992 was 31·3 becu—£22·2 billion—and in 1993 is estimated at 35·1 becu—£27·6 billion. The draft budget for 1994, the first full year in which the budgetary impact of CAP reform will be felt, has been set at 36·5 becu—£28·1 billion. Estimates for 1995 are not available as budgets are not set more than one year in advance.

23. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she next expects to meet her EC counterparts to discuss reform of the CAP.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regularly meet my EC colleagues, both bilaterally and at meetings of the Agriculture Council.

Further reform of the CAP is among the range of topics covered at such meetings.

Animal Transportation

17. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has made about the transport of live animals in the EC.

Mr. Soames: The Government are pressing for major improvements to the Community legislation and for strong enforcement of the rules in all member states.

Mr. Eric Clarke: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many live animals have been transported from the United Kingdom to Spain for slaughter since it has been permissible to do so.

Mr. Soames: A total of 2,770 sheep have been consigned to Spain for immediate slaughter since 1 January 1993, when new arrangements came into force.

Farms, Northumberland

18. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food what plans she now has to visit farms in Northumberland following the cancellation of her recent planned visit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I was disappointed that the temporary closure of Newcastle airport due to snow forced me to postpone my visit.

However, I met a delegation of Northumbrian farmers in London on 29 November.

The visit will be rearranged as soon as possible.

Fishing

20. **Mr. Kynoch:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received from the fishing industry since 5 July.

Mr. Jack: I have had various meetings with fishing industry organisations and with individual fishermen. In addition to these contacts, I have received formal proposals on conservation from the Scottish Fisherman's Federation and from the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations.

24. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken to reduce the fishing effort of the United Kingdom's fishing fleet.

Mr. Jack: We hope to make an announcement shortly.

Forestry

21. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she last met the chairman of the Forestry Commission to discuss the progress of the forest policy review; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I met the chairman of the Forestry Commission early last month when we had a brief exchange exchange of views on the work of the forestry review group.

26. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what indications she has received from the interdepartmental forestry review group on the future of the Forest Enterprise estate.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The forestry review group has not yet presented its advice to Ministers.

We are expecting to receive its report early next year.

Helpline Unit

22. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many calls have been made to the helpline unit since 24 May; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Since its launch on 24 May, the helpline has quickly established itself as a central contact point on a broad range of Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food activities.

In its first six months the helpline unit has received over 14,000 calls.

25. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether she proposes to introduce any new measures dealing with food hygiene matters.

Mr. Soames: The European Community single market hygiene measures for specific sectors, such as milk and milk products and meat products, are at various stages of implementation into our national law.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health is responsible for general food hygiene legislation, where it is planned to introduce next year new regulations to implement the hygiene of foodstuffs directive.

Agricultural Wages Board

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the future of the Agricultural Wages Board.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall).

Milk Quota

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what powers she has to ensure that no transfers of milk quota that are invalid or fraudulent are recorded in the register; and what steps she takes to ensure that the register is rectified and accurately maintained.

Mr. Jack: The quota register is amended following the submission of a duly completed quota transfer form. In cases where the parties concerned dispute the quota apportionment, or where the Minister has reasonable grounds for believing that a correct apportionment of quota has not been made, the Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations 1993 provide for the matter to be referred to arbitration. Pre-processing checks are made on a number of transfer forms to establish that there has, indeed, been a change in occupation of the land used for milk production. Where no such change of occupation is established, the transfer form would be rejected. Any party who contravenes the Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations or the relevant EC legislation, or who makes a false statement, is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a substantial fine.

Agricultural Workers' Earnings

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest available figure for the average earnings of part-time female agricultural workers in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jack: Estimates of earnings of agricultural workers are available from sample surveys. The average hourly earnings for part-time hired female agricultural workers in the United Kingdom for the year ended June 1993 is estimated at £3·67 per hour. This includes payments for overtime, holidays, annual bonus, perquisites and other payments.

Agri-environment Programme

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received on the funding of the Government's agri-environment programme.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Many people urged me not to cut funding of our agri-environment programme and I have recently confirmed that we are holding to our plans to increase expenditure to over £70 million per annum by 1995-96.

Pâté de Foie

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make it her policy to discourage the consumption of pâté de foie.

Mr. Soames: People must be allowed to decide for themselves what they eat.

The Government should neither encourage or discourage the consumption of a particular type of food, provided that the total diet is healthy and well-balanced.

The Government are nevertheless concerned at the animal welfare aspects of pâté de foie gras production involving force feeding. They have made it clear they would seek legislation to ban this practice if there was a prospect of it developing in the United Kingdom.

It would, however, be illegal under the treaty of Rome to prohibit imports from other Community countries.

Abattoirs

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what changes she has made to meat inspection at abattoirs regulations in the last month;

(2) what representations she has received on changes to meat inspection at abattoirs in the past month.

Mr. Soames: We have made no changes in the last month to the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992—SI 1992/2037—governing meat inspection in abattoirs, nor have we received any representations raising new concerns about meat inspection arrangements during this period.

The Government announced on 22 October a seven-point plan of deregulation in the meat industry. The plan signals a move to a less prescriptive system of meat hygiene enforcement while continuing to protect public health.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the rules for farmers' own use of slaughter of animals at small abattoirs.

Mr. Soames: The Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992—SI 1992/2037—do not apply to the slaughter in abattoirs of animals whose flesh is not intended for sale for human consumption. Animals slaughtered for a farmer's own use in a small abattoir will, therefore, not count towards any weekly throughput limit. The rules governing the slaughter of these animals in abattoirs are the same as those applicable to animals slaughtered on the farm: they must be slaughtered humanely, in accordance with the provisions of the Protection of Animals Act 1911, chapter 27, and, in the case of bovines, specified bovine offal must be disposed of in accordance with the Bovine Offal (Prohibition) Regulations 1989—SI 1989/2061 as amended by SIs 1990/2468 and 1992/306.

Fur Farms

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on fur farming.

Mr. Soames: Welfare conditions are monitored regularly by the state veterinary service and we are seeking European Community legislation to set standards for all fur farms.

Security standards for mink farms are set by the Mink (Keeping) Order 1992.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 10 December 1993

EDUCATION

Parental Choice, Wandsworth

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what plans he has to ensure that parents living within the London borough of Wandsworth will continue to have the right to choose the school of their choice for their children to attend; and what discussions he has had with the borough about this matter;

(2) what discussions he is having with the London Borough of Wandsworth about selective entry schools in the borough; what plans he has to ensure that such schools will still take children of mixed ability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: Under section 8 of the Education Act 1944, local education authorities have a duty to ensure that there are sufficient schools to provide education for all pupils in their area taking account of their age, ability and aptitude. This will continue to be the case under the Education Act 1993 until the sole responsibility for ensuring a sufficiency of schools in the primary or secondary phase, as the case may be, passes to the Funding Agency for Schools under the provisions of section 12 of that Act.

My right hon. Friend will continue to consider on their merits any proposals by Wandsworth council to implement its policy of diversity and choice in the borough's schools.

Education Authorities (Capital Assets)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the value of capital assets held by local education authorities; and which are held for the purposes of individual schools and which are occupied for other purposes.

Mr. Forth: The replacement capital value of local education authority school buildings in England is estimated to be £36·8 billion million. This includes the cost of furniture and equipment and building design fees. Additionally the land value of school sites is estimated to be £3·8 billion. Information is not held centrally on the extent to which schools are occupied for other purposes.

Goods and Services (VAT)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *571*, if he will list the supply of goods and services incidental to the supply of education by sixth form colleges and further education colleges which are exempt from value added tax.

Mr. Boswell: Item 4 of group 6, schedule 6 to the Value Added Tax Act 1983, as amended, specifies that the supply of any goods or services incidental to the provision of any education or training provided by a college in the FEFC sector is exempt from VAT. Her Majesty's Customs and Excise VAT leaflet 701/30/87, which is available in the Library, gives examples of the type of incidental goods and services covered by this exemption. They include educational materials such as pens, ink and exercise books, most catering supplies and accommodation.

Primary Schools (Class Sizes)

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the number of primary school children in *(a)* January 1992 and *(b)* January 1993, being taught in classes of more than 30; and what was the percentage change.

Mr. Robin Squire: In January 1992 there were 1,075,000 pupils in classes of more than 30 in maintained primary schools in England compared with 1,142,000—provisional—in January 1993, a rise of 6 per cent.

Nursery Education

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his latest estimate of the proportion of three-year-olds in local authority nursery education classes.

Mr. Robin Squire: Latest figures show that in England 39 per cent. of children aged three at the beginning of the 1992-93 school year were being taught in maintained—local education authority and grant-maintained—nursery schools and nursery classes in January 1993 when the annual pupil count is conducted.

Capital Credit Approval

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what amount has been requested by way of capital credit approval for each local education authority in 1994-95.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is in the table. The figures are taken from the capital plans for 1994-95 submitted by each local education authority to the Department.

LEA	*Total capital bid 1994-95 (£000)*
Barking	5,409
Barnet	11,514
Bexley	6,881
Brent	4,675
Bromley	9,937
Croydon	7,613
Ealing	40,012
Enfield	6,656
Haringey	15,688
Harrow	11,156
Havering	8,665
Hillingdon	9,349
Hounslow	11,959
Kingston	1,747
Merton	10,050
Newham	11,379
Redbridge	3,733
Richmond	4,490
Sutton	5,049
Waltham	10,085
City	0
Camden	1,544
Westminster	475

LEA	Total capital bid 1994-95 (£000)
Greenwich	8,101
Hackney	8,438
Hammersmith	2,775
Islington	9,135
Kensington	2,919
Lambeth	9,703
Lewisham	23,049
Southwark	6,263
Wandsworth	11,856
Tower Hamlets	25,560
Birmingham	51,514
Coventry	4,087
Dudley	6,090
Sandwell	9,685
Solihull	5,325
Walsall	6,218
Wolverhampton	11,465
Knowsley	13,496
Liverpool	15,662
St. Helens	5,544
Sefton	3,445
Wirral	6,098
Bolton	4,180
Bury	3,536
Manchester	49,217
Oldham	7,815
Rochdale	14,464
Salford	13,104
Stockport	2,115
Tameside	11,031
Trafford	6,292
Wigan	5,055
Barnsley	4,198
Doncaster	6,178
Rotherham	2,792
Sheffield	36,617
Bradford	37,329
Calderdale	5,275
Kirklees	9,499
Leeds	26,671
Wakefield	27,991
Gateshead	5,488
Newcastle	29,483
North Tyneside	11,510
South Tyneside	7,000
Sunderland	6,373
Isles of Scilly	94
Avon	12,314
Bedfordshire	5,888
Berkshire	13,267
Buckinghamshire	14,981
Cambridgeshire	25,235
Cheshire	21,141
Cleveland	11,683
Cornwall	16,030
Cumbria	25,037
Derybshire	36,317
Devon	25,526
Dorset	22,612
Durham	53,165
East Sussex	38,458
Essex	58,195
Gloucestershire	32,281
Hampshire	50,728
Hereford and Worcester	14,432
Hertfordshire	9,806
Humberside	19,253
Isle of Wight	10,369
Kent	40,464
Lancashire	40,633
Leicestershire	11,838
Lincoln	17,278
Norfolk	12,791
North Yorkshire	17,530
Northamptonshire	14,097
Northumberland	5,996
Nottinghamshire	17,045
Oxfordshire	21,641
Shropshire	8,448
Somerset	10,090
Staffordshire	16,119
Suffolk	19,715
Surrey	25,970
Warwickshire	5,384
West Sussex	16,087
Wiltshire	13,051
Total	1,608,696

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Public Appointments

Mr. Heald: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what further progress has been made in appointing more women as members of public bodies.

Mr. Waldegrave: Women have been appointed to some 40 per cent. of all new appointments made in the last 12 months. This is a further welcome improvement and demonstrates our continuing efforts to ensure that women can play their proper part in our public life. The percentage of public appointments held by women is now 28 per cent. which is a further increase of 2 per cent. since September 1992 on top of the 3 per cent. increase in the previous year. Full details will be published in due course in the 1993 edition of "Public Bodies".

Mr. Heald: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many public appointments are currently held by members of the ethnic minorities; and what plans the Government have to increase this number.

Mr. Waldegrave: Following the introduction last year of ethnic monitoring of public appointees, the statistics collected showed that at 1 September 1992, 2 per cent. of all appointments to public bodies were held by members of the ethnic minorities. The latest figures, full details of which will be published shortly in "Public Bodies", show that this has now increased to 2·3 per cent.

A few departments have already set their own goals for further increases but it is not practical for all departments to set such a goal. The Government aim progressively to increase the number of public appointments of members of ethnic minorities in order more closely to reflect their contribution to national life. Currently nearly 5 per cent. of the economically active population are members of the ethnic minorities.

TRANSPORT

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the Ministers in his Department who since June 1987 have visited *(a)* Saudi Arabia, *(b)* Malaysia, *(c)* Singapore and *(d)* South Africa on official business; and which such visits included party political activities in addition to official duties.

Mr. Norris: Since the election in April 1992, there has only been one visit by a Department of Transport Minister to the four countries named. This was by me to Singapore in October 1993. No party political activities were included in this visit. Owing to changes of Ministers and personnel, it would incur disproportionate cost to retrieve the information on visits before the last election.

Drink Driving

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the maximum legal limit on blood alcohol levels for drivers in each EC country.

Mr. Key: The information requested, in milligrammes of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood, is as follows:

	milligrammes
The Netherlands	50
Portugal	50
Belgium	80
Denmark	80
France	80
Germany	[1,2]80
Greece	[3]80
Italy	80
Luxembourg	80
Spain	80
United Kingdom	80
Ireland	100

[1] Germany has not adopted a common limit after unification.

[2] (0 in the former Democratic Republic).

[3] For the general drink/drive offence but the power exists to charge motorists at 50 mg/ml if an accident has taken place.

Bicycle Helmets

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to make the wearing of bicycle helmets compulsory.

Mr. Key: None. Bicycle helmets have been proven to reduce significantly both the number and the severity of head injuries. We therefore encourage cyclists, particularly children, to wear them.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Welfare Adaptations

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will give the date of receipt of an application for welfare adaptations at 17 O'Reilly park, Killeen, Newry, and the dates when the application was referred to the occupational therapist; when an occupational therapist report was received; when an architect was appointed; and when work is due to be completed;

(2) if he will give details of the reasons for delays in processing the application for welfare adaptations for 17 O'Reilly park, Killeen, Newry.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive but I understand from the chief executive that a verbal application was received in early January 1993 and referred to the occupational therapist on 7 January 1993 whose report was received on 29 January 1993.

A Housing Executive architect was appointed to carry out a feasibility study on 2 February 1993 and this was completed in May 1993. The scheme was passed to a consultant architect in June 1993 for detailed plans to be drawn up. These plans required amendments to incorporate comprehensive improvements to the dwelling which were brought forward to minimise disruption to the tenants.

The detailed plans were completed on 22 November 1993 and were approved by the Housing Executive on 2 December 1993. The work is due to start in January 1994 and be completed by April 1994. The work should commence within the target timescale recently set by the Executive for carrying out major adaptations which involve an extension to a disabled person's home.

Daisy Hill Hospital

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which organisations have been consulted over the membership of the proposed Daisy Hill hospital trust; and which organisations have been invited to nominate members to the trust.

Mr. Ancram: Apart from the period of public consultation on the application for trust status, my noble colleague, Lord Arran, advises me that he has not consulted on the membership of the Newry and Mourne health and social services trust, of which Daisy Hill hospital is a part.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the role of the lay helper in the creation of the Daisy Hill hospital trust.

Mr. Ancram: The position of lay helpers in any trust is formal, voluntary and unpaid. Their role is to assist in drawing up the formal application, giving potential trusts access to the types of skills and experience which non-executive members are expected to bring to the trust board, and to identify potential candidates for appointment as non-executive directors on the board of the trust.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consultations have taken place with the district councils in the Southern region, with members of the Southern health and social services board, or with hon. Members with constituencies covering parts of the Southern region, regarding the membership of the Daisy Hill hospital trust.

Mr. Ancram: None.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what appointments have been made to the board of the shadow Daisy Hill hospital trust.

Mr. Ancram: Mr. John McEvoy, former lay helper, has been appointed chairman of the Newry and Mourne health and social services trust for a period of four years from 23

November 1993. My noble colleague, Lord Arran, hopes to be able shortly to announce the names of the non-executive directors for the new trust.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consultations he or his colleagues had with the Southern health and social services board regarding the membership of the board of the proposed Daisy Hill hospital trust.

Mr. Ancram: None.

Spina Bifida

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the incidence of spina bifida among newborn infants in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: In 1992 the incidence was 0·78 per 1,000 total registered births.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what steps he is taking to reduce the incidence of spina bifida among newborn babies;

(2) what information he has concerning the use of vitamin supplementation for women in their main child-bearing years as a means of reducing cases of spina bifida; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: An expert advisory group report on folic acid and the prevention of neural tube defects, published in December 1992, confirmed evidence that women who increase their intake of folic acid when planning a pregnancy can significantly reduce the risk of having a baby with neural tube defect such as spina bifida. The report was immediately issued to all doctors, senior nurses, midwives and health visitors with a request that all women planning a pregnancy be advised to increase their consumption of folic acid. Health education material has been revised to incorporate this advice and a new public campaign using leaflets and posters was launched last month.

EMPLOYMENT

Training, Birmingham

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the training providers providing training for work programmes funded by Birmingham training and enterprise council.

Miss Widdecombe: I understand that the hon. Member is to meet the chief executive of the Birmingham training and enterprise council on 13 December. The TEC has agreed to supply him then with the list which he seeks.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he takes to monitor the financial viability of training and enterprise councils; and what contingency plans he has in the event that a training and enterprise council becomes unable to meet its contractual obligations.

Miss Widdecombe: Training and enterprise councils are contractually required to provide the Department with regular financial information. This information is carefully analysed by qualified staff to assess the continuing financial viability of individual TECs. The Department is in a position to make suitable alternative arrangements if a TEC ceased to be financially viable.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people became unemployed in England each month since January 1991; and how many were re-employed within six months.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is only available for people whose claims are processed by computer—99 per cent. of the total. It can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library. Of those becoming claimant unemployed, about two thirds leave within six months. The majority leave to go into employment.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the unemployment figures for the Tooting constituency in each of the last 10 years as of 30 November of each year.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is given in the table. The figure for November 1993 will be published on 16 December.

Claimant unemployment, on the unadjusted basis, for each November in the Tooting constituency

Year	*Total*
1983	5,336
1984	5,630
1985	5,687
1986	5,657
1987	4,496
1988	3,534
1989	2,814
1990	3,367
1991	5,657
1992	6,791

Suspension of Benefit

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what criteria he applies in exercising his discretionary power to suspend benefit under regulation 37 of the Social Security (Claims and Payments Regulations); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. David Lidington, dated 10 December 1993:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about Regulation 37 of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations.

Under Section 37(1)*(c)* of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations the Secretary of State may direct that payment of benefit due as a result of a decision of a Social Security Appeal Tribunal (SSAT) may be suspended if the adjudication officer considers that a further appeal to a Commissioner may be appropriate.

The power to suspend benefit is discretionary and is exercised on behalf of the Secretary of State by my officers. If, following a decision of an SSAT, the adjudication officer wishes to appeal to the Commissioner, my local office is requested not to implement the decision pending a further appeal.

An appeal to a Commissioner can only be made on a point of law. The adjudication officer must therefore consider that the decision of the SSAT is wrong in law before making an application for leave to appeal. The most common errors of law are; the misinterpretation of provisions of the Act or regulations; no facts are found, or no reasons are given for the decision; irrelevant considerations have been taken into account; relevant evidence has been ignored; the explanation of the decision discloses faulty reasoning.

Although my officers, acting on behalf of the Secretary of State, are not bound to comply with the adjudication officer's request to suspend the payment of benefit, my people in my local offices are not specifically trained to interpret Social Security law. They will, therefore, rely on the expertise of the adjudication officer where it is considered that an SSAT may have made an error in law. In practice, this means that benefit is always suspended in these cases unless there are good reasons, specific to the case, for not doing so.

I hope this is helpful.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the funding for each training and enterprise council in 1993-94, quantifying how much is to be spent on training for work, youth training, local initiative funds, administration and other projects.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) on 3 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *821*. This lists the funding for each training and enterprise council, including training for work, youth training, local initiative fund, administration—management fee—and other projects.

Youth Training

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has had regarding the levels of allowance paid to those on youth training schemes; what plans there are to alter the allowance in any way; what prospects there are to increase the allowance or alter the payment structure; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: I have had a number of representations regarding the levels of the youth training —YT—allowance. There are no plans to increase minimum YT allowances. Minimum YT allowances are set at levels which reflect the fact that trainees are involved in the learning process and I believe current levels are sufficient to meet the normal requirements of trainees living in the parental home.

Trainees who are employed are paid a wage by their employers. Employers benefit from considerable Government investment in the training of young people and are therefore encouraged to pay trainees more than the specified minimum rates of allowance wherever possible.

PRIME MINISTER

Council of Europe Delegation

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will announce the composition of the United Kingdom delegation for the 1994 ordinary session of the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe.

The Prime Minister: The 1994 ordinary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe will be opened in Strasbourg on 24 January 1994. The delegation from the United Kingdom for the session will consist of 19 members of the Conservative party, 15 members of the Labour party and two members from the minority parties.

The appointments of representatives and substitutes have been made on the basis of nominations by the parties concerned, in accordance with the resolution of this House on 22 May 1992 at column 682 and of the House of Lords on 18 June 1992 at columns 290-92.

The same delegation will be representing the United Kingdom Parliament at the Assembly of the Western European Union, which next meets in Paris in June 1994.

Representatives from the Government benches will be:

My noble Friend, the Lord Finsberg—who will continue to act as leader of both delegations.

My hon. Friends the Members for:

Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith)
Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson)
Poole (Mr. J. Ward)
Ashford (Sir K. Speed)
Medway (Dame P. Fenner)
Lewis (Mr. Rathbone)
Bournemouth, East (Mr. D. Atkinson)
Ravensbourne (Sir J. Hunt)
Lord Newell

Representatives from the Labour party will be:

The hon. Members for:

Wentworth (Mr. Hardy)
Tooting (Mr. Cox)
Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson)
Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks)
Don Valley (Mr. Redmond)
Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland)
Lord Kirkhill

The representative from the minority parties will be:

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston).

The following substitutes have been appointed to act as necessary on behalf of the delegates.

From the Government Benches:

The hon. Members for:

Reading, West (Sir T. Durant)
Norfolk, North (Sir R. Howell)
Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden)
Wellingborough (Mr. Fry)
Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks)
Bridlington (Mr. Townend)
Newark (Mr. Alexander)
Baroness Hooper
Earl of Dundee

From the Labour party:

The hon. Members for:

Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie)
Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman)
Newport, East (Mr. Hughes)
Easington (Mr. Cummings)
Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe)
Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall)
Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis)
Baroness Lockwood

From the minority parties:

The Lord Mackie of Benshie

ENVIRONMENT

Programme Expenditure

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a table showing for each standard region, with Greater London shown as a separate region, the total expenditure in 1992-93, and the budgeted expenditure in 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96, in respect of *(a)* estates action, *(b)* housing action trusts, *(c)* city challenge/urban programme, *(d)* urban regeneration agency/city grant/derelict land grant, *(e)* urban development corporations, *(f)* inner-city task forces and *(g)* city action teams.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 30 November 1993]:* The total public expenditure under these programmes for 1992-93 and the forecast for 1993-94 are shown, by region, in the following tables. For 1994-95 onwards, these programmes will transfer to the single regeneration budget, which will be administered by the integrated regional offices. A regional breakdown for 1994-95 and 1995-96 is not currently available.

Total public expenditure for 1992-93 and Provision for 1993-94

Region	Estate Action 1992-93 outturn	Estate Action 1993-94 forecast	Housing Action Trusts 1992-93 outturn	Housing Action Trusts 1993-94 forecast	City Challenge[2] Urban Programme 1992-93[3] outturn	City Challenge[2] Urban Programme 1993-94 forecast
North West	59·4	60·6	—	—	49·9	57·3
Northern	24·8	28·6	—	—	55·0	54·2
Eastern	5·1	5·9	—	—	—	—
South East	2·1	4·6	—	—	—	—
South West	11·6	12·3	—	—	2·0	2·0
London	93·1	89·8	11·8	—	60·7	85·6
East Midlands	26·6	27·4	—	—	16·5	30·0
Merseyside	37·8	39·2	0·2	—	39·7	43·1
Yorkshire and Humberside	42·8	41·3	14·6	—	39·7	48·5
West Midlands	44·7	46·3	—	—	50·1	57·3
TOTAL	348·0	356·0	26·6	78·0[1]	313·6	378·0

[1] 1993-94 provision for distribution amongst Liverpool, Hull, Waltham Forest, Birmingham and Tower Hamlets HATs.

[2] Includes Housing Corporations support towards City Challenge expenditure.

[3] City Challenge expenditure provisional. Final figures will not be available until after receipt of authorities' 1992-93 final audited claims.

Total public expenditure for 1992-93 and provision for 1993-94

Region	DLG; and City Grant to 10 November 1993 1992-93 outturn	DLG; and City Grant to 10 November 1993 1993-94[1] forecast	Urban Development[3] Corporations 1992-93 outturn	Urban Development[3] Corporations 1993-94 forecast	Task Forces 1992-93 outturn	Task Forces 1993-94 forecast
North West	35·7	27·8	80·8	58·6	2·5	1·1
Northern	13·0	16·5	84·3	75·5	2·0	1·8
Eastern	0·2	1·1	—	—	—	—
South East	0·6	1·0	—	—	—	—
South West	4·1	4·3	22·9	16·3	1·0	0·7
London	4·0	3·9	[4]240·9	[4]132·4	6·7	5·0
East Midlands	15·9	15·1	—	—	2·9	2·2
Merseyside	16·9	13·4	—	—	2·5	2·1
Yorkshire and Humberside	36·5	28·9	21·8	16·0	3·6	2·3
West Midlands	32·5	27·4	65·1	60·7	3·1	2·6
Total	159·4	[2]139·4	515·8	339·5	24·3	17·8

[1] Excludes English Estates ; resources include DLG receipts.

[2] City Grant regional breakdown to 10 November only. Total 1993-94 provision for DLG (including receipts)/City Grant/English Partnerships (excluding English Estates) is £172 million.

[3] Excludes receipts from own activities and from the ERDF.

[4] Includes provision for Docklands Light Railway.

Total public expenditure for 1992-93 and provision for 1993-94

Region	City action teams 1992-93 outturn	City action teams 1993-94 forecast
North West	0·5	—
Northern	1·1	—
Eastern	—	—
South East	—	—
South West	—	—
London	0·9	—
East Midlands	0·5	—
Merseyside	0·6	—
York/Humberside	0·5	—
West Midlands	0·5	—
Total	4·6	[1]1·2

[1] Breakdown of 1993-94 provision not yet available

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the total amount spent by his Department under the derelict land grant in 1992-93 in *(a)* the Northern region and *(b)* the United Kingdom as a whole;

(2) what was the total amount spent by his Department under the city challenge scheme in 1992-93 in *(a)* the Northern region and *(b)* the United Kingdom as a whole;

(3) what was the total budget allocated by his Department to the Urban Regeneration Agency in 1992-93 for expenditure in *(a)* the Northern region and *(b)* the United Kingdom as a whole;

(4) what was the total amount spent by his Department under the city grant scheme in 1992-93 in *(a)* the Northern region and *(b)* the United Kingdom as a whole;

(5) what was the total amount spent by his Department under the inner city task forces scheme in 1992-93 in *(a)* the Northern region and *(b)* the United Kingdom as a whole;

(6) what was the total budget in 1992-93 allocated by his Department to the city action teams in *(a)* Tyne and Wear and *(b)* the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) today. This contained programme information for each region in England. City challenge expenditure in England as a whole was £82·1 million in 1992-93 and in the northern region £14·99 million. Tyne and Wear city action team spent £494,000 in 1992-93 and Cleveland city action team spent £645,000.

My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales, for Scotland and for Northern Ireland are responsible for programmes operating in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the public expenditure provision for each of the four metropolitan borough councils in South Yorkshire for *(a)* estate action, *(b)* urban programme, *(c)* city challenge, *(d)* direct land grant, *(e)* city action teams, *(f)* the development corporation, *(g)* inner city task forces and *(h)* housing action trusts for each year since 1979.

Mr. Baldry: The total amount of public expenditure under these programmes in these local authority areas is set out below. None of these areas receives specific city action team or housing action trust funding.

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council

£ millions

	Estate action	*Urban programme*	*City Challenge*	*Derelict land grant*[2]	*Urban Development Corporations*[3]	*Inner city task forces*[3]
1979-80	—	—	—	0·145	—	—
1980-81	—	—	—	0·013	—	—
1981-82	—	—	—	0·141	—	—
1982-83	—	—	—	0·102	—	—
1983-84	—	—	—	0·048	—	—
1984-85	—	—	—	0·015	—	—
1985-86	—	—	—	0·133	—	—
1986-87	—	—	—	0·102	—	—
1987-88	—	1·790	—	0·561	—	[4]—
1988-89	—	1·913	—	0·237	—	[4]—
1989-90	—	2·323	—	0·501	—	1·619
1990-91	—	2·000	—	1·372	—	1·192
1991-92	2·160	2·334	—	0·702	—	0·189
1992-93	2·920	2·210	[1]—	1·829	—	—
1993-94	1·867	1·288	[1]—	1·671	—	—

[1] Dearne Valley Partnership: Expenditure shared between Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham Metropolitan Councils.

[2] Local authority derelict land grant only.

[3] Not paid direct to local authorities.

[4] Figures for these years not readily available.

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

£ millions

	Estate action	*Urban programme*	*City Challenge*[1]	*Derelict land grant*[2]	*Urban Development Corporations*[3]	*Inner city task forces*[3]
1979-80	—	—	—	0·017	—	—
1980-81	—	—	—	0·022	—	—
1981-82	—	—	—	0·052	—	—
1982-83	—	—	—	0·141	—	—
1983-84	—	—	—	0·194	—	—
1984-85	—	—	—	0·176	—	—
1985-86	—	—	—	0·119	—	—
1986-87	—	—	—	0·333	—	—
1987-88	0·019	1·370	—	0·525	—	—
1988-89	1·662	1·420	—	0·484	—	—
1989-90	3.849	2·101	—	2·087	—	—
1990-91	1·752	1.859	—	1·685	—	—
1991-92	2·479	2·143	—	0.878	—	—
1992-93	4·230	2·164	7·500	1·546	—	—
1993-94	4·599	1·342	15·000	1·221	—	—

[1] Includes £7·5 million a year from 1992-93 for Dearne Valley Partnership: expenditure shared between Barnsley Doncaster and Rotherham Metropolitan Councils.

[2] Local Authority DLG only.

[3] Not paid direct to local authorities.

Rotherham metropolitan borough council

£ million

	Estate action	*Urban programme*	*City challenge*	*Derelict land grant*[2]	*Urban development corporations*[3]	*Inner city task forces*[3]
1979-80	—	—	—	0·372	—	—
1980-81	—	—	—	0·549	—	—
1981-82	—	—	—	0·050	—	—
1982-83	—	—	—	0·067	—	—
1983-84	—	—	—	0·069	—	—
1984-85	—	—	—	0·027	—	—
1985-86	—	—	—	0·059	—	—
1986-87	—	—	—	0·252	—	—
1987-88	0·252	1·840	—	0·493	—	—
1988-89	0·280	1·768	—	1·747	—	—
1989-90	0·436	2·177	—	2·638	—	—
1990-91	0·005	2·000	—	3·876	—	—
1991-92	0·309	2·208	—	4·586	—	—
1992-93	0·682	2·224	[1]—	10·486	—	—
1993-94	—	1·487	[1]—	5·913	—	—

[1] Dearne Valley Partnership : expenditure shared between Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham Metropolitan Councils.

[2] Local Authority DLG only.

[3] Not paid direct to local authorities.

Sheffield City Council

£ millions

	Estate action	*Urban programme*	*City challenge*	*Derelict land grant*[1]	*Urban development corporations*[2]	*Inner city task forces*[2]
1979-80	—	2·650	—	0·031	—	—
1980-81	—	3·440	—	0·031	—	—
1981-82	—	3·490	—	0·022	—	—
1982-83	—	4·860	—	0·010	—	—
1983-84	—	4·500	—	0·010	—	—
1984-85	—	4·200	—	0·071	—	—
1985-86	—	4·510	—	0·592	—	—
1986-87	0·277	5·460	—	0·091	—	—
1987-88	1·786	5·630	—	0·514	—	—
1988-89	7·262	5·519	—	1·078	7·900	—
1989-90	8·296	5·739	—	0·053	9·500	—
1990-91	7·880	6·614	—	0·134	19·000	—
1991-92	7·255	10·907	—	0·636	13·300	—
1992-93	6·968	5·566	—	0·265	13·200	—
1993-94	6·180	3·940	—	1·060	12·000	—

[1] Local authority DLG only.

[2] Not paid direct to local authorities.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish the latest estimate available to his Department of the number of passengers expected to use the Cutty Sark station on the Docklands light railway extension;

(2) if he will itemise and cost each of the savings made to reduce the cost of the Jubilee line extension to Greenwich and Lewisham.

Mr. Baldry: The London Docklands development corporation, the owners of the railway, have made projections of potential passenger traffic at stations along the new extension. Annual projected passenger movements for a station at Cutty Sark rise from 1·4 million when it opens in 1997-98 to 2·5 million in 2001. Forecasts indicate that if Cutty Sark were not to be provided, the majority of potential passengers would use the new Docklands light railway station at Greenwich instead. The Government have asked the London Docklands development corporation and the Docklands light railway to consult local interests on the deletion of these stations before a final decision is made.

Provision of a new station at Cutty Sark would cost an estimated £13 million; at Island Gardens an estimated £4 million. The original estimate of costs also included £10 million for initial rolling stock which are now to be provided by Docklands light railway as operators of the extension. Other potential cost reductions may result from a fall in the land acquisition costs and from minor changes in the project's specifications.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria of viability he has applied to the future of the Island Gardens and Cutty Sark stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Department, together with the owners of the railway, the London Docklands development corporation, and Docklands Light Railway Limited itself, has made an assessment of the financial viability of the extension to Lewisham in the light of independent merchant banking advice. The conclusion was that the forecast incremental revenue from passengers on the extension could not finance the full project as previously costed—at £140 million. A review of the capital and operating costs of the project has indicated provisionally that the new stations proposed for Island Gardens and Cutty Sark will need to be deleted in order to make the project as a whole viable. These stations would be situated underground at each end of the new tunnel taking the railway under the Thames and would involve much higher costs of construction and operation than the ground level stations along the line. The forecast revenue from both stations would cover only the estimated running costs of those stations and would not be sufficient to contribute towards the capital costs of their construction.

The Government have asked the London Docklands development corporation and Docklands Light Railway Limited to consult local interests including businesses before a final decision is made on whether to delete the stations.

The Government have consistently supported this project on the condition that no Government grant or subsidy will be made available. That remains the position. Nevertheless, approval has been given for the project to proceed as a joint venture between the private and public sectors, with capital contributions being made by Lewisham council, South Thames training and enterprise council and Deptford city challenge.

Integrated Sub-Office (Plymouth)

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will establish an integrated departmental sub-office in Plymouth to serve Devon and Cornwall as part of his programme of integrated regional offices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: We will consider how best the new office in the south west can deliver its services across the whole region in consultation with the senior regional director following his or her appointment.

Environmental Protection Act 1990

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses were received to the consultation paper of March proposing amendments to the scope of part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990; and when he proposes to consult on draft amending regulations.

Mr. Yeo: Two hundred and fifty responses were received to the consultation paper. These have now been considered and I am most grateful to those who sent in their views.

I have today issued a second consultation paper which contains a statistical summary of these responses and invites comments on draft regulations to amend the prescribed processes and substances regulations.

I am pleased to say that a substantial proportion of the amendments should have the effect of lightening the burden on business. The regulations will continue to ensure that processes with the greatest pollution potential still come under the stringent controls introduced by part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. But we have identified cases where businesses had to meet more onerous requirements than were necessary, and opportunities for cutting red tape, for example by reducing the number of authorisations needed by certain processes.

A copy of the consultation paper has been placed in the Library of both Houses.

WALES

Badgers

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many badgers were shot or gassed in each county in each of the last three years; and how many of these were subsequently shown to have tuberculosis.

Mr. Redwood: The number of badgers killed, following trapping during state veterinary service badger removal operations, in Wales since 1 January 1991 is as follows:

Year	*Number of badgers killed*	*Number positive*
1991	22	0
1992	—	—
[1]1993	10	0

[1] Up to 6 December 1993.

The figures relate to the county of Dyfed. No badgers have been killed by the state veterinary service in any other county in Wales in the last three years. The legal gassing of badgers ceased on 26 June 1982.

Departmental Accounts

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the discrepancies of his departmental approporiation accounts 1992-93, Paper 11-xi, identified by the Comptroller and Auditor General in his report of 2 December.

Mr. Redwood: The Comptroller and Auditor General —C and AG—reported and qualified his audit opinion on three of the Welsh Office's 1992-93 appropriation accounts within class XVI. On vote 4, he found that

> "erroneous payments to Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) continue to exist at significant levels following the transfer of responsibility from the Department of Employment"

on 1 April 1992; an understatement, as a result mainly of the incorrect assessment of benefit entitlements, of certain payments made through the Employment Service Agency —ESA. He notes in paragraphs 16-18 and 26-27 the efforts which my Department, TECs and the ESA have devoted to putting these matters right. I recently met the chairmen of all the TECs in Wales, to stress my determination that fully effective systems should be maintained. They agree with me.

On vote 5, the C and AG reported on the progress made in auditing the outstanding claims, brought to Parliament's attention when he qualified his opinion on the 1991-92 accounts, for payments made to highway authorities over the period from 1974 to 1990, and on clearance of claims relating to 1990-91. He has confirmed that the systems now in place have allowed the Welsh Office to record satisfactorily advances made since April 1990. Local authorities too should ensure they accurately record these sums and their use.

On vote 11, an error in the method of calculating sums due to authorities in respect of community charge grant let to four overpayments in March 1993; the sums were all recovered by 30 September.

Public Appointments

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if it is necessary for appointment to a non-departmental public body in Wales that a candidate has been included in the register held by the Welsh Office for public appointments.

Mr. Redwood: No, although many names are drawn from the departmental register. Candidates for public appointments may also be nominated by organisations, Members of Parliament and the Cabinet Office public appointments unit. All candidates are considered on their merits irrespective of the source of nomination.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has reached a decision on the level of resources to be devoted to regional selective assistance, the Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board for Rural Wales in 1994-95.

Mr. Redwood: A demand for regional aid, from both Welsh companies and inward investors is still high and I am increasing the money available for regional selective assistance to £67 million to meet that demand.

Grant in aid for the Welsh Development Agency will be increased by almost £10 million, a rise of nearly 16 per cent. The board believes overall expenditure of £167 million can be achieved for 1994-95, given its ability to sell assets. This will enable the agency to build on its success in attracting inward investment to Wales and to continue its support for our indigenous businesses.

The budget of the Development Board for Rural Wales will also increase, to almost £17 million, bringing its expected overall expenditure in 1994-95 to over £27 million. This increase will enable the board to continue its business park developments at Penrhyndeudraeth and Cardigan, to develop its programmes for the western areas which suffer most from rural decline, and to continue to support the Wales tourist board's Tourism 2000 strategy.

HEALTH

Brighton Health Care NHS Trust

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many beds are provided currently by the Brighton health care NHS trust; how many were proposed in the original redevelopment plan; and how many are proposed under the latest, revised plans drawn up by the trust.

Dr. Mawinney: This information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. John Spiers, chairman of Brighton health care national health service trust for details.

Mersey Regional Health Authority

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many personnel are currently employed in administration and how many are employed in clinical services in Mersey regional health authority; and how many have been so employed for each of the last 10 years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is shown in the table.

Administrators and Clinical Staff in Mersey Regional Health Authority 1982-92 (whole-time equivalent)

	Administrative and Clerical	*Direct Care*[1]	*Medical and Dental*
1982	5,350	25,870	2,050
1983	5,320	25,780	2,120
1984	5,450	25,530	2,120
1985	5,260	25,970	2,180
1986	5,280	26,160	2,170
1987	5,400	26,000	2,150
1988	5,560	26,180	2,170
1989	5,790	26,180	2,240
1990	5,810	25,390	2,350
1991	6,160	24,510	2,450
1992	6,240	23,940	2,530

Notes

1. Figures relate to national health service staff employed within Mersey region.
2. [1] Direct Care care includes nursing and midwifery, professions allied to medicine, professional and technical and scientific and professional. Figures since 1989 are affected by the regrading of some senior nurses to senior manager posts. Since 1990 figures have been affected by the exclusion of Project 2000 nurses.
3. Figures exclude agency nursing staff and locum medical and dental staff.

GP Fund-holders

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of the population of Berkshire is registered at *(a)* fund-holding and *(b)* non-fund-holding general practices.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally. Regional health authorities are responsible for managing the general practitioner fund-holding scheme in their areas. Nationally 25 per cent. of the population is covered by GP fund-holders. In Oxford region this is 33 per cent.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of general practitioners, and the total number of secretaries, administrators, receptionists, and practice managers in general practice in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The available information is shown in the tables.

	1 October 1989	*1 October 1990*	*1 October 1991*	*1 October 1992*	*1 April 1993*
Numbers of GPs	25,608	25,622	25,686	25,968	26,116

The data relate to England:

Staff type	*1 October 1989*	*1 October 1990*	*1 October 1991*	*1 October 1992*	*1 April 1993*
Management and administration	n/a	4,595	5,679	6,147	6,147
Secretary/clerical	4,043	30,576	10,495	11,166	11,109
Receptionist	22,535	—	20,824	21,331	20,862

1. The data relate to whole time equivalent staff in England.
2. No data for management and administrative staff are available for 1989; the figure for 1990 relates only to practice managers.
3. The figure for the secretary/clerical category for 1989 relates only to clerical staff; secretaries are included with receptionists. The 1990 figure for secretary/clerical category includes receptionists.
4. The number of GPs in England has risen steadily since 1979 and now currently stands at an all-time high. The increase in administration staff employed by GPs enables them to delegate much of the day to day business of running a practice. This in turn provides the opportunity for GPs to devote more time to the delivery of clinical care to their patients. While the number of administration staff has increased it should be noted that the number of practice nurses has risen from 888 to 9,120 whole time equivalents an increase of over 900 per cent. between 1 October 1989 and 1 April 1993.

NHS Users

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the population using the national health service are *(a)* female and *(b)* members of an ethnic minority.

Mr. Sackville: Of all in-patient episodes recorded in England for 1989-90, the latest year for which information is available, 57·6 per cent. of cases were recorded as female. Of episodes with a diagnostic code other than complications of pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium, 52·1 per cent. of cases were recorded.

Information is not collected centrally on patients' ethnic group, although we are currently consulting on the principle of doing so in respect of in-patients.

Diseases

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of *(a)* dysentery, *(b)* typhoid, *(c)* paratyphoid, *(d)* malaria, *(e)* TB and *(f)* jaundice were reported for England and Wales in each year since 1988.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Notifications of selected infectious diseases reported in England and Wales 1988-92

Disease	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Dysentery	3,692	3,278	2,756	9,935	16,960
Typhoid	174	164	178	182	201
Paratyphoid	180	88	93	99	81
Malaria	1,271	1,478	1,493	1,553	1,189
Tuberculosis	5,164	5,432	5,204	5,436	5,799
Viral hepatitis[1]	5,063	7,071	9,005	8,860	8,993

[1] Infective jaundice was redesignated viral hepatitis on 1 October 1988.

The rise in notifications of viral hepatitis seen between 1988 and 1990 was due to increased notifications of hepatitis A infection. This rise was consistent with the regular peaks in incidence of hepatitis A seen every seven to nine years.

The rise in notification of dysentery in 1992 was seen in all major conurbations other than London. Trends in dysentery also exhibit a periodicity, with peaks every seven to eight years, although the peak in 1992 was higher than other peaks in the previous two decades.

NHS Expenditure

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how she plans to spend the extra money for the NHS announced in the Budget; and what percentage of it will be spent on administration.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, announced allocations to regional health authorities for 1994-95 on 7 December at columns *198-200.* Revenue allocations will rise by an average of 1·3 per cent. above inflation. In addition, health authorities have been given a 2·25 per cent. efficiency target, to ensure existing resources are used to improve patient services. Health authorities and trusts should reduce their administrative costs as far as they can, consistent with sound management of the £22 billion spent on the hospital and community health services. My right hon. Friend recently announced our proposals for streamlining the management structure of the national health service. This will result in further substantial savings in administrative costs so we can maximise the proportion of NHS expenditure devoted to direct patient care.

It is for individual health authorities to determine their own purchasing priorities within the framework of the NHS Management Executive's planning and priorities guidance for 1994-95, EL(93)54 published in June, copies of which are available in the Library.

Junior Doctors

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the figures from the returns for September showing how many junior doctors are contracted for an average of more than 83 hours per week, nationally and by region.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of junior doctors and dentists in England contracted for more than a maximum average of 83 hours a week, at 30 September, is as follows:

Region	*Number*
Northern	0
Yorkshire	5
Trent	0
East Anglian	4
North West Thames	1
North East Thames	32
South East Thames	5
South West Thames	2
Wessex	0
Oxford	0
South Western	0
West Midlands	42
Mersey	0

Region	Number
North Western	0
ENGLAND	91

Regional task forces are monitoring these remaining posts closely to ensure that they are eliminated as quickly as possible.

Leukaemia

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to ensure that the national health service has adequate specialist beds for the treatment of leukaemia.

Mr. Sackville: We are not aware of any evidence to suggest that the clinical facilities currently available for the specialist treatment of patients with leukaemia are in any way inadequate.

Health Authorities

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many chairmen of health authorities in England received emoluments exceeding £500 per attendance in the last 12 months;

(2) how many non-executive directors of health authorities in England received emoluments which exceeded £500 per attendance in the last 12 months.

Dr. Mawhinney: Chairmen and non-executive members of health authorities receive an annual remuneration and are not paid on the basis of attendance.

The amount of emoluments paid to individual chairmen and non-executive members of health authorities is not available centrally.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what powers *(a)* a district health authority/and *(b)* a family health services authority have to withold from publication any report on an agenda item to be considered in public session.

Dr. Mawhinney: District health authorities and family health services authorities are public bodies to which the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 apply. Unless a resolution has been passed by the board to exclude the public on grounds of confidentiality, the public would be entitled to attend meetings and to obtain relevant papers.

NHS Management Executive

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to instruct the NHS Management Executive regional offices to hold meetings in public after the abolition of regional health authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have no such plans. The abolition of regional health authorities is subject to the passage through Parliament of the proposed Bill.

Printing Costs

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost to the NHS of printing and publishing, by each regional health authority, documents for the information of the public.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to contact the chief executives of the regional health authorities for details.

Spina Bifida

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the rate of spina bifida among newborn babies.

Mr. Sackville: In 1992, the rate per 10,000 total births—live and still—was 1·2 for spina bifida in England and Wales.

NHS Patients (Repatriation)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have been flown back from abroad in each year since 1990; and what was the cost to the NHS.

Dr. Mawhinney: Neither United Kingdom nor European Community legislation contains any power allowing national health service funds to be used to defray repatriation costs incurred outside the United Kingdom by United Kingdom residents. There is no central record of numbers privately repatriated by air.

Young People (Supervision)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the average monthly cost of keeping a young person in secure accommodation in the last year for which figures are available;

(2) what was the average monthly cost of supervision under the Children and Young Persons Acts for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally.

Random Breath Testing

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which EC countries have a policy of random breath testing by the police.

Mr. Key: I have been asked to reply.

Police powers vary from country to country and information about precise breath testing procedures in each EC country is not available.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

Sir John Cope: Information relating to expenditure by the Treasury for the use of Government car service cars by Ministers in 1990-91 is not now readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The figure for 1991-92 was £260,355. Five cars were allocated to Treasury Ministers on long-term hire.

Pensioners

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what are the most recent estimates of the number of people who are *(a)* under state retirement age and *(b)* over state retirement age, and receiving a pension from a recognised scheme, giving in each case the number who are (i) non-taxpayers, (ii) basic rate taxpayers and (iii) higher rate taxpayers, in the United Kingdom;

(2) what are the most recent estimates of the number of people who are *(a)* under state retirement age and *(b)* over state retirement age, and receiving (i) an occupational pension and (ii) a personal pension, giving in each case the number who are (1) non-taxpayers, (2) basic rate taxpayers and (3) higher rate taxpayers in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest estimates of the number of people in receipt of an occupational pension in 1993-94 are in the table. Information is not available on the number of people receiving personal pensions.

	Number in receipt of an occupational pension (thousands)	
	Aged under 65	*Aged 65 or over*
Lower rate taxpayers	400	1,000
Basic rate taxpayers	900	1,100
Higher rate taxpayers	70	80

Taxation

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average individual cumulative gain *(a)* in cash prices and *(b)* in 1993-94 prices to those earning (i) £5,000, (ii) £10,000, (ii) £15,000, (iv) £20,000, (v) £25,000, (vi) £30,000, (vii) £40,000, (viii) £50,000, (ix) £60,000 and (x) £100,000, as a result of each change in (1) income tax and (2) income tax and national insurance, since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest estimates of the reduction in liability resulting from changes in national insurance and income tax rates, allowances and thresholds are in the table. The 1978-79 income tax regime has been indexed to 1993-94 levels by reference to the statutory formula and allowing for independent taxation.

Comparison between 1993-94 and 1978-79 indexed regimes

	Average reduction (£) in:	
Range of individuals income in 1993-94 (£)	*Income tax*	*Income tax and national insurance contributions*
Under 5,000	140	170
5,000 – 10,000	380	360
10,000 – 15,000	740	630
15,000 – 20,000	1,080	820
20,000 – 25,000	1,460	960
25,000 – 30,000	1,860	1,290
30,000 – 40,000	2,240	1,670
40,000 – 50,000	3,380	2,810
50,000 – 60,000	5,760	5,210
60,000 – 70,000	8,700	8,100
70,000 – 80,000	13,000	12,400
Over 80,000	47,700	47,200
Average	1,200	1,010

I regret that a reliable analysis of taxpayers with incomes over £100,000 is not available.

For the purposes of the calculations, the indexed regime of 1978-79 has been applied directly to the income base of 1993-94. In practice retention of the 1978-79 regime, indexed as appropriate, for the intervening years would have led to changes in the income base.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the reduction in income tax in 1993-94 compared with the 1978-79 indexed regime, broken down into the top 1 per cent., 5 per cent., 10 per cent. and bottom 50 per cent. of taxpayers, showing the total reduction and the average gain.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest estimates on the annual reduction in income tax liability for 1993-94 compared with the 1978-79 indexed regime are given in the table. The 1978-79 regime has been indexed by reference to the statutory formula and allowing for independent taxation. For the purpose of these calculations the indexed regime of 1978-79 is applied directly to the later income base of 1993-94. In practice, retention of the regime, indexed as appropriate, for the intervening years would have led to changes in the income base.

Quantile group of taxpayers under the 1978-79 indexed regime (Per cent.)	*Nos. of tax-payers (Thousands)*	*Reduction in tax (£ million)*	*Average gain (£)*
Top 1	300	9,600	35,800
Top 5	1,300	13,400	10,000
Top 10	2,700	16,000	6,000
Bottom 50	13,300	4,500	340
All taxpayers	26,700	31,800	1,200

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the regional distribution of *(a)* the personal tax burden and *(b)* the overall tax burden.

Mr. Dorrell: The table shows the amount of income tax payable by region for 1991-92, the latest year for which regional information is available. Regional information for taxes overall is not available.

Region	*Amount of income tax liability of residents (£ million)*
North	2,710
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,840
North West	6,360
East Midlands	4,300
West Midland	5,210
East Anglia	2,560
South East	28,800
South West	5,270
Wales	2,500
Scotland	5,170
Northern Ireland	1,050

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people and what percentage of all taxpayers in *(a)* Great Britain and *(b)* Northern Ireland paid the top rate of income tax in each year since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: The table provides estimates of the number of taxpayers in the United Kingdom liable to income tax at a higher rate—that is any rate above the basic rate. Prior to the introduction of independent taxation in 1990-91, married couples are counted as one unit. It is not possible for the Northern Ireland component to be reliably distinguished for each of these years separately. However, for the years pre-independent taxation, 1980-81 to 1989-90, the number of higher rate taxpayers in Northern Ireland averaged about 20,000, about 4 per cent. of all taxpayers in Northern Ireland. It is estimated that there were 22,000 higher rate taxpaying individuals in Northern Ireland in 1991-92, which is around 4¼ per cent. of all taxpaying individuals in the province.

Taxpayers liable at higher rate, 1978-79 to 1993-94[1]

	Thousands	*As percentage of all taxpayers*
1978-79	763	3·6
1979-80	674	3·1
1980-81	796	3·8
1981-82	1,090	5·2
1982-83	983	4·7
1983-84	860	4·2
1984-85	930	4·6
1985-86	950	4·7
1986-87	1,120	5·5
1987-88	1,190	5·7
1988-89	1,350	6·4
1989-90	1,500	7·0
1990-91	1,700	6·5
1991-92	1,620	6·2
[2]1992-93	1,800	7·1
[2]1993-94	1,900	7·5

[1] Single people and married couples for years up to and including 1989-90, individuals from 1990-91.

[2] Provisional estimates projected from the 1991-92 Survey of Personal Incomes.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each region of the United Kingdom *(a)* the number of higher rate taxpayers, *(b)* the number of basic rate taxpayers and *(c)* the number that pay no national insurance or income tax.

Mr. Dorrell: The information shown in the table is the latest available on a regional basis and is for 1991-92.

Thousands

Region	*Taxpayers liable at higher rate*	*Taxpayers liable only at basic rate*	*Non-taxpayers aged over 16*
North	50	1,220	1,190
Yorkshire and Humberside	93	2,050	1,810
North West	122	2,620	2,290
East Midlands	83	1,760	1,360
West Midlands	95	2,160	1,900
East Anglia	53	975	640
South East	832	7,780	5,480
South West	114	2,160	1,530
Wales	36	1,210	1,050
Scotland	108	2,220	1,760
Northern Ireland	22	490	670

VAT

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how much value added tax was paid per annum by a family consisting of a married man on half of average male earnings, his wife and two children in 1978-79; and what is the most recent estimate;

(2) what estimate he has as to the average VAT paid per annum by a family consisting of a married man on *(a)* half of, *(b)* three quarters of, *(c)* twice and *(d)* three times average male earnings, his wife and two children in 1978-79; and what is the most recent estimate.

Sir John Cope: Estimates of VAT payments outside the range of three quarters to one-and-a-half times average earnings are not available. It is estimated that a married couple with two children on three quarters average earnings will pay approximately £700 a year in VAT in 1993-94 and £1,700 a year in VAT in 1993-94 at one-and-a-half times average earnings. Figures for VAT payments by such a family in earlier years, including 1978-79 have been deposited in the Library. Estimates of VAT payments are subject to wide margins of error.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the changes to the VAT system in each year since 1978-79, including both changes in the rate of VAT and changes in classification of goods and services.

Sir John Cope: On 18 June 1979 the standard rate of VAT of 8 per cent. and the higher rate of 12½ per cent. were unified at 15 per cent., which was raised to 17½ per cent. from 1 April 1991. A comprehensive list of all changes in the VAT system going back to 1978-79 could be made only at disproportionate cost, but the main changes to the VAT liability of goods and services have been the extension of the standard rate to:

—hot take away food from 1 May 1984;

—building alterations from 1 June 1984;

—the publication of advertisements in newspapers etc., from 1 May 1985;

—the construction and sale of new non-residential buildings from 1 April 1989; and

—fuel and power supplied to business, and to water and sewerage supplied to manufacturing industry, from 1 July 1990.

Landlords were given the option to tax non-residential rents and sales of used buildings from 1 August 1989. Supplies of stockbroking services, which were previously standard rated, were made exempt from 1 January 1990.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his most recent estimate of how much VAT is paid per annum by *(a)* an average family and *(b)* a married couple on average income; and how much they paid in 1978-79.

Sir John Cope: It is estimated that a family consisting of a married couple on average earnings with two children will pay approximately £1,010 a year in VAT, and a couple with no children £980 a year in VAT in 1993-94. Comparable figures for the same family types for 1978-79 have been deposited in the Library. Estimates of VAT payments are subject to wide margins of error.

Exports

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total value of the United Kingdom's exports for each of the last four quarters.

Mr. Nelson: The latest information is available on the CSO database, which can be accessed through the House of Commons Library; the indentifier is DJAZ.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest quarterly figure he has for the total level of export orders; and what the total was for the same period last year.

Mr. Portillo: Quantitative data on the total level of export orders is not available.

Excise Duty

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue the Treasury has forgone since January in lost excise duty from the cross-border sales of *(a)* wines, *(b)* spirits, *(c)* beers, *(d)* cigarettes and tobacco and *(e)* all of *(c)* and *(d)*.

Sir John Cope: The table shows the estimated total revenue losses, covering both excise duty and VAT, arising from increased cross-border shopping for the whole of 1993. It is not possible to give reliable estimates for different types of alcoholic drink. The estimates have been derived from the results of household surveys conducted by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. They take account of the fact that the some cross-border shopping took place before 1993, also that some of the purchases abroad are likely to represent new consumption, rather than substituting for purchases in the United Kingdom.

Revenue loss in 1993 (£m)

	Excise duty	*VAT*	*Total*
Alcoholic drinks	55	20	75
Tobacco products	80	20	100
Total	135	40	175

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the impact in 1994-95 on the retail prices index of raising £1 billion from *(a)* duty on tobacco products, *(b)* duty on beer, *(c)* duty on wine and spirits, *(d)* duty on petrol, *(e)* VAT and *(f)* vehicle excise duty.

Sir John Cope: The estimated impacts on the RPI excluding mortgage interest payments are as follows:

	Per cent.
Beer	0·29
Wine and spirits	0·90
Tobacco	0·41
Petrol	0·21
VED	0·22

These estimates assume that the increase in tax is fully passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices. The estimates allow for behavioural changes according to the procedure described in annex A to chapter 4 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95." Increases in petrol duty and VED fall partly on business, so the long run RPI effect for these items is likely to be greater as businesses pass the additional tax on to consumers.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much his Department spends annually on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising and *(c)* press advertising; and what were the corresponding figures for 1985 and 1979.

Mr. Nelson: Expenditure on press advertising by the Treasury is expected to be £57,000 in 1993-94. Expenditure in 1985-86 was £42,000. A comparable figure for 1979-80 could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The Treasury does not have any expenditure on television and radio advertising.

International Monetary Fund

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all sources of British public funds allocated to the IMF in the last five years.

Mr. Nelson: The table summarises these transactions over the past five years:

£ million

	1989-90	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Quota[1]				1,104·3	
ESAF[2]	17·0	1·5	1·5	10·0	20·0
Net SDR charges[3]	67·9	69·8	56·0	58·3	[5]58·2
Interest received on reserve tranche position[4]	33·3	27·8	27·3	22·2	[5]19·2

[1] As a member of the International Monetary Fund, the United Kingdom pays a subscription, its quota, which was last increased in 1992. 25 per cent. of this increase was paid in special drawing rights from holdings in the exchange equalisation account. This did not reduce the level of reserves as our reserve position with the fund—the amount the United Kingdom can draw on demand—was increased commensurately. The rest was paid from the National Loans Fund (NLF), in the form of sterling non-interest bearing notes which were placed on deposit at the Bank of England and returned to the NLF. These monetary transactions leave public expenditure and the PSBR unchanged.

[2] The United Kingdom makes an annual contribution to the interest subsidy account of the enhanced structural adjustment facility (ESAF), which is a trust fund administered by the IMF. This scores in the ODA's programme as public expenditure.

[3] There is a charge to pay on holdings by a member of special drawing rights. Interest is received by the member on its SDR holdings. As the United Kingdom currently holds fewer SDRs than its allocation, it makes a net payment to the fund from the exchange equalisation account which is recorded as a monetary transaction.

[4] The United Kingdom receives interest on its reserve tranche position in the IMF, when IMF holdings of sterling are less than the United Kingdom quota. If IMF holdings of sterling are greater than the UK quota, the United Kingdom is required to pay a charge via the exchange equalisation account. Transactions arising from the United Kingdom's reserve tranche position are monetary transactions that affect United Kingdom reserves.

[5] To end November 1993.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria are used to determine whether or not an address is considered a person's main residence in relation to regulation 5(2) of the Income Tax (Interest Relief) (Housing Associations) Regulations 1988.

Mr. Dorrell: There is no statutory definition of the term "main residence". It is a question of fact whether a dwelling is a person's main residence, and the Inland Revenue apply the same criteria for the purposes of regulation 5 as they do for the purposes of the mortgage interest relief legislation generally.

Personal Pensions

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) when the Securities and Investments Board decided to review cases where personal pensions may have been mis-sold under the Financial Services Act 1986; how many cases are involved; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps the Securities and Investments Board proposes to take to ensure that any individual who was wrongly persuaded to buy a personal pension in contravention of the Securities and Investments Board rules and regulations is compensated in full.

Mr. Nelson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 8 December 1993 at column *234*.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if the Securities and Investments Board will publish details of its survey of the sale of personal pensions; and in how many cases the Securities and Investments Board believes that there was prima facie evidence of mis-selling;

(2) if he will ask the Securities and Investments Board to publish the results of its examination of cases where personal pensions may have been mis-sold.

Mr. Nelson: The Securities and Investments Board will publish the results of its independent pilot study of pension transfers before Christmas. SIB is co-ordinating a full-scale study to establish the extent of mis-selling.

Financial Services Act

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has to review the Financial Services Act 1986.

Mr. Nelson: I have no proposals to review the Financial Services Act 1986.

Departmental Spending Programme

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the change in the value of each departmental spending programme for 1994-95 measured by factor prices, where available, relative to 1993-94 outturn and 1992-93 figures.

Mr. Portillo: The information sought is not available. However, departmental spending figures were published in the November 1993 "Financial Statement and Budget Report" in cash and real terms in table 5B.3 and table 5B.4 respectively.

Finance Bill

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the date for the publication of the Finance Bill.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on 9 December at column *313*.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Gennady Shtelman

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on the case of Gennady Shtelman, a prisoner in Uzbekistan; and what action he has taken.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am aware of the case of Gennady Shtelman and have received a number of representations on his behalf.

During President Karimov's visit to London in November, I raised with him the importance of observing human rights, in line with his country's CSCE commitments and other international conventions. Mr. Shtelman's case was raised at official level. Our ambassador in Tashkent will continue to monitor his and other cases.

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

Mr. Goodlad: Official transport for Ministers was provided by the Government car service during 1990-91 at a cost of £328,050. Six vehicles were provided.

Gibraltar

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussion she has had with the Spanish Government about Gibraltar; and what issues were discussed.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, met Señor Solana to discuss Gibraltar on 1 March. They discussed possible ways of developing the Brussels process and the way ahead generally. Since March officials have met three times, and a further meeting is planned for 14 December. My right hon. Friend hopes to have further discussions with Señor Solana in the early part of next year.

Manchester United Supporters

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, (1) pursuant to his answer of 2 December, *Official Report*, column *678*, what response he received to his representations to the Turkish ambassador of 8 November concerning the treatment of Manchester United supporters;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 2 December, *Official Report*, column *678*, whether the British ambassador in

Ankara has yet received a report, or other response to his representations to the Turkish authorities on the treatment of Manchester United supporters;

(3) pursuant to his answer of 2 December, *Official Report,* column *678,* in respect of how many Manchester United supporters allegations of maltreatment were sent to the Turkish ambassador.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British ambassador in Ankara has not yet received a response to his representations to the Turkish authorities.

The Turkish ambassador in London presented a report to us on 23 November. There was much in it to clarify about the treatment by the Turkish authorities of British football fans. On 2 December, we sent the ambassador a list of the 16 main allegations and asked for the Turkish authorities' comments.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many complaints have been received from the Turkish authorities relating to the treatment of Galatasaray supporters in Manchester.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No complaints have been received from the Turkish authorities about the treatment of Galatasaray supporters in Manchester.

European Union

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out each provision of each treaty which applies to the European Community pillar and each provision of each treaty which applies to *(a)* the European Union collectively and *(b)* to each of the other pillars of the Union.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As I made clear in my answer of 2 December at column *680,* the Government use the terms European Community and European Union according to the subject matter under discussion. The treaty of Rome, the treaty of Paris and the EURATOM treaty, as amended by titles II, III and IV of the treaty on European Union apply to the "Community" pillar; title V of the Treaty on European Union applies to the CFSP pillar; title VI applies to the justice and home affairs pillar; and titles I and VII apply to the European Union collectively as well as to individual pillars. There are some cross-references to different pillars within each title.

Anguilla

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what stage he has reached in resolving the dispute between Anguilla and Her Majesty's Government regarding sovereignty, internal affairs, building of prisons and other matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There is no such dispute over sovereignty between Anguilla and Her Majesty's Government. We concluded a country policy plan with the Government of Anguilla in August 1993. The plan provides for a capital aid programme of £10·5 million over the next four years, including a new structure to replace the dilapidated prison.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effects on nuclear non-proliferation of the partial ratification in the Ukrainian Parliament of the START I treaty.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have made clear to the Ukrainian Government that we do not consider the resolution on ratification of START I by the Ukrainian Parliament to be acceptable. The Ukrainian Government, however, have confirmed that they remain committed to Ukrainian non-nuclear weapons status. We will continue to urge the Ukrainian Government to secure Ukraine's full implementation of the START I treaty, and accession to the non-proliferation treaty as a non-nuclear weapons state, without further delay.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the reasons for the Government of St. Helena excluding Mr. Timmreck from returning to the island in advance of any exclusion order being made.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This is a matter for the Government of St. Helena. It is in the hands of solicitors and is the subject of litigation.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Occupational Pensions

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on occupational pensions specific to pension funds of public industries that have been privatised.

Mr. Hague: The pension schemes of former public industries operate within the same legal framework as all private sector schemes.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out the proposed full list of tests and points for assessing qualification for the categories of incapacity benefit.

Mr. Scott: The Government published a consultation document "A consultation on the medical assessment for incapacity benefit" on 1 December. This document, which is freely available, outlines the initial stages in the development of the proposed medical test and seeks comments on how incapacity for work is to be defined and scored. A copy has been placed in the Library. All comments are most welcome. The results of the consultation and an evaluation exercise will determine how the test is finally framed.

Personal Pensions

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he is taking to make personal pensions attractive across the age range; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: I have today published a consultation paper on age-related rebates. The results of this exercise will help to formulate our detailed policy proposals. Copies of the paper have been placed in the Library. The consultation period will end on 15 January 1994.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the result of the appeal hearing on 14 September attended by Mr. M., national insurance number RA 91 50 70 C, into his appeal against the decision of the Benefits Agency to refuse him mobility allowance; when Mr. M. will be notified of the decision on his appeal; and if he will make a statement on the interval between hearing and notification.

Mr. Scott: The responsibility for the administration of appeals is a matter for the president of the Independent Tribunal Service, his honour Judge Thorpe. He will write to the hon. Member.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what account the Child Support Agency takes of existing maintenance payment made in respect of families living outside Britain when assessing liability for maintenance payments.

Mr. Burt: The formula which the Child Support Agency uses to assess maintenance does not take account of other maintenance arrangements, whether or not they involve persons living abroad.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will place in the Library a copy of the guidelines issued by his Department to Benefits Agency to advise their local offices on which categories of jobs might be suitable for disabled people in receipt of invalidity benefit; and what representations he has received in response.

Mr. Scott: Guidance issued to adjudication officers refers them to the "Standard Occupational Classification". This has been developed jointly by the Department of Employment and the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. Both the "Standard Occupational Classification" and "The Adjudication Officers Guide" are in the Library.

Girocheques

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many replacement girocheques were issued by his Department in each of the last five years; and what was their total value for each of these years;

(2) what changes there have been in the criteria used by his Department for the issuing of replacement girocheques;

(3) if he will make a statement about the criteria used by his Department for the issuing of replacement girocheques in cases where the original cheque has been lost or stolen; and if he will make a statement on what flexibility unemployment benefit offices have in administering this policy.

Mr. Hague: The administration of payment of benefit by girocheque is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Brian Donohoe, dated 9 December 1993:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions about replacement girocheques issued by the Department of Social Security.

The number of girocheques replaced after being reported missing or stolen, and the value of those replaced girocheques (based on average value of issues) in each of the last five years are as follows:

Year	*Number replaced*	*Value £ million*
1988-89	45,765	3·53
1989-90	53,636	4·31
1990-91	58,802	5·38
1991-92	67,265	6·47
1992-93	90,933	8·93

Additionally, the Employment Service Agency acts as our agent in the provision of girocheques to those who are unemployed and claiming Income Support. Data relevant to those issues cannot be seperately identified and are, therefore, not included in the tables above.

Since the formation of the Benefits Agency there has been no change in the criteria for the issuing of replacement girocheques.

I am informed by Mike Fogden, the Chief Executive of the Employment Service Agency that the criteria they use in the issuing of replacement girocheques is the same as that of the Benefits Agency, namely:

To issue a prompt replacement whenever a girocheque is reported as not received, lost, stolen or destroyed unless there is reason to doubt that the report is genuine.

The reasons for doubt include:

(a) an unreasonable delay in making the report.
(b) incomplete or inconsistent answers on the report form.
(c) Post Office confirmation that the girocheque has been cashed.
(d) a previous history of loses.

Decisions on replacing girocheques reported as lost or stolen are made by Executive Officers based in Employment Service Jobcentres or Benefit Agency offices, who take account of the individual circumstances of each case.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Disability

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about his Department's future plans for the disability living allowances Minister's hotline unit; and how many cases have been dealt with by the unit in each month since its establishment.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Brian Donohoe, dated 9 December 1993.

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) Hotline.

The Hotline continues to operate at the DLA Unit in Blackpool and achieve a 48-hour call back service. There are presently no plans to alter this facility. However, as the performance for handling DLA claims is now being sustained at a high level we will have to consider at some point whether there remains a need for the service in the same form to be maintained in the future. Members will be advised of any changes if, and when we propose such changes.

As requested, I have provided details in the attached appendix of the number of cases that have been dealt with by the Ministers Hotline since its inception.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Cases dealt with by DLA Ministers Hotline

	Number of calls
1992	
July	417
August	733
September	690
October	1,132
November	885
Decenmber	513
1993	
January	858
February	707
March	609
April	469
May	250
June	193
July	178
August	108
September	100
October	88
November	78

Fraud

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the basis of the calculation of sector fraud achievement of claimed savings of £491 million in weekly benefit and £25 million in instrument payment savings on page 15 of the document, "Fighting Fraud in 1992-93".

Mr. Hague: The administration of benefit fraud is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Bob Cryer, dated 9 November 1993:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about the basis of sector fraud's savings as published in Fighting Fraud.

With regard to the weekly benefit saving, a multiplier of 32 weeks is applied to the amount of weekly benefit savings recorded as a result of successful fraud investigations or interventions. This single multiplier is currently applied to all benefits payable by the Department and reflects the anticipated average period for which claims could be expected to continue in the absence of a successful fraud intervention.

Instrument of Payment savings are not subject to any multiplier and all such savings are recorded at face value.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

SCOTLAND

Kilgarth Tip, Coatbridge

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to take a decision about the application by City of Glasgow district council in respect of Kilgarth tip, Coatbridge.

Mr. Lang: The letters conveying the decision about the application by City of Glasgow district council were issued on Monday 6 December.

Learning Difficulties

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what statutory provisions govern the voting rights of people with learning difficulties; what plans he has to ensure that people with learning disabilities are given better opportunities to vote; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The statutory provisions are contained in the representation of the people and the mental health legislation. To be entitled to vote all electors must satisfy criteria of eligibility and competence. Eligibility is governed by the registration process and it is the responsibility of electoral registration officers to determine whether or not an applicant satisfies the statutory conditions, including the common law requirement that an elector should not lack the capacity to vote because of profound learning difficulties. At an election the presiding officer also carries a responsibility to satisfy himself as to the elector's capacity to vote.

The Scottish Office Home and Health Department will shortly be issuing revised guidance on these matters to electoral registration officers.

Forestry

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the forestry review group's report.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 29 November 1993]:* The advice of the review group is, and will remain, confidential to Ministers.

A7

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to be in a position to publish the route action plan covering the A7 trunk route south of Hawick; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 29 November 1993]:* I expect to publish a leaflet setting out the details of the route action plan early in 1994.

Set-aside Land

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what percentage of arable land on Scottish non-LFA farms will require to be taken out of production in 1994, on the basis of IACS figures, to avoid liability for penalties under the arable area payment scheme in 1995, showing *(a)* the standard set-aside requirement, *(b)* the penalty from 1993 and *(c)* any further area arising from the discrepancy between IACS statistics and previous census statistics submitted by the Department to the European Commission;

(2) if he will estimate the reduction in production of spring-sown cereals in 1994 arising from the arable area payments scheme penalty for 1993 and any further reduction in cropping that may be required to avoid a further penalty in 1995; and if he will make a statement on the impact of that reduction on the Scottish maltsters, millers and other cereal using industries.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* No arable land requires to be taken out of production in 1994 or 1995, nor is there a discrepancy in the statistics.

The rules of the arable area payments scheme made clear that the total claimed arable area must not exceed the regional base area; and that any excess would result in penalties. The scheme is voluntary; and if farmers do apply there is no obligation to do so on all their arable land. They may therefore sow as much arable crops as they wish without setting aside any land.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Fraud

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to review the sentences available for fraud.

Mr. Maclean: The Government are satisfied that the penalties for offences involving fraud are adequate. Fraudulent trading and false accounting both carry a maximum sentence of seven years' imprisonment; and obtaining property by deception has a maximum sentence of 10 years' imprisonment.

Prison Officers (Accommodation)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officer accommodation units at each of the London prisons were still owned by the Prison Department as of 1 December.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 10 December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many prison officer's quarters were still owned by the Prison Service at each of the London prisons. The number as at 1 December 1993 were as follows:

	Number
Belmarsh	13
Brixton	120
Feltham	86
Holloway	150
Latchmere House	21
Pentonville	94
Wandsworth	114
Wormwood Scrubs	172
	770

Firearms Certificates

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in England and Wales had been granted a firearms certificate as of 1 December; and for what uses such certificates have been granted.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The number of firearms certificates which were on issue in England and Wales as at 31 December 1992 was 136,810. Corresponding information for 1 December 1993 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The law requires that, before issuing a firearm certificate, the chief officer of police must satisfy himself that the applicant has a good reason for requiring the firearm or ammunition in respect of which the certificate is sought. No central record is kept of the reasons for which certificates are granted.

Dangerous Dogs

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce legislation on dangerous dogs in the coming Session.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Farriers (Registration) Act 1975

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many communications he has received during the consultation on deregulation of the Farriers (Registration) Act 1975; how many were in favour and how many against; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Department has received 16 responses to its consultative letter concerning the deregulation review of the Farriers (Registration) Acts 1975 and 1977. Eleven were in favour of retaining the present controls and five argued for deregulation.

Riding Establishments Acts

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many communications he has received during the consultation on deregulation of the Riding Establishments Acts; how many were in favour and how many against; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Department has received 12 responses to its consultative letter on the deregulation review of the Riding Establishments Acts 1964 and 1970. All were in favour of retaining present controls.

Sentencing

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what account he takes, in reaching decisions on tariff sentences upon those convicted of offences deemed political, of the individual offenders and mitigating factors such as age or nature of motivation;

(2) what representations he has received from *(a)* Abdul Qayyum Raja, a prisoner at HMP Long Lartin, *(b)* his legal representatives and *(c)* other individuals and organisations about his case;

(3) if he will reduce the sentence imposed under tariff arrangements on Abdul Qayyum Raja; when he intends to announce his decision in this case; and if he will disclose full information and explanation for the tariff sentence he finally decides upon in this case;

(4) what representations he has received from *(a)* Mohammed Riaz, a prisoner at HMP Whitemoor, *(b)* his legal representatives and *(c)* other individuals and organisations on his case;

(5) if he will reduce the sentence imposed under the tariff arrangements on Mohammed Riaz; when he intends to announce his decision in this case; and if he will disclose full information and explanation for the tariff sentence he finally decides upon in his case;

(6) if he will disclose full information about each factor which he takes into account in reaching decisions concerning the tariff; and if he will make a statement on the effect of the judgment in the House of Lords in the case of Doody and Others in 1993.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The arrangements for determining the period which mandatory life sentence prisoners—including those convicted of politically motivated murders—should serve in custody in order to meet the requirements of retribution and deterrence are set out in my right hon. and learned Friend's replies of 27 July 1993 at columns *863-85* and 4 November 1993 at columns *376-78*. The procedures for disclosing such decisions and related information to the prisoners concerned are also described.

In deciding the period to be served in custody all available information, including advice from the judiciary, representations on the prisoners' behalf and any mitigating factors will be fully taken into account. The statement by the right hon. Sir Leon Brittan, as Secretary of State in 1983, that terrorists and certain other specified categories of murderer can normally expect to serve at least 20 years will also be relevant in some cases.

As to the cases of Mr. Raja and Mr. Riaz, representations have been made on their behalf by their legal representatives, Members of both Houses of Parliament and members of the public. Mr. Riaz has also made representations direct. All these representations are being carefully considered and decisions will be taken shortly. Mr. Raja and Mr. Riaz will be informed separately of the period set in their case and each of them will be given reasons for the decision.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received supporting the view that tariff sentences should be set by the trial judge in open court upon hearing representations on behalf of the prisoner immediately upon conviction.

Mr. Maclean: From time to time, we receive representations supporting the view that when a mandatory life sentence is passed on a person convicted of the offence of murder the period necessary to satisfy the requirements of retribution and deterrence should be stated by the trial judge in open court after the offender has had an opportunity to make representations.

Custody Costs

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average cost of custody per inmate month in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Alun Michael, dated 10 December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the cost of custody per inmate month.

The average monthly cost of holding an inmate in custody was £2,142 for 1992-93.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the average monthly cost of a supervision order combined with intensive intermediate treatment or specified activities in the last year for which figures are available;

(2) what was the average monthly cost of a probation order in the last year for which figures are available;

(3) what was the average monthly cost of a community service order in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Maclean: The latest information on the costs of probation and community service orders is set out in table 12.3 of "Probation Statistics, England and Wales, 1992", which is in the Library of the House.

The average monthly cost of a probation order is estimated at £98 and the average monthly cost of a community service order is estimated at £95. The costs of supervision orders when combined with other requirements may vary greatly and the equivalent figures could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average cost of custody per inmate month in *(a)* open and *(b)* closed youth establishments in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Alun Michael, dated 10 December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the cost of custody per inmate month in open and closed youth establishments.

In 1992-93 the average monthly cost of holding an inmate in an open youth establishment and a closed youth establishment was £2,747 and £2,132 respectively.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the average monthly cost of cautioning-plus schemes in the last year for which figures are available;

(2) what was the average cost of administering a caution in the last year in which figures are available.

Mr. Maclean: No figures are available on the cost of administering a caution. Although it is not possible to calculate the average monthly cost of so called "caution-plus" schemes, information from two long established schemes suggests that the average cost of each supported caution is in the range £300-£1,100.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average monthly cost of bail support schemes in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Maclean: The Home Office probation supervision grant scheme currently makes grants to 11 projects solely or mainly for bail support; other projects may include some bail support work.

The average monthly Home Office grant to these bail support projects in the financial year 1993-94 is £4,062. However, this may not fully reflect the cost of bail support projects as projects may well receive funding from other sources.

Security Firms

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what checks his Department makes to ensure that security firms used by his Department do not employ staff who have criminal records.

Mr. Maclean: Staff from security firms employed by the Home Office undergo security checks, including criminal record checks, appropriate to the nature of their work and place of employment.

Winston Silcott

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to be able to take a decision in respect of the reference of the case of Winston Silcott to the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to be in a position to reach a decision shortly.

Murder Sentences

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the shortest sentence served for murder in the last 30 years; and what were the circumstances.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Barbara Roche, dated 10 December 1993:

Shortest sentence served for murder in the last 30 years

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the shortest sentence served for murder in the last 30 years and what the circumstances were.

The shortest sentence served was one day. This occurred in two unrelated cases where the inmates died one day after reception.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average sentence served by those convicted of murder and later released.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 10 December 1993:

Average sentence length for murder

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the average time served by inmates sentenced for murder and who have since been released.

I attach a copy of a table showing the numbers of life sentenced prisoners released from 1981-91. This information is published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales" (Table 8.5 of the latest volume, for 1991, CM 2157), a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what assessment he has made of the findings of the independent inquiry into the mandatory life sentence chaired by Lord Lane; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effect on victims and their families of knowing the sentence imposed on those convicted of murder, as recommended in the independent inquiry into the mandatory life sentence chaired by Lord Lane.

Mr. Maclean: I consider that the report of the Committee on the Penalty for Murder has usefully drawn together the arguments for a change in the existing law under which the mandatory penalty for murder is a sentence of life imprisonment. In considering the report's conclusions, I will, of course, take into account the possible effects of any change on the families of murder vicitims. But I have not been persuaded by arguments I have so far heard that any change is necessary to the present law.

Banking Services (Sundays)

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to provide that the services provided by bank and building societies to individuals such as automatic cash dispensers, telephone banking and cash and credit card transactions should be restricted on Sundays; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None. The Sunday Trading Bill contained on introduction three options for reform of the Sunday trading laws in England and Wales. A Committee of the whole House on 8 December chose the option of partial deregulation. If it becomes law this option would place no restriction on services provided by banks and building societies.

Deportation Policies

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will annouce the outcome of his internal review of deportation policies and procedures following the death of Joy Gardner; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I had hoped to be able to announce the outcome of the review before the House rises, but the review is not yet quite complete. I shall make an announcement as soon as possible after the recess.

Voluntary Repatriation

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inquiries have been received about voluntary repatriation schemes established under section 29 of the Immigration Act 1971, in the past quarter and the same quarter last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The voluntary repatriation scheme established under section 29 of the Immigration Act 1971 is operated by the International Social Service of the United Kingdom (ISS) on behalf of the Home Office. In the quarter 1 September to 30 November 1993 a total of 103 inquiries about voluntary repatriation were received by ISS; 43 such inquiries were received in the same quarter last year.

Immigration Advisory Service

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the criteria for the appointment of the directors of the organisation formerly known as UKIAS; how many candidates applied; how many *(a)* black and *(b)* Asian people were on the shortlist; what were the names of those who interviewed the candidates; and what are the salary and conditions of appointment of the successful candidate.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The appointment was a matter for the trustees of UKIAS's successor body, the immigration appeals advisory service, which is an independent body.

Prison Rules

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his proposed changes to the prison rules.

Mr. Howard: I have laid prison and young offender institution amendment rules before Parliament to come into effect on 1 January 1994. First, the rules will extend the scope of confidentiality for prisoners' legal correspondence to all correspondence between prisoners and their legal advisers or a court, whether or not legal proceedings have been commenced. The rules set out the circumstances in which such correspondence may be opened, read or stopped. Secondly, the amendments will increase the maximum period of cellular confinement a governor may impose as a disciplinary punishment from three to 14 days for adult prisoners and from three to seven days for young offenders. This is a desirable strengthening in disciplinary powers, particularly in the light of the continuing trend in increased offending in prisons.

DEFENCE

Civil Servants

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of people employed *(b)* the total number of black people and *(c)* the total number of Asians.

Mr. Aitken: The following table sets out, by grade, the total number of staff serving in my Department and the total number of black and Asian staff who have responded to the Department's ethnic minority origin survey. Response to the survey was voluntary, and where there are fewer than 10 ethnic minority staff listed in a particular grade, for reasons of personal confidentiality it is not our policy to define precise numbers.

Black and Asian staff in the Ministry of Defence

Grades within the open structure and occupational groups	*Total Staff at 1 April 1993*	[1]*Total Black Staff*	[1]*Total Asian Staff*
Open Structure Grade 1 (include 1A)	4	—	—
Open Structure Grade 2	9	—	—
Open Structure Grade 3	50	—	—
Open Structure Grade 4	34	—	—
Open Structure Grade 5	282	—	—
Open Structure Grade 6	730	—	—
Open Structure Grade 7	2,747	<10	16
Senior Executive Officer	1,211	—	<10
Higher Executive Officer (D)	19	<10	<10
Higher Executive Officer	3,033	<10	10
Administration Trainee	6	—	<10
Executive Officer	5,771	45	46
Administrative Officer	14,921	186	173
Administrative Assistant	7,625	123	111
Senior Economic Assistant	1	—	—
Senior Assistant Statistician	2	—	—
Assistant Statistician	1	—	—
Senior Information Officer	29	—	—
Information Officer	53	—	—
Assistant Information Officer	2	—	—
Senior Librarian	16	—	—
Librarian	49	—	—
Assistant Librarian	48	—	—
Museum Curatorial Group Grade D	5	—	—
Museum Curatorial Group Grade E	6	—	—
Museum Curatorial Group Grade F	9	—	—
Museum Curatorial Group Grade G	6	—	—
Museum Conservation Group Grade F	1	—	—
Chief Constable	1	—	—
Deputy Chief Constable	2	—	—
Assistant Chief Constable	5	—	—
Chief Superintendent	12	—	—
Superintendent	27	—	—
Chief Inspector	66	—	<10
Inspector	149	<10	<10
Sergeant	655	<10	<10
Constable	3,506	11	<10
Senior Professional and Technology Officer	2,341	<10	16
Higher Professional and Technology Officer	4,009	<10	49
Professional and Technology Officer	5,439	14	[illegible]
Professional and Technology Officer 4	6	—	—
Technical Grade 1	406	—	<10
Technical Grade 2	32	—	<10
Graduate Trainee	143	—	<10
Trainee Incorporated Engineer	24	—	—
Senior Mapping and Charting Officer	120	—	—
Higher Mapping and Charting Officer	235	<10	<10
Mapping and Charting Officer	515	<10	<10
Mapping and Charting Technical Grade 1	218	—	—
Mapping and Charting Technical Grade 2	92	<10	<10
Senior Graphics Officer	13	—	—

Grades within the open structure and occupational groups	*Total Staff at 1 April 1993*	*[1]Total Black Staff*	*[1]Total Asian Staff*
Higher Graphics Officer	57	—	—
Graphics Officer	218	<10	<10
Marine Service Officer Grade 1	15	—	—
Marine Service Officer Grade 2	92	—	—
Marine Service Officer Grade 3	176	—	—
Marine Service Officer Grade 4	108	—	—
Senior Research Officer (R)	45	—	—
Research Officer (R)	20	—	—
Chief Typing Manager	16	—	—
Typing Manager	200	<10	—
Senior Personal Secretary	95	<10	<10
Personal Secretary	836	10	<10
Typist	3,698	86	38
Trainee Typist	6	—	—
Senior Scientific Officer	1,678	<10	30
Higher Scientific Officer	1,686	<10	36
Scientific Officer	1,484	10	22
Assistant Scientific Officer	735	<10	<10
Senior Instricutional Officer	66	—	—
Higher Instructional Officer	297	<10	—
Instructional Officer 1	1,082	<10	<10
Instructional Officer 2	235	—	—
Catering Manager 3	1	—	—
Chef 1/Chief Cook 1	12	—	—
Chef 2/Chief Cook 2	24	<10	—
Chief Fire Service Officer	1	—	—
Senior Fire Officer	12	—	—
Fire Service Officer 1	34	—	—
Fire Service Officer 2	57	—	—
Fire Service Officer 3	59	—	—
Senior Investigating Officer	12	—	—
Investigating Officer 1	61	—	—
Investigating Officer 2	228	—	—
Museum Technician Grade 2	1	—	—
Museum Technician Grade 3	3	—	—
Museum Support Grade 1	1	—	—
Museum Support Grade 2	3	—	—
Museum Support Grade 3	23	—	<10
Museum Support Grade 4	5	—	—
Museum Support Grade 5	7	—	—
Senior Photographic Officer	9	—	—
Higher Photographic Officer	55	—	<10
Photographic Officer	165	—	<10
Process and Supervisory Group Grade A	7	—	—
Process and Supervisory Group Grade B	33	—	—
Process and Supervisory Group Grade C	117	—	—
Process and Supervisory Group Grade D	311	<10	<10
Process and Supervisory Group Grade E	135	—	<10
Senior Psychologist	21	—	<10
Higher Psychologist	23	—	—
Psychologist (Graduate Trainee)	7	—	—
Stores Officer Grade A	20	—	—
Stores Officer Grade B	131	—	—
Stores Officer Grade C	371	—	<10
Stores Officer Grade D	782	<10	<10
Support Manager 1	9	—	—
Support Manager 2	40	—	—
Support Manager 3	208	<10	<10
Support Grade Band 1	1,205	14	<10
Support Grade Band 2	1,048	37	13
Senior Telecommunication Technical Officer	50	—	—
Higher Telecommunication Technical Officer	166	—	—
Telecommunication Technical Officer	391	<10	—
Assistant Telecommunication Technical Officer	475	<10	<10
Trainee Telecommunication Technical Officer	53	—	—
Communications Officer 1	16	<10	—
Communications Officer 2	47	<10	—
Communications Officer 3	132	<10	—
Communications Officer 4	366	<10	<10
Total Staff in Open Structure and Occupational Groups	74,468	600	658
Departmental Grades	14,168	78	55
Industrial Grades	42,121	322	204
Totals	131,757	1,000	917

Note: There are some 500 Departmental grades and some 850 Industrial grades used in the Ministry of Defence, most of which are managed locally. A detailed breakdown of these could be provided only at disproportionate cost and effort.

[1] Respondents to ethnic minority origin survey.

United States Military Bases

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the United States military bases in the United Kingdom as of 1 December.

Mr. Hanley: As of 1 December 1993, bases and facilities were made available to the United States visiting forces at the following locations in the United Kingdom:

Main Operating Bases
RAF Alconbury
RAF Lakenheath
RAF Mildenhall
RAF Upper Heyford

Standby Deployment Base
RAF Fairford

Storage/Support Facilities
RAF Brawdy
Chilwell
RAF Daws Hill
Eastcote
Felixstowe
RAF Feltwell
RAF Hythe
London HQ USN Europe
RAF Machrihanish
Marchwood
RAF Molesworth
RAF Northwood
Oakington
RAF Spadeadam
RAF St. Mawgan
RAF Watton
RAF Welford
RAF West Ruislip
West Ruislip

Wartime Contingency Hospitals
RAF Arbroath
RAF Bicester
RAF Little Rissington
RAF Nocton Hall
RAF Upwood

NATO Ammunition Depot
NAD Glen Douglas

Communications Facilities
RAF Barford St. John
RAF Barkway
Botley Hill
Bovingdon
RAF Chelveston
RAF Chicksands
Christmas Common
Coldblow
RAF Croughton
RAF Daventry
RAF Dunkirk
RAF Edzell

Menwith Hill Station
RAF Oakhanger
RAF Swingate
RAF Uxbridge

Departmental Objectives

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list his departmental standing objectives.

Mr. Hanley: The current departmental standing objectives have been listed on page 2 of the MOD "Departmental Report 1993"—Cm 2201—a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether quantitative data are used in his assessment of the achievement of departmental standing objectives.

Mr. Hanley: Performance against departmental standing objectives is assessed on the basis of quantitative data where available and the judgment of military and civilian budget holders reports up the management chain.

Performance Targets

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what performance targets have been established in his Department.

Mr. Hanley: Performance targets have been set at all levels in the Department, both in the management plans which set out what budget holders undertake to deliver for their delegated budgets and in job plans for individuals. They could be collated centrally only at disproportionate cost.

Equipment

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria are used to determine the figures provided in table 8, page 18 of Cm. 2201, relating to availability, reliability and maintainability of equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Table 8 on page 18 of Cm 2201 gives figures for the percentage by value of contracts for new equipment projects over £1 million which have provisions for availability, reliability and maintainability. The criteria used to determine the figures are that reliability and maintainability requirements should form essential elements of the contract specification, wherever possible linking payment to the demonstration of satisfactory reliability and maintainability in service. Alternative approaches, including warranties and fixed-price support contracts are used where linkage of payment to demonstration is not practicable.

Chief of the Air Staff

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 6 December, *Official Report,* columns 54-55, what is the number of occasions in each of the last 12 months on which the Chief of the Air Staff has given a personal briefing to *(a)* hon. Members, *(b)* academics and *(c)* members of the media; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Briefings by the Chief of the Air Staff were given as follows:

	MPs	Academics	Media
January	—	—	—
February	—	—	4
March	1	—	3
April	—	—	—
May	1	—	—
June	—	—	—
July	—	—	—
August	—	—	1
September	—	—	—
October	1	—	—
November	—	—	—
December	—	—	—

Mr. David Hart

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 6 December, *Official Report*, columns *54-55*, whether Mr. David Hart was given a briefing by the Chief of the Air Staff as *(a)* an academic or *(b)* a member of the media; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Mr. David Hart was briefed on 27 May by Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief RAF Strike Command because he had published media articles on general defence issues and one particularly about the RAF.

Maralinga

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the ex-gratia payment towards the clean-up of the Maralinga site will be made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley *[pursuant to his answer, 1 December 1993,* column *609]*: The United Kingdom Government agreed in principle on 14 July to make an ex gratia payment of £20,000,000 to the Federal Government of Australia as a contribution to the cost of the further clean-up of the Maralinga site. A note giving effect to this agreement was signed today by the Australian High Commissioner and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office. A copy of the note will be placed in the Library of the House. The payment will be phased over six years beginning on 1 January 1994.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Copyright Libraries

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the copyright libraries entitled to a copy of all books published within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sproat: Under the Copyright Act 1911 publishers are required to deliver, at their own expense, a copy of any new publication to the British library. There are five other copyright libraries: the national libraries of Scotland and Wales; the Bodleian library, Oxford; Cambridge University library; and the library of Trinity college, Dublin. If any of them requests a copy the Copyright Licensing Agency may demand a free copy from the publisher on its behalf.

Overseas Artifacts

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage which artifacts and from which countries, previously held in Britain, have been returned to their countries of origin in the last 10 years; what requests *(a)* have been rejected and *(b)* are currently under consideration; and what is the value of the artifacts concerned.

Mr. Brooke: This information is not available centrally. The artifacts in question are the property of independent institutions and private owners and any requests for their return would normally be directed to them. The Government are not necessarily informed of such requests or their outcome. Even when we have been made aware of requests, the information required could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Laboratories

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many whole-time equivalent staff are currently employed at *(a)* the Warren Spring Laboratory, *(b)* the National Engineering Laboratory and *(c)* the National Physical Laboratory; how many were employed at each laboratory on 31 March 1992 and 31 March 1993; and how many he plans to employ on 31 March 1994.

Mr. Heseltine: The numbers for 31 March 1992 and 1993 and currently are:

	31 March 1992	31 March 1993	Current
Warren Spring Laboratory	321·0	278·0	224·5
National Engineering Laboratory	388·5	363·5	338·0
National Physical Laboratory	807·5	770·0	748·0

Warren Spring Laboratory will be closing on 31 March to be replaced by the new National Environmental Technology Centre, to which a substantial number of its staff will be transferring.

I am currently considering future plans for the other laboratories.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many staff at Warren Spring he presently proposes to transfer to AEA Technology; and which sections, teams or project groups have been named for closure since 1 April.

Mr. McLoughlin: The House is aware that the National Environmental Technology Centre is being created in south Oxfordshire by the bringing together of Warren Spring Laboratory with the environmental technology services of the Atomic Energy Authority. This merger of the country's two major environmental research laboratories will form a single powerful centre of excellence in this field. The merger will take place on 1 April 1994. The turnover of the NETC will be about £20 million to £25 million, compared with £13·5 million at Warren Spring in 1992-93.

The merger will take place in most of the business centres of Warren Spring, accounting for 87 per cent. of the laboratory's work in 1992-93. All the scientific staff working in those business centres have been offered the opportunity to transfer. The numbers finally deciding to transfer from Warren Spring will depend on individual choice, but about 100 are expected to do so.

The business centres which the AEA has decided not to transfer, and which will therefore close on or before 1 April 1994, are:

Heavy Gas Dispersion,
Environmental Advisory Unit
Thermal Processing
Chemical Analysis—quality assurance, inorganic analysis, dispersant evaluation
Effluent treatment—mineral processing
Information systems
Ship Safety
Process Technology—solid/liquid separation

These account for 38 scientific staff. Support activities which will also close are:

Directorate and senior management team
Central services
Finance
Personnel
Technical services
Publications, photography and library.

Technology Transfer

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received on the DTI funding mechanisms for technology transfer; and when he expects such mechanisms to be in place.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government received around 800 representations during the preparation of the White Paper on Science and Technology—"Realising our Potential—A Strategy for Science Engineering and Technology" Cm. 2250. Following publication, I am using seminars to consult industry on the implementation of the new policies.

These consultations are showing that in addition to the range of current technology transfer initiatives, there is scope for further activity, particularly involved business links to provide local delivery. Consultations are in progress on those new ideas, and announcements for pilots are likely in 1994.

Research and Development

Mr. Rendel: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how much he expects his Department to spend on research and development for each year from 1993 to 1997;

(2) how much his Department spent on research and development in each year since 1980.

Mr. Heseltine: The Department of Trade and Industry's expenditure on research and development is recorded in the annual review of Government-funded research and development, copies of which are placed in the Library of the House. The first such review, published in 1983, shows expenditure from 1977-78 onwards. The 1993 review shows planned expenditure up to 1995-96. Revised figures, including plans for 1996-97, will be prepared in light of this year's public expenditure survey and published in the 1994 "Forward Look of Science and Technology", which replaces the annual review.

Trading Standards Officers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, how many trading standards officers there are in non-metropolitan areas of England.

Mr. McLoughlin: There are about 796 qualified trading standards officers in post in England local authorities other than the London and Metropolitan boroughs.

Peat

Mr. Canavan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what funds have been made available to support research into the development and promotion of alternatives to peat; and if he will list the companies, institutes and research establishments which have been supported by these funds.

Mr. McLoughlin: My Department promotes the recyling of waste material, including the composting of its degradable fraction, and has recently funded two projects under DEMOS, the DTI's environmental management options scheme, providing:

(i) A grant of over £400,000 to South West Water, Devon Waste Management and Focsa Services (UK) Ltd., to demonstrate the feasibility of co-composting of Municipal Solid Waste and Sewage Sludge.
(ii) A grant of over £150,000 to Motherwell Bridge Envirotec, Environmental Energy and Newcastle university to demonstrate an anaerobic digestion plant for the treatment of the organic fraction of municipal solid waste.

My Department is also seeking to overcome a major obstacle to increased use of composted materials—the lack of recognised standards—by funding a specialist from Warren Spring laboratory to participate in CEN work to develop European standards for soil conditioners and growing media.

All this work has the potential to result in the development of composted materials which could serve as alternatives to peat.

I should add that the Department of the Environment has the lead on research into composting techniques in the context of waste management, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food also supports some research into growing media.

Textiles

Mr. Garnier: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the Government's policy with regard to the multi-fibre arrangement in the event of the Uruguay round of the GATT not achieving adequate cuts in the high tariff and non-tariff barriers faced by British textile and clothing manufacturers in United Kingdom export markets in the third world and in the emerging economies of the developing world.

Mr. Needham: The Government are working for a balanced outcome to the Uruguay round negotiations as they affect the textile and clothing sector. We have been pressing in particular for a satisfactory outcome reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers as part of an overall settlement including the phase-out of the multi-fibre arrangement and strengthened GATT rules and disciplines.

Ferranti

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information his Department holds on the trading activities of International Signal and Control from 1971 to its purchase by Ferranti in 1987.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Department does not monitor the commercial operations of international organisations, and the information it holds on the trading activities of International Signal and Control Group plc prior to its purchase by Ferranti plc in 1987 is that generally addressed to Ferranti shareholders in a circular dated 29 September 1989 from the chairman of that company.

Ferranti subsequently provided additional information direct to the Serious Fraud Office, which conducted an investigation into the matters of concern outlined by the company.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what communication his Department has had with the office of defence trade control at the United States state department in regard to the collapse of Ferranti.

Mr. Needham: None.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if his Department took any action to block a bid by Thomson CSF for the Ferranti company.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Neither my Department, nor the Office of Fair Trading, was made aware of any proposal by Thomson CSF to bid for Ferranti International.

Manufacturing

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table revising and updating table 2, "Large Fast Growing Sectors", in the world market economies published in 1989 in his Department's report on manufacturing into the late 1990s.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is in the table.

Large fast growing commodity groups in the world market economies[1]

	$ billion	*Per cent. change*	*Percentage UK share of world market*[2]	
SITC	*1990*	*1984-90*	*1984*	*1990*
761 Television receivers	17	[illegible]	7·2	6·7
898 Musical instruments, pts	19	[illegible]	10·7	9·7
896 Works of art etc	14	[illegible]	15·9	25·0
893 Articles of plastic nes	29	215·8	7·6	8·6
726 Printing, bookbinding, machinery, pts	10	199·3	10·8	10·4
752 Automatic data processing equipment	73	194·4	12·6	10·4
714 Engines and motors nes	22	184·3	17·7	15·3
736 Metalworking machine-tools	21	183·4	5·9	6·3
894 Toys, sporting goods, etc	27	181·9	6·7	6·3
792 Aircraft etc	54	180·5	8·8	8·6
831 Travel goods, handbags	10	171·2	6·0	5·6
845 Outerwear knit nonelastic	26	170·6	6·1	6·4
034 Fish, fresh, chilled frozen	16	170·4	4·9	3·7
821 Furniture, parts thereof	31	170·3	7·0	6·7
744 Mechanical handling equ	21	168·1	6·5	7·7
872 Medical instruments nes	10	162·9	6·9	6·0
843 Women's outerwear nonknit	32	159·5	5·2	6·1
741 Heating, cooling equipment	21	156·7	5·1	5·4
759 Office, ADP mch pts, acces	46	156·1	10·6	11·8
533 Pigments, paints, etc	11	154·1	4·9	6·0
764 Telecom, equipment, pts, acc nes	54	151·8	5·0	6·5
842 Men's outerwear not knit	20	144·1	7·5	6·1
773 Electrical distributing equipment	14	141·6	4·7	5·7
745 Nonelec machinery, tools nes	15	136·6	7·4	7·4
772 Switchgear etc, parts nes	36	135·9	6·4	6·4
642 Paper, etc. precut, arts of	13	135·2	8·4	9·6
541 Medicinal, pharmaceutical product	35	132·9	4·8	5·9

[1] Based on world imports; only commodity groups where import value exceeds $10 billion have been included.

[2] United Kingdom imports as a percentage share of world imports.

Source: United Nations International Trade Statistics Yearbook vol 2, 1988 and 1990.

Fireworks

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to review the deregulation of industry, with particular reference to the manufacture of fireworks.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: All regulations having an impact on business are under review as part of a Government-wide initiative to minimise regulatory burdens on business whilst maintaining effective and appropriate safeguards. The manufacture of fireworks is covered by the Explosives Act 1875, which is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. I understand that the Act is currently under review by the Health and Safety Executive, in consultation with interested parties.

Konver Programme

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list, by region, *(a)* the successful bids and their value and *(b)* the unsuccessful bids for Konver funding.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 8 December 1993]*: Lists of both successful and unsuccessful applicants for Konver, European regional development fund and European social fund grants have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The total number of applications was 289. Following the amalgamation of certain projects the total number of applications assessed was 263.

Data Rights

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to introduce data rights for research in the United Kingdom, equivalent to those made available by NASA and the Government of Japan.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 8 December 1993]*: In relation to earth observation satellites, access for researchers at reasonable cost to data resulting from European Space Agency missions is guaranteed by the agency, of which the United Kingdom is a member. In addition, the British National Space Centre is participating in international negotiations to provide for the exchange of data for research purposes between European and non-European missions.

Post Office Finance

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the difference between the planned external finance requirements of the Post Office for 1994-95 in the Financial Statement and Budget report of the previously announced figure; and what part of it represents proceeds from the proposed sale of Parcelforce as mentioned in paragraph 5.42 of the Financial Statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 9 December 1993]*: The 1994-95 external financing limit for the Post Office was set at –£186 million in the 1992 autumn statement. This figure has been revised to –£226 million in the 1993 "Financial Statement and Budget Report." None of this increase represents proceeds from the proposed sale of Parcelforce.

AGRICULTURE

Forestry Commission Land

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list, for each separate piece of land currently owned or leased by the Forestry Commission in East Sussex, West Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight *(a)* its name and *(b)* its area in hectares; and if she will place a map in the Library which names and identifies each of these pieces of land.

Mr. Jack: The Forestry Commission manages the following areas of land in east Sussex, west Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

County	*Area (hectares)*
East Sussex	2,964
Hampshire	34,276
Isle of Wight	1,454
West Sussex	4,054

I have made arrangements for a map showing the location of the individual areas to be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

The more detailed information on the individual areas is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list, for each separate piece of land currently owned or leased by the Forestry Commission in Cleveland, Durham and Northumberland *(a)* its name and *(b)* its area in hectares; and whether she will place a map in the Library which names and identifies each of these pieces of land.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 7 December 1993]:* The Forestry Commission manages the following areas of land in Cleveland, Durham and Northumberland:

County	*Area (hectares)*
Cleveland	493
Durham	3,260
Northumberland	59,249

I have made arrangements for a map showing the location of the individual areas to be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

The more detailed information requested on the individual areas is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list, for each separate piece of land currently owned or leased by the Forestry Commission in Cambridgeshire, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk *(a)* its name and *(b)* its area in hectares; and whether she will place a map in the Library which names and identifies each of these pieces of land.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* The Forestry Commission manages the following areas of land in Cambridgeshire, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk:

County	*Area (hectares)*
Cambridgeshire	682
Essex	775
Norfolk	14,330
Suffolk	9,820

I have made arrangements for a map showing the location of the individual areas to be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

The more detailed information requested on the individual areas is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list, for each separate piece of land currently owned or leased by the Forestry Commission in Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Somerset *(a)* its name and *(b)* its area in hectares; and if she will place a map in the Library which names and identifies each of these pieces of land.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* The Forestry Commission manages the following areas of land in Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Somerset.

County	*Area (hectares)*
Avon	324
Cornwall	3,290
Devon	10,123
Dorset	7,030
Somerset	4,440

I have made arrangements for a map showing the location of the individual areas to be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

The more detailed information requested in the individual areas is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Bananas

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the dispute between Geest and Fyffes and Jamaican Producers regarding banana licences and transportation arrangements.

Mr. Jack: Under the new EC banana regime, which came into force on 1 July 1993, the issuing of licences to import bananas into the Community to companies who apply in the United Kingdom is the responsibility of the Intervention Board executive agency. The board's officials have issued licences for the second half of this year entirely in accordance with the provisions of Council Regulation 404/93 and Commission Regulations 1442/93 and 1443/93. The dispute over licences between Geest and Fyffes and Jamaica Producers is a commercial matter which it is for the companies themselves to resolve.

Beef Premium Payments

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how long farmers in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales had to wait on average for payment of beef premium payments; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The EC rules do not allow beef premium payments until 1 November, when a 60 per cent. advance can be made. In England, payments under the beef special premium scheme began in November, and by 8 December, some 40 per cent. of claimants had been paid advances. In Wales, advance payments are expected to begin by early January at the very latest. In both England and Wales, advance payments under the suckler cow premium scheme are expected to start in January.

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when farmers in south-east Cornwall can expect to receive the initial payment of their special beef premium; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The EC rules do not allow advance payments of beef special premium to be made before 1 November. By 8 December, some 40 per cent. of claimants in England had been paid advances. In Devon and Cornwall, the proportion of claimants paid by 8 December was 43 per cent. which was more than the average. Remaining claimants will be paid as quickly as possible.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 13 December 1993

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Surveillance

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if citizens making their houses available to the police for surveillance are individually identified in court.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Where there is a prosecution in a case in which individuals have assisted the police by making their houses available for the purpose of surveillance it is open to the prosecution to apply to the court before trial for a ruling that this fact should not be disclosed to the defence. The court's duty is then to balance the public interest of non-disclosure against the interest of securing fairness to the defendant. If the court decides against disclosure the identity of the house occupier would not then be revealed in court. If an order for disclosure is made it is open to the prosecution to abandon the case.

Leave to Enter

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people arriving on a cross-channel ferry have been refused leave to enter the United Kingdom and removed each month since May at *(a)* Dover western docks, *(b)* Dover eastern docks, *(c)* Folkestone, *(d)* Ramsgate and *(e)* Newhaven.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is given in the table.

Passengers refused leave to enter, and removed from, selected ports

Number of persons

	Dover West	*Dover East*	*Folkestone*	*Ramsgate*	*Newhaven*
1993					
May	21	284	2	9	15
June	18	295	1	7	2
July	41	367	2	13	15
August	33	338	1	7	12
September	34	333	5	5	34
October	13	332	5	3	14
November	4	n/a	4	n/a	7

n/a=not yet available.

Prisoner Discharges

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the money allowance-grant that is given to a prison inmate who is discharged from a prison in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 13 December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the grant paid to prisoners discharged from prisons in England and Wales.

Most prisoners serving sentences over 14 days are eligible for a discharge grant. Exceptions include those with substantial resources or discharged to hospital. The rate of the grant generally corresponds to one week's Income Support and is currently £44·00 (age 25 and over) or £34·55 (age 18 to 24). Prisoners who need accommodation arranged for them on release are eligible for a higher rate, currently £90·05.

Prisoners (except deportees) not eligible for a discharge grant receive payment of fares and a subsistence allowance to cover their journey to a destination in the British Isles.

Deportations

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been deported, so far, in 1993; and how many people were deported from the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1991 and *(b)* 1992.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The number of persons removed from the United Kingdom under the deportation process was 2,220 in 1991, 2,453 in 1992, and 1,654—provisional figure—for January to September 1993.

Requirement to Leave

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many nationals of EC countries were made subject to a requirement to leave the United Kingdom for *(a)* each of the three years preceding 1993 and *(b)* for each month since May 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information available is given in the table.

EC nationals[1] require to leave the United Kingdom

Number of persons

	Passengers refused leave to enter and removed	*Illegal entrants removed[2]*	*Persons removed under the deportation process[3]*
1990	145	8	59
1991	88	7	51
1992	229	3	76
1993			
January to March	49	3	30
April	10	1	18
May	23		
June	12		
July	17	..	11
August	28		
September	19		

.. not yet available.

[1] Including persons who claimed to be EC nationals.

[2] Including persons who departed voluntarily.

Life Sentences

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average life sentence served by *(a)* men and *(b)* women who were sentenced to life imprisonment since 1970.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 13 December 1993:

AVERAGE TIME SERVED BY LIFE SENTENCE PRISONERS SENTENCED SINCE 1970

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the average time served by *(a)* men and *(b)* women sentenced to life imprisonment since 1970.

The available information is published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales" (Tables 8.4 and 8.5 of the latest volume, for 1991, Cm. 2157), a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library. Information for men and women released in 1992 was given in response to a question from Mrs. Mahon MP (Vol. 229, Col. 856, Written Answers on 27 July 1993) and I attach a copy of the reply for ease of reference.

Shotguns

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a table showing the major occupation of shotgun certificate holders.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not available centrally.

Firearms

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many firearms, by category, are registered as being in private ownership.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The estimated number of firearms which were held on a firearm certificate in England and Wales on 31 December 1992 is 358,000. Information as to the categories of firearms held on certificate is not available centrally.

Baroness Thatcher

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those police authorities which have asked publisher Harper Collins for a contribution to the cost of policing visits made by Baroness Thatcher to promote her memoirs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not held centrally.

New Prisons

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list any sites being considered for new prisons in south Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Alex Carlile, dated 13 December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the sites being considered for new prisons in South Wales.

Long term projections of prison population indicate that 800 additional prisoner places will be required in South Wales by the end of the decade. A new prison is needed, therefore, which will provide relief for Cardiff and Swansea prisons and reduce the need to send many prisoners from this area to other prisons, sometimes as far as Dartmoor and The Verne in Dorset. The Prison Service recognises that it should, wherever possible, hold prisoners close to their homes. A new prison in South Wales is vital to this key long-term objective.

A search was undertaken to find a suitable site for a new prison in South Wales. In addition to being of an adequate size and shape, together with suitable ground conditions for substantial buildings, it had to be well located in terms of the distribution of population, access to the major road and motorway system in South Wales and public transport. The Parc Hospital site at Bridgend was identified as an ideal location and will be available for use later next year. The purchase of the site is being negotiated and a planning notice for the proposed prison has been served in compliance with Welsh Office Circular 37/84. This is now being considered by the local planning authority, Ogwr Borough Council.

Prisoners (Benefits)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provisions are made for prisoners to apply for social security benefits before release, to enable any such benefits to be received immediately upon release; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Robert Maclennan, dated 13 December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking what provisions are made for prisoners to apply for social security benefits before release.

Governors are encouraged to ensure that, whenever possible, prisoners are given the opportunity prior to discharge to seek advice about their entitlement to social security benefits on release. There are no arrangements for prisoners to make a claim while still in custody. Prisoners are advised to visit their local benefits office as soon as possible after release. They are provided with a form to introduce them to the Department of Social Security. Many qualify for a discharge grant, which provides financial assistance until they are able to lodge a claim.

Guidance on benefits is given in the Prisoners Information Pack, which is available to all prisoners. The Prison Service are currently considering with the Benefits Agency whether the arrangements for providing advice to prisoners on benefits to which they may properly be entitled on release can be improved.

Murder

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of individuals convicted for murder since the abolition of the death sentence who, on release, have committed murder again.

Mr. Maclean: From the information to date seven individuals convicted of murder in England and Wales since the abolition of the death penalty had been convicted again of murder in England and Wales following release as follows:

Case	*Date of first murder*	*Date of second murder*
First	1969	1986
Second	1971	1990
Third	1972	1988
Fourth	1972	1992
Fifth	1974	1985
Sixth	1979	1989
Seventh	1980	1992

In addition, a further case involved a murder in England in 1972, with a subsequent murder taking place in Scotland in 1983. One person convicted of a murder which took place in 1981 in Northern Ireland was subsequently convicted of a second murder in England which took place in 1992.

Inquests (Multiple Deaths)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what circumstances a coroner may adjourn an inquest into multiple deaths without reconvening its sitting to complete his investigations.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Under section 16(1) of the Coroners Act 1988, if a coroner is informed that a person has been charged with the murder, manslaughter or infanticide of the deceased, or with an offence directly involving or alleged to have been committed in circumstances connected with the death of the deceased, he must, in the absence of reason to the contrary, adjourn the inquest until after the conclusion of the relevant criminal proceedings. Under section 16(3) of the Act, the coroner may resume the adjourned inquest after the conclusion of the criminal proceedings if, in his opinion, there is sufficient cause to do so.

Electoral Boundaries

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to respond to the final suggestions for boundaries made by the European Parliamentary Committee for Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend will pay prompt attention to the report of the Committee when he receives it. I understand that that is likely to be later this month.

Police Statistics

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, for each police authority in England and Wales, *(a)* the increase in authorised police establishment requested and *(b)* the increase granted by him in each of the past five years, in both cases making it clear whether supernumeraries are included or excluded from each figure.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I will write to the hon. Member.

National Public Alert System

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce a national public alert system.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It was announced on 12 November 1992 that the obsolescent national siren warning system was to be closed down and that future national arrangements for warning the public would use radio and television broadcasts. Work is in hand on the new system.

Re-entry Visas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the Government's policy on issuing re-entry visas to those settled in the United Kingdom and who intend to return within short periods; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Re-entry visas were abolished in May 1991. Those settled in the United Kingdom are however exempt from the requirement to obtain a visa if they return to the United Kingdom for settlement within two years of departure.

PRIME MINISTER

European Union

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government in respect of the admission of states in the Visegrad group into the European Union; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Copenhagen European Council agreed in June that the Central European associate countries—including the four states in the Visegrad group—should be admitted to the European Union, if they so wished, as soon as they are ready to take on the obligations of membership. The Government had worked hard to achieve this outcome, and warmly welcomed it.

The associate countries are now beginning to prepare themselves, economically and politically. The United Kingdom is helping this process both bilaterally and through the European Union.

Honours System

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the progress of his proposals for the honours system announced on 4 March.

The Prime Minister: The changes to the honours system outlined in my statement to the House on 4 March have been put into effect. I plan to report to the House shortly on the review of the numbers and distribution of honours.

Northern Ireland (Investment)

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the companies from other EC countries which have brought inward investment into Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the last 10 years.

The Prime Minister: According to records maintained by the Department of Trade and Industry's Invest in Britain Bureau, 879 EC-owned companies have set up in the United Kingdom in the last 10 years. These figures are based on information provided by the companies at the time of the announcement to invest. There is no requirement to notify the Department, and so the figures include only those projects where the Invest in Britain

Bureau and its regional partners were involved, or which have come to their notice. They take no account of subsequent developments.

At the request of the companies concerned, some names are commercially confidential, and cannot be quoted. However, a list of quotable companies has been placed in the Library of the House.

Cash Limits

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister what will be the cash limit on the cost of running his office in 1994-95.

The Prime Minister: Financial provision for the running of my Office in 1994-95 is subject to the budgetary planning arrangements operated jointly by the Cabinet Office and Office of Public Service and Science. Internal allocation of the 1993 survey settlement is not yet complete. Provision is expected to be similar to that for the current financial year.

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister what information ministerial special advisers who resign or retire are required to provide concerning their subsequent employment; and to whom.

The Prime Minister: None.

NATO

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister if it is the policy of Her Majesty's Government to support the admission of states in the Visegrad group into membership of NATO; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: We and our NATO allies have repeatedly stated that NATO is not a closed shop. We do not therefore rule out the possibility of new members at some time in the future. But the question of NATO enlargement is a complex one. Our overriding objective in considering it must be to enhance security and stability across the whole of Europe, while at the same time ensuring that we do not create new divisions or erect new barriers.

Morality

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Prime Minister which of Her Majesty's Government's policies since 1979 have attempted to influence moral behaviour; and what assessment he has made of each of those policies.

The Prime Minister: Policies are designed to influence moral behaviour where it is in the national interest that they should do so. Our policies on law and order are perhaps the most obvious example.

No. 10 Downing Street

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister how much has been spent on decorating and furnishing No. 10 Downing street since November 1990.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 30 November 1993]*: Figures are available only on a financial year basis. The expenditure on new works, furniture and fittings in the state rooms, on the catering facilities, and in the offices and other rooms in 10 Downing street from April 1991 to March 1993 was £292,000.

EDUCATION

Assisted Places

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 6 December, *Official Report*, column *31*, what information his Department has on the place of residence of pupils under the assisted places scheme at the time of their original application for an assisted place; what steps his Department takes to ensure that applicants for assisted places are genuinely entitled to a place under the scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Information about the place of residence of pupils at the time of their application for an assisted place is not held by the Department. It is for participating schools themselves to select pupils for assisted places, but the Department ensures that they target able children from families with low incomes, and also that a substantial majority of assisted pupils in any school have previously attended a maintained school.

To ensure that participating schools carry out assessments of income correctly, the Department also issues regular comprehensive guidance and carries out random audit surveys of income assessments. These surveys, together with the statistical information collected, show that schools are indeed administering the scheme properly and targeting the pupils for whom the scheme is intended.

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 6 December, *Official Report*, column *31*, what was the total cost to public funds of the assisted places scheme at Wolverhampton grammar school in each year since 1981.

Mr. Forth: The information requested for the past five years is given in the table. Data for earlier years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Academic year	*DFE expenditure £000s*
1988-89	485
1989-90	507
1990-91	600
1991-92	702
1992-93	[1]760

[1] Estimate pending final claim.

School Inspectors

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will list by local education authority area *(a)* the number of Office for Standards in Education formal inspections and *(b)* the number of unannounced visits carried out so far.

(2) if he will list by local education authority area the number of formal inspections planned till the end of 1994.

Mr. Robin Squire: The arrangements for inspecting schools under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 are a matter for Ofsted.

I have asked Professor Sutherland to write to the hon. Member.

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

Mr. Forth: In the financial year 1990-91, the Government car service for Ministers cost the Department £134,191·00, including value added tax, for five vehicles. There will in addition have been a cost to the Department in transporting ministerial boxes and other papers to Ministers; it is unfortunately not possible to disaggregate this figure from other costs.

ENVIRONMENT

Homelessness

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many hostel spaces for the homeless in Doncaster have been supported by his Department in *(a)* 1990-91, *(b)* 1991-92, *(c)* 1992-93 and *(d)* the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The Government provide resources, through the programmes of the Housing Corporation, for capital and revenue funding towards housing associations schemes for people with special needs. The information which follows gives the number of bed-spaces in such schemes in the metropolitan borough of Doncaster which have received revenue funding for that year and the amount of capital funding which has contributed to the addition of new bed-spaces in that year.

	Bed-spaces	*Revenue funding £*	*Capital funding £*
1990-91	37	92,000	206,000
1991-92	43	137,000	128,000
1992-93	54	144,000	382,000
1993-94	58	158,000	116,000

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of hostel accommodation beds available for elderly homeless people at risk in central London in November 1991, November 1992 and November 1993.

Sir George Young: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, what discussions he has held regarding provision to replace the beds for the homeless lost in Central London on the closure of the Salvation Army hostel in Great Peter street.

Sir George Young: The responsibility for the funding of new provision through housing associations is vested in the Housing Corporation, which I understand has had discussions with the Salvation Army about the future of the Great Peter street site. More generally, under the Government's rough sleepers initiative, the Housing Corporation is planning to provide funding for about 1,500 new bedspaces in Central London over a three-year period beginning this year.

Ministers (Foreign Visits)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the Ministers in his Department who since June 1987 have visited *(a)* Saudi Arabia, *(b)* Malaysia, *(c)* Singapore and *(d)* South Africa on official business; and which such visits included party political activities in addition to official duties.

Mr. Gummer: My Department's central records, which only go back to 1 April 1990, show that the only such visits were by my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) to Malaysia and Lord Strathclyde to South Africa.

As far as I am aware these visits included no party political activities. The visit to Malaysia was to attend a meeting with developing countries prior to the UNCED summit in Rio de Janeiro, whilst Lord Strathclyde's visit to South Africa was to promote export opportunities for the United Kingdom water industry.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has received on the matters discussed and decisions taken at the workshop on national plans for sustainable development held by the Development Assistance and Environmental Policies Committees of the OECD in Ottawa in October.

Mr. Yeo: The workshop was attended by representatives of OECD and other Governments, including officials from my Department and the Overseas Development Administration, and by non-governmental organisations (notably the UK-based International Institute for Environment and Development and the Overseas Development Institute) and by international agencies.

It was not a decision-taking forum. It compared the experience of different OECD countries *(a)* in preparing sustainable development strategies to follow up the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and *(b)* in giving assistance with such plans to developing nations. The general view was that countries were likely to produce a variety of types of strategies and plans dealing with sustainable development, economic development, and environment and conservation policies, reflecting their different circumstances; the OECD however could try to assist international discussions, for example in the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, by drawing up its own guidelines on the common features that it might expect to find in strategies or plans that were intended as contributions to sustainable development. Another conclusion was that governments must integrate their policies for economic development and environmental protection.

Packaging Waste

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for monitoring the implementation of the voluntary plan which he has asked the packaging industry to draw up to recover between 50 per cent. and 75 per cent. of packaging waste; what action he proposes to take in the event of the packaging industry failing to meet the targets drawn up by him; and if he will introduce legal targets for the avoidance, minimisation and recycling of packaging waste and measures to boost markets for recycling products.

Mr. Yeo: We believe that a voluntary approach, such as the producer responsibility initiative for packaging waste, will enable industry to devise the most cost effective and flexible methods for securing the Government's objectives for the recovery and recycling of packaging waste and for the reduction at source of packaging. Under producer responsibility we have asked industry to present by Christmas a phased plan to achieve our targets and we will examine their proposals very closely to satisfy ourselves that they are feasible. However, we have also made it clear to industry that if they are not able to satisfy us that they will succeed on a voluntary basis we will consider legislation.

Air Sampling

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the locations of the air sampling station used for official purposes in Greater London; and what assessment he has made as to the adequacy of the range of samples for the safeguarding of the public.

Mr. Yeo: The Government are advised on their monitoring strategy by the Department of the Environment's independent export review groups: the quality of urban air review group; the photochemical oxidants review group; and the review group on acid rain. Advice concerning potential health effects is provided by Department of Health independent export groups, the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants and the Committee on Medical Aspects of Air Pollution Episodes.

The location of the Department of the Environment's automatic and non-automatic air quality monitoring sites in Greater London are given in the tables.

Site type	*Location*
Automatic	
Enhanced urban site	Camden (Bloomsbury)
Hydrocarbon site	Camden (University College)
Hydrocarbon site	Greenwich (Eltham)
NOx, O_3, CO, SO_2	Westminster (Bridge Place, Victoria)
NOx, CO	Kensington and Chelsea (Earls Court)
NOx, CO, SO_2	Kensington and Chelsea (Cromwell Road)
Non-automatic	
Smoke and sulphur dioxide[1]	Croydon
	Ealing (2)
	Enfield
	Greenwich (2)
	Hackney
	Harrow
	Islington
	Kensington and Chelsea
	Lambeth
	London (City)
	Redbridge
	Tower Hamlets
	Westminster
Nitrogen dioxide[1] (4 diffusion tubes in each borough)	Barking
	Barnet
	Brent
	Bromley
	Camden
	Ealing
	Enfield
	Greenwich
	Hackney
	Havering
	Hillingdon
	Islington
	Kensington and Chelsea
	Lambeth
	London (City)
	Southwark
	Waltham Forest
	Westminster
Toxic organic micropollutants	Marsham Street, Victoria, Westminster
Multi-element and lead	Neasden, Brent
	Cromwell Road, Kensington and Chelsea
	Bridge Place, Victoria, Westminster

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[1] Monitoring undertaken in collaboration with local authorities.

Bathing Water

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the quality of sea water off the beaches in and adjacent to the Castle Point constituency meets the European Community directive on bathing water standards.

Mr. Yeo: The results of water quality monitoring in the 1993 season for bathing waters in the area are shown in the Department's press release No. 818 copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the results of the study into the effects on health of sea water bathing around the British coastline which was conducted by pilot study in collaboration with the University of Wales water research centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: A report on the pilot study was published on 19 June 1990 and placed in the Library.

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the results of the sea water bathing health study which took place at Southend on Sea on 4 July 1992; and what implications can be drawn from that study on the advisability of sea water bathing in and around the Castle Point constituency.

Mr. Yeo: The study at Southend in 1992 forms part of the four-year programme of research at a number of locations on which the final report will be published shortly.

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if it is safe to bathe from beaches serving the coastline in and adjacent to the Castle Point constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Safety will depend on a large number of factors including wind, wave and tidal conditions and the competence of the bather. Methods of risk assessment are described in "Safety on British Beaches" published by

RoSPA and RLSS UK. The advice from the Department of Health is that there is minimal risk of serious disease from swimming in British coastal waters.

Civil Servants

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each civil service grade in his Department *(a)* the total number of people employed, *(b)* the total number of black people and *(c)* the total number of Asians.

Mr. Gummer: The total numbers, and the numbers of black and Asian staff[1] at each grade level are as follows:

	Total in grade	*Black*	*Asians (excluding Chinese)*
Grade 1	1	0	0
Grade 2	7	0	0
Grade 3	34	0	0
Grade 4	7	0	0
Grade 5	144	0	0
Grade 6	309	1	0
per cent.		0·3	
Grade 7	776	8	2
per cent.		1·0	0·3
SEO and equivalent	740	3	12
per cent.		0·4	1·6
HEO and equivalent	981	18	24
per cent.		1·8	2·4
EO and equivalent	1,224	28	42
per cent.		2·3	3·4
AO and equivalent	1,601	131	76
per cent.		8·2	4·7
AA and equivalent	790	65	36
per cent.		8·2	4·6
Total	6,614	254	192
per cent		3·8	2·9

[1] Figures are for permanent full time and part-time non-industrial staff, including those in agencies based on those who have responded to ethnic origin surveys as at 1 October 1993. Respondents account for 91 per cent. of all staff; a total of 510 respondents—7·7 per cent. of all staff overall —are of ethnic minority origin.

"London: Making the Best Better"

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total amount paid to the *Evening Standard* for distributing and advertising the questionnaire and document "London: Making the Best Better"; if separate amounts where payable for (i) distribution and (ii) advertising; if any advertisements were provided free of charge as part of a distribution package; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Information about the amount paid to the *Evening Standard* is commercial in confidence.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a full list of all polling organisations who were consulted about draft copies, or asked to undertake pilot studies, in connection with his questionnaire accompanying "London: Making the Best Better"; what was the total cost involved in such pilot studies or consultations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The organisations invited to tender to undertake a pilot study on the questionnaire accompanying the document "London: Making the Best Better" were MORI, NOP and the London Research Centre. The contract was awared to MORI, at a total cost of £4,500 including VAT.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what who was responsible for printing copies of the documen, "London: Making the Best Better" and the accompanying questionnaire.

Mr. Gummer: The Department of the Environment was responsible for printing both the booklet amd the questionnaire. The work was competitively tendered and the contract awarded to Flair Press Ltd.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the task of analysing replies to the document "London: Making the Best Better" has been put out to tender.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer10 December 1993]:* No. The analysis of the replies is being undertaken within my Department.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many replies so far received to the document "London: Making the Best Better" questionnaire have been deemed invalid.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* Of about 6,500 replies received so far, under 30 are unusable.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider including within the remit of the new agency for environmental protection responsibility for the promotion of recycling and environmentally friendly technology.

Mr. Yeo: The proposed environment agency will bring together the work of the National Rivers Authority, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the local authority waste regulators. The detailed functions, powers and duties of this new agency are still under consideration.

Sewage Sludge

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the successive estimates given by his Department of the cost of ending sewage sludge dumping in Britain, together with the names of the external consultants employed to assist with the preparation of such estimates.

Mr. Yeo: The Department said in October 1990 in evidence to the House of Lords Committee on the European Communities, that the initial estimate was of the order of £200 million. In the document "Paying for Quality" published by the Director General for Water Services in July 1993 an estimate of capital costs of around £440 million was given. Further estimates are now being made by the sewerage undertakers in preparation for their submissions to the director general in the context of the current periodic review of price limits.

Coal Workings (Toxic Leaks)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he plans to ensure that leakage of toxic substances from coal workings will continue to be dealt with following privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: It is for mineowners to ensure that they comply with any discharge consents determined by the National Rivers Authority. The Government will ensure that British Coal's current responsibilities with regard to the physical legacy of mining will be carried forward after privatisation.

Harzardous Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements will be put in place to replace Directive 78/319/EEC on toxic and dangerous waste.

Mr. Yeo: The Council of Ministers has agreed that member states will continue to apply the provisions of this directive, which is repealed on 12 December, until the Hazardous Waste Directive—91/689/EEC—comes into force in the spring of 1995. In the United Kingdom this agreement will be effected by retaining waste management controls including the 1980 Special Waste Regulations. The regulations will be revised to implement the new directive; they will be the subject of future consultation.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the United Kingdom's submission to the European Commission under article 37, provisions of the Euratom treaty concerning radioactive waste discharges from THORP.

Mr. Yeo: The "General Data" required to be provided to the EC Commission under article 37 of the Euratom treaty on the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield, have been placed in the Library of the House. The Commission gave a favourable opinion on this plant as published in the *Official Journal of the European Communities* on 21 May 1992.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what expenditure was incurred by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in each of the financial years 1991-92 and 1992-93, and what is the projected expenditure for 1993-94, on work contracted out in sampling and monitoring;

(2) what expenditure was incurred by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in each of the financial years 1991-92 and 1992-93, and what is the projected expenditure for 1993-94, on work contracted out in research on areas other than preparation for technical guidance;

(3) what expenditure was incurred by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in each of the financial years 1991-92 and 1992-93, and what is the projected expenditure for 1993-94, on work contracted out in information technology;

(4) what expenditure was incurred by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in each of the financial years 1991-92 and 1992-93, and what is the projected expenditure for 1993-94, on work contracted out in preparation for technical guidance;

(5) what expenditure was incurred by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in each of the financial years 1991-92 and 1992-93, and what is the projected expenditure for 1993-94, on work contracted out in management consultancy services other than information technology.

Mr. Yeo: The information is as follows:

£ million

	1991-92	*1992-93*	*Projected 1993-94*
Sampling and monitoring	1·3	1·6	2·0
Research	6·0	4·9	4·0
Information technology	0·4	1·4	1·4
Technical guidance	0·6	1·0	0·4
Management consultancy	0·3	0·7	0·9

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the current minimum standards of qualification and industrial experience required by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution for new entrants *(a)* to the pollution inspector grade and *(b)* to the assistant pollution inspector grade; and if he will make a statement on planned changes in these requirements.

Mr. Yeo: New entrant pollution inspectors and assistant pollution inspectors require a relevant honours degree or equivalent qualification. They must also possess relevant professional experience—normally at least five years for pollution inspectors and two years for assistant pollution inspectors—ideally in a process industry. In addition, they must hold a current United Kingdom driving licence. There are no plans to change these requirements.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the salary costs of civil service staff working for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in each of the financial years 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94, and what are the projected salary costs for 1993-94, for *(a)* inspectoral staff and *(b)* all other staff.

Mr. Yeo: The information is as follows—in £ million:

	1991-92	*Projected 1992-93*	*1993-94*
Inspectors' salaries	4·5	5·3	7·2
Other salaries	2·1	3·3	4·6

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of external entrants to *(a)* the pollution inspector grade and *(b)* to the assistant pollution inspector grade in each year since 1984; and if he will make a statement on planned changes to the ratio of PIs to APIs at recruitment.

Mr. Yeo: The pollution inspector and assistant pollution inspector grades were not established until 1989 and 1990 respectively. Recruitment since then is as follows:

	Number of external recruits	
Date of recruitment campaign	*PI*	*API*
1989	8	—
1990	36	7
1991	32	9
1992	24	1

Recruitment from each campaign is geared to HMIP's needs at the time and not to any predetermined PI/API ratio.

Correspondence

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to give a substantive reply to the matters raised with him in a letter dated 16 October by Occan and Morton consultants of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Mr. Baldry: The matters raised in this letter have already been dealt with in official correspondence and in correspondence from the authors of the report by Risk and Policy Analysts Ltd.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the level of funding for the National Rivers Authority in 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Yeo: Grant-in-aid paid to the National Rivers Authority was £99·518 million in 1990-91, £83·850 million in 1991-92 and £81·802 million in 1992-93. The reductions are more than offset by increases in income from non-grant sources. Expenditure on grant-aided functions increased by £14 million to £188 million between 1990-91 and 1992-93.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the expected level of funding for the National Rivers Authority in 1994 and 1995.

Mr. Yeo: The public expenditure plans announced on 30 November envisage grant-in-aid funding to the National Rivers Authority of £67·861 million in 1994-95 and £59·876 million in 1995-96. Year on year reductions in grant support largely reflect efficiency savings, and increases in forecast income.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement of the reasons for the cuts in National Rivers Authority funding for 1993-94.

Mr. Yeo: Since the 1992 autumn statement there have been no reductions in grant-in-aid provision for the National Rivers Authority for 1993-94. However, I understand that the authority may underspend its provision.

Ecclesiastical Buildings

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he is considering in relation to the way in which listed building consent is unnecessary in connection with ecclesiastical buildings owned by the Church of England.

Mr. Baldry: Responsibility for the subject of this question is a matter for the Secretary of State for National Heritage.

Urban Regeneration Agency

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations the Urban Regeneration Agency has had with local authorities; and if he will list those authorities.

Mr. Baldry: David Taylor, the chief executive, and his senior staff are undertaking an extensive programme of regional visits to help inform the development of English Partnerships—the Urban Regeneration Agency—strategy. On each visit they have met representatives from several of the region's local authorities. I will ask Mr. Taylor to write to the hon. Member with a list of the local authorities concerned. Mr. Taylor is also about to meet representatives from local authority associations and individual authorities to discuss the development of a unified financing regime for English Partnerships. In addition, my Department has consulted all local authorities on our draft guidance to English Partnerships which was published in August 1993.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment where the Urban Regeneration Agency is to be based.

Mr. Baldry: English Partnerships—the Urban Regeneration Agency—will have a strong regional structure including a small London office. Its central administrative functions will be based outside London. Other decisions on the locations of its offices have yet to be taken.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on progress in establishing the Urban Regeneration Agency;

(2) if he will state the budget for 1993-94 and 1994-95 for the Urban Regeneration Agency.

Mr. Baldry: The Urban Regeneration Agency, under its new name of English Partnerships, was launched on 10 November. It has taken over from my Department responsibility for the city grant programme with a budget for the remainder of 1993-94 of £34 million. From April 1994, it will incorporate the derelict land grant and English Estates programmes. For 1994-95, English Partnerships will have a budget of around £250 million including grant-in-aid and estimated receipts from its own activities and the European Union.

City Pride

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the budget for city pride for the years 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr. Baldry: No specific resources are set aside for city pride.

Allerton Estate, Bradford

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to announce his decision in relation to the estate action bid, submitted by Bradford council, to regenerate the Allerton estate; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I expect to announce decisions on this and other bids for estate action resources later this month along with local authority HIP allocations.

Local Government Review

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the more strategic functions which will have to be done at a level above unitary councils referred to in the Minister's letter of 22 November to all hon. Members.

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Planning had land use planning particularly in mind. Annex B of the policy guidance which we have issued to the Local Government Commission suggests that shared arrangements may also be necessary for functions like transport planning, library and archive services, or emergency planning. Paragraph 17 of that guidance draws attention to the special position of law and order services, where the combining of local government areas may be necessary in order to preserve appropriate structures.

Ozone-depleting Substances

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to imposing a ban on the sale of fridges that use ozone-depleting substances and global warming gases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The production of chlorofluorocarbons is to be phased out in 1995, and the use within the European Community of hydrochlorofluorocarbons in 2015. The use of HCFC's as refrigerants in domestic fridges and freezers will be banned from 1996, and in industrial refrigeration from 2000. There are no restrictions on the use of HFC's as refrigerants. These have some global warming potential but are essential to enable the industry to move away from ozone-depleting CFC's and HCFC's.

These controls provide strong encouragement to the fridge manufacturing industry to move out of ozone-depleting substances. A ban on sales would not conform to current deregulation initiatives, nor to our commitments under the Montreal protocol. It would threaten free trade within the single market. It would cost jobs and severely hamper the competitiveness of British industry. For these reasons, the Government do not feel that a ban on sales would be appropriate.

Housing

Mr. Milligan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the names of the authorities to be included in the programme for housing transfers by councils in 1994-95

Sir George Young: I am today announcing the names of the 12 authorities who will be able to proceed, on a voluntary basis and subject to the approval of their tenants, with proposals to transfer their housing stock to housing associations during 1994-95.

I am pleased that 14 authorities responded to our invitation and that, as a result of an expanded programme, it has been possible to programme some 50,000 dwellings.

The 12 authorities which have successfully gained a place on the 1994-95 disposals programme, together with the 15 intended recipient housing associations are as follows:

(a) (i) a disposal by Basingstoke and Deane borough council to Basingstoke and Upper Test Housing Association of not more than 4,900 dwelling houses;
    (ii) a disposal by Basingstoke and Deane borough council to Basingstoke and North Hampshire Housing Association of not more than 4,800 dwelling houses;
(b) a disposal by Castle Point borough council to Castle Point Housing Association of not more than 1,900 dwelling houses;
(c) (i) a disposal by Cherwell district council to Banbury Homes Housing Association of not more than 3,483 dwelling houses;
    (ii) a disposal by Cherwell district council to Cherwell Valley Housing Association of not more than 3,489 dwelling houses;
(d) a disposal by Harborough district council to South Leicestershire Housing Association of not more than 2,853 dwelling houses;
(e) a disposal by Maldon district council to Plume Housing Association of not more than 2,100 dwelling houses;
(f) a disposal by Malvern Hills district council to Elgar Housing Association of not more than 4,900 dwelling houses;
(g) a disposal by Mid Beds district council to Mid Beds Housing Association of not more than 3,015 dwelling houses;
(h) a disposal by North Dorset district council to North Dorset Housing Association of not more than 3,000 dwelling houses;
(i) a disposal by Thanet district council to Thanet Community Housing Association of not more than 1,760 dwelling houses;
(j) a disposal by Vale of White Horse district council to the Vale Housing Association of not more than 5,000 dwelling houses;
(k) a disposal by Walsall metropolitan borough council to Beechdale Community Housing Association of not more than 1,548 dwelling houses;
(l) (i) a disposal by Wychavon district council to Evesham and Pershore Housing Association of not more than 4,144 dwelling houses; and
    (ii) a disposal by Wychavon district council to Droitwich Spa and Rural Housing Association of not more than 2,626 dwelling houses.

The programme comprises some 50,000 dwellings valued at more than £560 million.

Section 135 of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993 enables the Secretary of State to control housing stock disposals through this annual programme.

Construction Industry

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received a copy of the interim report by Sir Michael Latham to the joint review of procurement and contractual arrangements in the United Kingdom construction industry.

Mr. Baldry: Sir Michael Latham has now presented his interim report, which was due before the end of the year, and I have received a copy. Copies of the report have been placed in the Library.

I announced the appointment of Sir Michael as the independent reviewer for the joint Government/industry review of procurement and contractual arrangements in the United Kingdom construction industry to the House on 5 July this year.

Sir Michael's final report will be completed in July 1994 and will contain recommendations to Government and other bodies about practical reforms to reduce conflict and litigation and to encourage productivity and competitiveness.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases the Crown Prosecution Service has not brought to court in each of the last seven years for which figures are available.

The Attorney-General: The number of defendants whose case did not proceed in each of the last seven years was:

	Numbers
[1]1987	118,991
1988	194,693
1989	213,965
1990	227,489
1991	262,139
1992	281,121
[2]1993	218,466

[1] April to December.

[2] January to September.

These figures include cases where proceedings were dropped by the CPS, cases where the prosecution was unable to proceed because the defendant had died or could not be traced, and cases adjourned sine die.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Attorney-General what was the level of expenditure by the Crown Prosecution Service for each of the last seven years for which figures are available.

The Attorney-General: Gross expenditure by the Crown Prosecution Service from its two votes in each of the last seven years was as follows:

	£'000
[1]1986-87	74,153
1987-88	133,840
1988-89	156,882
1989-90	184,141
1990-91	213,431
1991-92	242,677
1992-93	273,748

[1] Part year.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases were brought to court in which the Crown Prosecution Service failed to secure a conviction for each of the last seven years for which figures are available.

The Attorney-General: The number of defendants whose case was dismissed in magistrates' courts and the number acquitted in the Crown Court for the last seven years was:

	Magistrates courts	*Crown Court*
[1]1987	20,051	6,122
1988	25,853	9,422
1989	27,437	9,369
1990	28,795	8,726
1991	26,644	9,551
1992	25,210	9,227
[2]1993	16,781	6,900

[1] April to December.

[2] January to September.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Attorney-General how many full-time staff equivalent were employed by the Crown Prosecution Service for each of the last seven years for which figures are available.

The Attorney-General: The table provides the numbers of full-time staff equivalent employed by the Crown Prosecution Service in October each year, beginning in 1986.

Category	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Lawyers	1,208	1,269·5	1,374·5	1,427·5	1,611·5	1,874·5	2,068·5	2,181·5
Legal Trainees	—	—	—	—	79	123	121	144
Administrators	1,910	2,841	2,629·8	3,100·5	3,487·5	3,674·5	4,094·5	4,191·5
Total	3, 118	3,750·5	4,004·3	4,528	5,178	5,672	6,284	6,517

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Television Franchises

14. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many representations he has received on the recent change in the law relating to television franchises and its possible effect on smaller, regional television companies.

Mr. Brooke: This year, I have received 69 representations from hon. Members on the ownership restrictions on the ITV companies, as well as 22 from broadcasters, advertisers, other organisations and 20 from members of the public. The correspondence has included comments about the smaller regional television companies.

Business Sponsorship Incentive Scheme

15. **Mr. Duncan Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what are the latest figures from the business sponsorship incentive scheme.

Mr. Sproat: The figures for 1992-93 indicate a record increase of 33 per cent. in the number of awards and an additional £1·9 million for the arts. It is likely that in 1993-94 the scheme will prove to be even more effective. In recognition of the great success of the scheme, I recently announced that I am increasing its budget by £300,000 to £4·8 million in 1994-95.

BBC Licence Fee

18. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he next plans to meet the chairman of the BBC governors to discuss the BBC licence fee.

Mr. Brooke: I have no plans at present to meet the chairman of the BBC to discuss the television licence fee.

National Lottery

20. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the site of the headquarters of the national lottery.

Mr. Sproat: The site of the headquarters of the national lottery will be a matter for the appointed licensee. Those tendering for the licence will be aware of the advantages of locating in an area receiving Government incentives.

Councils of Ministers

21. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals he has made, following the decisions of the European Councils in Edinburgh 1992 and Brussels 1993, to increase the transparency and accountability of decision-making, including the recording of votes for each member state, at meetings of European Community Councils of Ministers at which his Department is represented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Government fully support the conclusions reached at Edinburgh and Brussels on openness. On the matter of recording of votes, the Foreign Affairs Council on 6 December agreed that votes on legislative decisions would be published automatically unless a majority of the Council opposed this. This is fully consistent with the conclusions of the Edinburgh European Council last December.

Voting details are now published by the Council secretariat after Council meetings. We shall ensure that this information is provided to Parliament.

Windsor Castle Fire

22. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the latest estimated total cost to public funds of the Windsor castle fire.

Mr. Sproat: It is at present estimated that the cost of the Windsor castle restoration will be between £30 and £40 million of which about £9 to £12 million will be met from public funds.

Independent Television

23. Sir Jim Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his policy on independent television.

Mr. Brooke: My aim is to ensure that the regulatory framework allows the ITV companies to flourish and to maintain and improve the programme services they provide to audiences in the United Kingdom and overseas, where new opportunities are opening up for United Kingdom broadcasters.

Opera

24. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what research he has conducted into the popularity of opera; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Figures made available to the Arts Council by the British Market Research Bureau indicate that 2·8 million—or over 6 per cent.—of the adult population attend opera performances. This represents an increase of over 30 per cent. in the last five years. Recent studies have also shown that, in addition to those who attend opera, 7 million people now have an interest in the art form. I warmly congratulate all those involved in opera in this country on this remarkable achievement.

Television Programmes

25. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what requirement he has placed on commercial television companies to broadcast British-made programmes; if this requirement applies to BSkyB; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Under the Broadcasting Act 1990, Channel 3 licence holders are required to broadcast regional programmes, of which a suitable proportion should be made within the area. No such requirement applies to BSkyB. But under the EC Television Without Frontiers Directive, all United Kingdom broadcasters, where practicable, have to reserve a majority of their transmission time, subject to certain exclusions, for European works.

Arts Events

26. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how he intends to improve on the latest figures for attendance at arts events.

Mr. Brooke: The improvement of access to the arts is a cornerstone of the Government's policies for the arts, and is also a primary aim of the Arts Council. All Arts Council clients work to enlarge their audiences. Specific marketing initiatives support and direct their work; the latest figures point to the continuing success of these initiatives.

Tourism

27. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many civil servants his Department employs with responsibilities for tourism; and what is the total cost of their salaries.

Mr. Sproat: There are 20 staff employed in my Department's tourism division, including one who works part-time. It is part of the division's role to ensure that the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board make effective and efficient use of the money voted to them by Parliament. The division's salary budget for 1993-94 is £448,820.

BBC Funding

28. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what consideration he has given to the funding of the BBC; and when he plans to publish his proposals concerning the renewal of the BBC charter.

Mr. Brooke: I hope to publish a White Paper early next year setting out the Government's proposals for the future of the BBC, including its funding.

Sport (Drug Misuse)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if, when he next meets the chairman of the Sports Council, he will discuss with him the problems of drug misuse in sport.

Mr. Sproat: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of the Sports Council regularly to discuss matters of mutual concern, including the misuse of drugs in sport.

Orchestral Concerts

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many orchestral concerts he has attended in his official capacity since taking office; and how many of these were in London.

Mr. Brooke: Since taking office I have attended 23 concerts involving orchestras or ensembles of various size: 18 of these were in London.

Rugby Football

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what grants from public funds have been paid to the Rugby Football Union for the rebuilding of its ground at Twickenham; what further grants are proposed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: None.

Ecclesiastical Buildings

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what changes he is considering in relation to the way in which listed building consent is unnecessary for work in connection with ecclesiastical buildings owned by the Church of England.

Mr. Brooke: The intention is that the exemption should in future be confined to buildings used primarily as places of worship, and some curtilage structures, and should be available to the Church of England and other church bodies whose internal control systems for works to such buildings meet the requirements of the code of practice which I published on 17 December 1992 at column *370*. Following discussions with Church and amenity interests, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I are considering to what extent curtilage structures should be included in these arrangements, and what special provision should be made for cathedral complexes. Our conclusions will be embodied in an order under section 60(5) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which will be laid before the House in due course.

Film Industry

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what consultations he has had with representatives of the film industry.

Mr. Brooke: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison).

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his definition of *(a)* security assurances and *(b)* security guarantees with regard to (i) the use of nuclear weapons by the United Kingdom against a non-nuclear weapon state and (ii) the commitment of the United Kingdom to defend a non-nuclear weapon state against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We regard a security guarantee as a commitment through an alliance, such as it contained in article 5 of the North Atlantic treaty, under which we and other states parties have undertaken collectively to take the necessary action to restore and maintain the security of each state member of the Atlantic alliance.

We have in addition issued positive and negative nuclear security assurances to certain non-nuclear weapon states in the following terms:

> "The United Kingdom affirms its intention, as a Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council, to seek immediate Security Council action to provide assistance, in accordance with the Charter, to any non-nuclear-weapon State, party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, that is a victim of an act of aggression or an object of a threat of aggression in which nuclear weapons are used."

This assurance was given in the United Nations Security Council on 17 June 1968 and was welcomed by the Security Council resolution 255 two days later.

> "Britain undertakes not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States, which are parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to other internationally binding commitments not to manufacture or acquire nuclear explosive devices, except in the case of an attack on the United Kingdom, it's dependent territories, it's armed forces or it's allies by such a State in asociation or alliance with a nuclear-weapon state.

The United Kingdom gave this assurance at the United Nations special session on disarmament on 28 June 1978.

Ukraine

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the ratification of the START—strategic arms reduction talks—1 treaty by the Parliament of Ukraine on 18 November.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We issued a statement on 30 November about the Ukrainian Parliament's resolution which ratified the START 1 treaty. A copy of the statement has been placed in the House of Commons library.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans his Department has to meet Ukrainian officials and politicians to discuss the ratification of the START 1 treaty by the Parliament of Ukraine on 18 November.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have already discussed this question with Ukrainian Government officials, and have made clear our concerns along the lines of the public statement we made on 30 November, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House. We have also made our views clear to members of the Ukrainian Parliament.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department has received from Ukraine a draft treaty on security guarantees for Ukraine; and what plans his Department has to respond to such a draft treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received from the Ukrainian ambassador a copy of a draft security treaty for signature by the five nuclear weapon states. The draft treaty would come into force on entry into force of the START 1 treaty, and it does not commit Ukraine to accession to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty—NPT—as a non-nuclear weapon state. We have made clear to the Ukrainian Government that Ukraine will be covered by our national security assurances once she accedes to the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he plans to discuss the ratification of the START 1 treaty by the Parliament of Ukraine on 18 November with his NATO counterparts *(a)* prior to and *(b)* at the NATO summit in January 1994; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This question was discussed at the ministerial meeting of the North Atlantic Council on 2

December. Allies agreed that NATO should consider in the context of preparations for its January summit what steps the alliance might take to encourage the early entry into force and rapid implementation of all provisions of the START 1 treaty.

Cyprus

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the recent Council of Europe document concerning the influx of illegal settlers from Turkey into northern Cyprus; and if he will make a statement on Government policy regarding this official Council of Europe document.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We too are concerned by reports of an influx of settlers from Turkey into northern Cyprus. The issue needs to be addressed in the context of an overall settlement. We share the hope of the United Nations Secretary-General that progress can be made with a resumption of intercommunal talks in the new year. We shall continue to support him in his efforts to achieve this.

Kashmir

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Indian Government as to the recent activities of the Indian security forces in occupied Kashmir following the disturbance at Sopore in which a number of people were killed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discussed the security situation in Kashmir with the Indian Prime Minister and Home Minister on 15 November. Following the incident at Sopore on 26 November our high commission in New Delhi asked the Indian Home Ministry for details. We were informed that some 15 people were killed, including 11 militants, following an attack on the Indian army.

Endangered Species

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 29 November, *Official Report*, column 278, if he will specify the seal and whale species for which the Norwegian Government are requesting exemptions from the European Council habitats directive.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Norwegian Government have asked for exemptions from the European Community's habitats directive in respect of grey, harbour, harp, hooded and ring seals; and minke, fin and killer whales.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to resist any attempt by the Norwegian Government to secure exemptions from the EC habitats directive in respect of seals and whales.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We oppose the commercial hunting of whales and support the listing of seal species in the annexes of the EC Habitats Directive. Norway's requests for exemptions from the directive are, however, a matter for the Community as a whole. We shall consult with other member states in preparing the Community's response.

Committee of the Regions

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the full membership of the British delegation to the European Union Committee of the Regions.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As I told the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) in my written reply on 28 October at column *735*, we have proposed the following list of nominees for appointment by the Council to the European Community Committee of the Regions:

England
Councillor Simon Day
Devon County
Conservative
Lady Anson DL JP
Waverley District
Conservative
Sir Peter Bowness CBE Dl
London Borough of Croydon
Conservative
Councillor Colin Warbrick CBE
Trafford Metropolitan Borough
Conservative
Councillor Christopher Penn
Suffolk County
Conservative
Councillor Toby Harris
London Borough of Haringey
Labour
Councillor Albert Bore
Birmingham Metropolitan Borough
Labour
Councillor Josie Farrington
Lancashire County
Labour
Councillor George Gill
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough
Labour
Councillor Dennis Pettitt
Nottinghamshire County
Labour
Councillor Janet Sillett
Norwich District
Labour
Councillor Graham Tope
London Borough of Sutton
Liberal Democrat
Councillor David Belotti
East Sussex County
Liberal Democrat
Councillor Roy Cross
Richmondshire District
Independent

Scotland
Councillor Charles Gray
Strathclyde Region
Labour
Councillor Rosemary McKenna
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth District
Labour
Councillor Brian Meek
Edinburgh District
Conservative
Councillor Duncan McPherson
Highland Region
Independent
Councillor Daniel Coffey JP
Kilmarnock and Loudoun District
SNP

Wales
Councillor John Evans
Rhymney Valley District
Labour
Lord Kenyon
Wrexham Borough

Conservative
Councillor Eurig Wyn
Gwynedd County
Plaid Cymru

Northern Ireland
Councillor Reg Empey
Lord Mayor of Belfast
UUP
Councillor Dennis Haughey
Cookstown Borough
SDLP
Alternate Members
England
Councillor John Morgan OBE
Test Valley District
Conservative
Councillor Doreen Fleming OBE
Fenland District
Conservative
Councillor Fraser Mitchell
Solihull Metropolitan Borough
Conservative
Councillor Elgar Jenkins OBE
Bath District
Conservative
Councillor Paul White
Essex County
Conservative
Councillor John Battye
Oldham Metropolitan Borough
Labour
Councillor Hedley Salt
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough
Labour
Councillor Kenneth Bodfish
East Sussex County
Labour
Councillor Ian Swithinbank
Northumberland County
Labour
Councillor Saily Powell
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
Labour
Councillor Peter Soulsby
Leicester District
Labour
Councillor Peter Cocks CBE
Cornwall County
Liberal Democrat
Councillor Tony Prior
South Somerset District
Liberal Democrat
Councillor Milner Whiteman
Bridgnorth District
Independent

Scotland
Councillor Keith Geddes
Lothian Region
Labour
Councillor Jean McFadden
Glasgow District
Labour
Councillor Marcus Humphrey
Grampian Region
Conservative
Councillor Peter Peacock
Highland Region
Independent
Councillor Clive Sneddon
North East Fife District
Liberal Democrat

Wales
Councillor Keith Griffiths
Gwent County
Labour
Councillor Bill Hughes
Swansea City
Conservative
Councillor Jill Evans
Rhondda Borough
Mid Glamorgan County
Plaid Cymru

Northern Ireland
Councillor Simpson Gibson
Ards Borough
UDUP
Alderman Sean Neeson
Mayor of Carrickfergus
Alliance Party

Mrs. Parveen Akhtar Ahmed

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will arrange for Mrs. Parveen Akhtar Ahmed, the wife of Mr. Tariq Hussain Ahmed, of Bradford to be interviewed at the high commission in Islamabad as a matter of urgency; when Mrs. Ahmed was granted a visa to join her husband in the United Kingdom; whether her passport carries a stamp confirming that she has been granted indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom; if he will arrange for Mr. Ahmed to be given full information about what documentation is required before Mrs. Ahmed attends an interview to determine when she is to be granted permission to rejoin her husband; for how long Mrs. Ahmed has been seeking to return to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the absence of any information in London about Mrs. Parveen Akhtar Ahmed's application for entry clearance, I have asked the British high commission in Islamabad to let me have a report. I shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a substantive reply from the migration and visa correspondence unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as soon as possible.

Aisha Bibi

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision is going to be taken by the United Kingdom post in Islamabad into the application by Aisha Bibi—Ref: HO K461344; and HUL/338/93—to join her husband, Zaib Alam Khan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the absence of any information in London about an entry clearance application from Aisha Bibi, I have asked the British high commission in Islamabad to let me have a report. I shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a substantive reply from the migration and visa correspondence unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as soon as possible.

Burundi

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what pledges have been made by donor Governments to finance the Organisation of African Unity initiative in respect of Burundi.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Several major donors have expressed an interest in providing financial and logistical support for the OAU's International Mission for Protection, Observation and Confidence-building in Burundi. Discussions between potential donors and the OAU have been taking place in Addis Ababa.

We have no plans to contribute towards financing the OAU initiative. The United Kingdom has already committed one million dollars to the United Nations Trust Fund for Liberia and we anticipate that other European partners, who did not contribute to this fund, will take the lead in Burundi.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the arrival of OAU forces in Burundi.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We understand that the OAU plan to send 20 civilians and 180 military personnel in the first instance. As far as we know, none have yet arrived in Burundi.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what mediation efforts are currently taking place in Burundi.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Both the OAU Secretary-General's representative, Senegal's representative in Ethiopia, Ambassador Fall and the United Nations Under-Secretary General, James Jonah, have recently visited Burundi to discuss the situation with the parties concerned. The United Nations Secretary-General's special representative, Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, has been holding discussions in Burundi since 2 December. The OAU discussed Burundi at its mini-summit in Cairo on 7 December.

Angola (Arms Embargo)

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the recently lifted arms embargo on Angola was imposed; what publicity was given to the decision at the time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: When Angola became independent in 1976, the restrictions on the supply of defence equipment which at that time applied to the Soviet Union and its close allies, were applied to Angola. We are not aware that this policy was made public.

TRANSPORT

London Underground

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his best estimate of the likely cost to London Underground of compensation sought by customers under the relevant citizen charters arising from the major breakdowns on the system from 24 November onwards.

Mr. Norris: London Underground currently estimates that the value of the claims made under their customer charter will be between £150,000 and £200,000.

Road Safety Database

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) of 6 December, *Official Report*, column 22, which other member state abstained in the vote on setting up a Community road safety database.

Mr. MacGregor: The other member state to abstain was Germany.

Rail Privatisation

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what so far has been the cost to public funds of railway privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: The costs set out include those of special advisers where appropriate, and the costs attributable to preparations for the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising and the Office of Rail Regulation before the start of this financial year:

Department of Transport: Running costs, etc.

	£ million
1991-92	0·5
1992-93	1·2
1993-94 expected expenditure	1·5

Department of Transport: Consultancy costs

	£ million
1991-92	0·5
1992-93	5·5
1993-94 expected expenditure	12·0

The Department of Transport's internal BR privatisation costs cannot be separately identified before September 1991.

Office of passenger rail franchising

	£ million
1993-94 expected expenditure	3·4

Office of rail regulator

	£ million
1993-94 expected expenditure	3·3

British Rail's costs and estimates are a matter for British Rail.

Testing Stations

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has in respect of the casual staff currently employed in testing stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The vehicle inspectorate—VI—has full peronnel responsibility for such staff. VI continues to employ casual staff because this allows it the flexibility it needs to deal with fluctuating demand and other short term staffing needs. Casual appointments will be kept under review and casual staff will be recruited, retained or released in order to meet the needs existing at any one time.

Electronic Road Tolling

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends that electronic road tolling should apply to trunk roads which form part of the trans-European road network but which are not classified as motorways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: In his statement on 2 December about the Government's plans for motorway charging at column *650* my right hon. Friend said that the precise definition of the network to be charged was an issue for further consideration.

Motorways

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what communications he has had with either the Commission or the European Community or the Governments of its member states concerning charging vehicles for use of motorways; and if he regards such schemes or proposals as a component of the single internal market in transport.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* My right hon. Friend maintains regular contact with the Commission and his colleagues in other member states on motorway charging.

Council directive 93/89/EEC, adopted on 25 October this year, sets out, among other things, the conditions under which member states may impose tolls or user charges on heavy goods vehicles over 12 tonnes gross on motorways and similar roads. This direcive will help eliminate distortion of competition in road goods transport in the European Community.

A38

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he hopes to announce the preferred route for the improvements to the A38 trunk road between Saltash and Trerulefoot; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* We are still considering responses to the recent public consultation, including suggestions for alternative routes.

I hope to announce the preferred route in spring 1944.

Research Laboratory, Crowthorne

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the size of the land holdings of the Transport and Road Research Laboratory at Crowthorne; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Under a valuation survey conducted in 1988 by Hillier Parker on behalf of the PSA, the size of the TRL site was found to be approximately 256 English acres which is 103·6 hectares.

A privatisation study is presently being conducted at TRL; until this has been completed I am unable to give more information.

Motorways (Noise)

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce type approval standards for the approval of noise levels produced by motorway road surfaces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Type approval standards are not appropriate for the noise levels arising from road surfaces. The Department provides a specification setting limits on the surface texture, which seeks to minimise the level of noise from traffic consistent with safety requirements for adequate skidding resistance.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Overseas Aid

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of gross domestic product the overseas aid budget will be in 1994-95, assuming the figures for the growth of the economy given in the Budget.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have been asked to reply.

The total provision for ODA's external assistance programmes, announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 30 November, amounts to 0·34 per cent. of forecast GDP in 1994-95, on the basis of the figures given in the Financial Statement and Budget Report. Not all of ODA's total provision counts as official development assistance under the OECD development assistance committee criteria. Internationally accepted ratios of overseas aid to gross national product (GNP) are calculated annually for the development assistance committee of the OECD, according to agreed international criteria and on the basis of expenditure by calendar year not on planning figures.

Prices

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest information he has for *(a)* the last quarter and *(b)* over the last 12 months of the change in (i) manufacturers' prices and (ii) producer prices.

Mr. Nelson: The available information for October 1993 is as follows:

Producer prices—all manufacturing

	Materials and fuel purchased per cent.	*Output prices per cent.*
Increase over last three months	−2·4	0·2
Increase over last twelve months	0·9	4·0

The increase over the last three months will be affected by seasonal fluctuations.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the underlying rate of inflation is accounted for by changes in the price of *(a)* clothing and footwear, *(b)* household and leisure goods and *(c)* council tax.

Mr. Nelson: The underlying rate of inflation, as measured by the 12-month percentage movement in the retail prices index excluding mortgage interest payments, stood at 2·8 per cent. in October 1993. Of this clothing and footwear contributed 0·06 percentage points household and leisure goods 0·13 percentage points and council tax/community charge/rates −0·30 percentage points towards the overall figure.

Business Investment

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish a table giving business investment measured in current prices as a percentage of gross domestic product, measured in current prices *(a)* for each year since 1974 and *(b)* for each quarter since 1988; and what was the average for the periods 1974 to 1979 and 1979 to 1992;

(2) what proportion of gross domestic product he estimates is accounted for by gross business investment *(a)* in 1993-94 and *(b)* in each year since 1989.

Mr. Nelson: The latest estimates of business investment at current and constant prices and gross domestic product at current and constant market prices to the third quarter of 1993 are available on the CSO database which may be accessed by the House of Commons Library. The relevant database identifiers are DEOO and CAOB at current prices and DEMS and CAOO at constant prices. Her Majesty's Treasury does not publish financial year forecasts of business investment.

Incomes

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total and average investment income and earned income in 1992-93 of *(a)* the top 1 per cent., *(b)* the top 5 per cent., *(c)* the top 10 per cent., *(d)* the bottom 70 per cent., *(e)* the bottom 50 per cent., *(f)* the bottom 10 per cent. of taxpayers and *(g)* all taxpayers.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest estimates are given in the table:

Quantile group of taxpayers	*Total earned income[1] (£ billion)*	*Average earned income (£)*	*Total investment income (£ billion)*	*Average investment income (£)*
Top 1 per cent.	24	95,500	8	29,900
Top 5 per cent.	62	49,200	13	10,100
Top 10 per cent.	95	37,700	16	6,400
Bottom 70 per cent.	156	8,800	9	700
Bottom 50 per cent.	91	7,200	8	600
Bottom 10 per cent.	11	4,500	1	500
All taxpayers	345	13,700	35	1,400

[1] Income from employment, self-employment and pensions.

VAT

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the estimated yield in 1993-94 of the imposition of VAT at *(a)* 5 per cent., *(b)* 17·5 per cent. and *(c)* 22 per cent. on (i) books, (ii) newspapers, (iii) magazines, (iv) rent and (v) fares on passenger transport.

Sir John Cope: The actual yield would depend on the effects on consumers behaviour. Without allowing for such behavioural changes, the Treasury publication, 'Tax Ready Reckoner and Tax Reliefs' shows the cost of not standard rating currently zero rated items. The figures for books, newspapers and magazines has been apportioned into each category using shares of consumers' expenditure. From these figures it is possible to derive the following table in £ million for 1994-95.

	5 per cent.	*17½ per cent.*	*22 per cent.*
Books	95	330	415
Newspapers	155	550	690
Magazines	65	220	275
Domestic passenger transport	330	1,150	1,445

The publication also shows the cost of net standard rating VAT exempt items. Rent on domestic dwellings is exempt and not zero rated. If the exemption were removed the estimate on the basis given above would be £2,300 million at 17·5 per cent. Equivalent calculations for 5 per cent. and 22 per cent. have not been made.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to close the loopholes for VAT liability afforded by the pre-payment of accounts.

Sir John Cope: None. Under both United Kingdom and EC law, VAT is chargeable at the rate in force when payment is made if that precedes the delivery of the goods or the issue of a tax invoice.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the rates of VAT charged in each other EC country for *(a)* food in shops, *(b)* food in restaurants, *(c)* books, *(d)* magazines, *(e)* newspapers, *(f)* household fuel, *(g)* rents, *(h)* house purchase, *(e)* children's clothing, *(j)* community centres and *(k)* transport fares.

Sir John Cope: Rates of VAT charged in each other EC country for food in shops, books, magazines, newspapers, household fuel, house purchase, children's clothing and transport fares are set out in the *Official Report*, 24 November 1993, columns *66-70*. VAT rates on food in restaurants, rents and community centres according to the latest information available, are set out in the tables.

(b) VAT on food in restaurants in the EC

Country	*Rate per cent.*
Belgium	19·5
Denmark	25
France	18·6[1]
Germany	8
Greece	18 (13)[2]
Ireland	12·5
Italy	9[3]
Luxembourg	3
Netherlands	17·5
Portugal	16 (12)[4]
Spain	6, 15[5]
United Kingdom	17·5

[1] The following rates apply generally in Corsica: 0·9 per cent., 2·1 per cent., 8 per cent. and 13 per cent.

[2] The rate in brackets applies in the departments of Lesbos, Chios, the Dodecanese and the Cyclades, and in the islands of Thasos, the Northern Sporades, Samothrace and Skyros.

[3] Excluding the supply of food in luxury premises including luxury hotels.

[4] The rate in brackets apply in the autonomous regions of Madeira and the Azores Archipelagoes.

[5] The standard rate applies to the supply of food in luxury hotels.

(g) VAT on rents in the EC

The letting of immovable property is exempt from VAT in every member state, although some member states operate an option to tax in certain circumstances.

(j) VAT on community centres in the EC

Leasing of such buildings is exempt in all member states. For purchase (including construction) in other member states the rates in the table on house purchase apply.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether the issue of value added tax on imported works of art is likely to be considered at the December meeting of ECOFIN; and what views he will be expressing on this subject at that meeting;

(2) if he will make a statement of his policy on the future of imported works of art in connection with value added tax;

(3) what assessment he has made of the possible impact of the imposition of value added tax on imported works of art upon London's world position as a centre for the trade in art objects; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The subject of VAT on second hand goods, including works of art, antiques and collectors items, was discussed again at ECOFIN today and agreement was reached on the Seventh VAT Directive. Under this agreement margin schemes will be extended to all second hand goods. No VAT other than that in the member state of purchase will be payable when works of art, antiques and collectors items are moved from one member state to another.

Imports of such items into the European Union from third countries will be charged VAT at not less than 5 per cent. except in the United Kingdom where imports of pre-1973 works of art will be charged at an effective rate of 2½ per cent. until mid-1999. Items imported temporarily for resale and subsequent export outside the EU will not be chargeable with VAT. The Commission will review the effects of the new arrangements in 1998 and report to the Council.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and I have had full consultations with the art trade on these matters throughout the very long period they have been under discussion. The agreement avoids potentially damaging legal actions and means that the United Kingdom art market will have the most favourable VAT regime in the EU and will be able to maintain its pre-eminence in the world.

Company Failures

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much was lost, in the last year for which figures are available, in public revenue in PAYE, national insurance contributions and VAT from *(a)* companies which went into voluntary creditors liquidation and *(b)* unincorporated businesses which became bankrupt.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is available only at disproportionate cost.

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much he estimates net public capital expenditure will fall by 1997.

Mr. Portillo: Outturn and projections for public sector capital expenditure are set out in table 5.3 of the Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95.

Taxation

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate for 1993-94 the number of people claiming *(a)* one-parent benefit and *(b)* the widowed mother's allowance, who are taxpayers.

Mr. Dorrell: In 1993-94 it is estimated that about 350,000 taxpayers will claim one-parent benefit and about 40,000 taxpayers will claim widowed mother's allowance.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the number of additional people brought into the tax system as a result of the freezing of personal tax allowances proposed in the March Budget.

Mr. Dorrell: In 1993-94 no one was brought into income tax as a result of the changes announced in the March Budget. However, about 300,000 more people pay tax in 1993-94 under the Budget proposals compared with statutory indexation of personal allowances.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was *(a)* the total income, both earned and unearned, *(b)* the total national insurance contributions and *(c)* the total tax paid by (i) the top 1 per cent., (ii) the top 5 per cent., (iii) the top 10 per cent., (iv) the bottom 50 per cent. and (v) all taxpayers for Scotland, England Wales and Northern Ireland in each year since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* Readily available estimates based on the Survey of Personal Incomes are in the tables. For 1980-81 and 1989-90, married couples are counted as one taxpayer and their incomes are combined. Following the introduction of independent taxation in 1990-91. husbands and wives are counted seperately. The estimates of total income relate to income subject to income tax and exclude non-taxable income such as certain social security benefits. The quantile groups of taxpayers are defined by reference to the number of taxpayers in each country in each year.

Information on quantile groups of taxpayers within each country of the United Kingdom

1980-81

Quantile group of tax unit *Per cent.*	*Total income* *£ million*	*Income tax liability* *£ million*
SCOTLAND		
Top 1	556	202
Top 5	1,750	491
Top 10	2,870	732
Bottom 50	3,350	421
All taxpayers	11,900	2,240
ENGLAND		
Top 1	6,300	2,480
Top 5	18,200	5,470
Top 10	29,100	7,790
Bottom 50	32,600	4,170
All taxpayers	116,000	22,300
WALES		
Top 1	319	129
Top 5	893	266
Top 10	1,400	374
Bottom 50	1,610	190

Quantile group of tax unit *Per cent.*	*Total income* *£ million*	*Income tax liability* *£ million*
All taxpayers	5,580	1,040
NORTHERN IRELAND		
Top 1	127	45
Top 5	412	114
Top 10	664	169
Bottom 50	727	87
All taxpayers	2,660	492

Information on Quantile Groups of Taxpayers within each country of the United Kingdom
1989-90

Quantile group of tax units	*Total income*	*Income tax liability*	*Employees' and self-employed national insurance contribution liability*
Per cent.	£ million	£ million	£ million
SCOTLAND			
Top 1	1,570	476	28
Top 5	4,680	1,180	149
Top 10	7,530	1,730	286
Bottom 50	7,640	885	330
All taxpayers	28,700	4,880	1,370
ENGLAND			
Top 1	21,300	7,100	231
Top 5	53,900	15,400	1,180
Top 10	81,300	21,000	2,320
Bottom 50	69,800	8,400	3,060
All taxpayers	275,000	51,000	12,100
WALES			
Top 1	885	283	13
Top 5	2,270	591	61
Top 10	3,460	815	117
Bottom 50	3,560	403	150
All taxpayers	13,100	2,230	595
NORTHERN IRELAND			
Top 1	522	163	9
Top 5	1,180	310	37
Top 10	1,860	440	65
Bottom 50	1,630	175	69
All taxpayers	6,510	1,110	296

Information on quantile groups of taxpayers within each country of the United Kingdom
1990-91

Quantile group of taxpayers *Per cent.*	*Total income* *£ million*	*Income tax liability* *£ million*	*Employees' and self-employed national insurance contribution liability* *£ million*
Scotland			
Top 1	1,770	559	26
Top 5	4,980	1,340	120
Top 10	7,820	1,910	234
Bottom 50	7,590	824	330
All taxpayers	28,900	5,070	1,300
England			
Top 1	25,400	8,540	236
Top 5	61,100	17,900	1,190
Top 10	91,100	24,100	2,360
Bottom 50	78,800	8,950	3,310
All taxpayers	311,000	58,200	13,300
Wales			
Top 1	804	248	13
Top 5	2,230	562	57
Top 10	3,540	816	114
Bottom 50	3,970	414	159
All taxpayers	14,200	2,370	631
Northern Ireland			
Top 1	448	144	6
Top 5	1,180	316	28
Top 10	1,800	439	57
Bottom 50	1,680	169	73
All taxpayers	6,460	1,110	291

Information on quantile groups of taxpayers within each country of the United Kingdom
1991-92

Quantile group of taxpayers *Per cent.*	*Total income* *£ million*	*Income tax liability* *£ million*	*Employees' and self-employed national insurance contribution liability* *£ million*
Scotland			
Top 1	2,080	665	27
Top 5	5,420	1,430	142
Top 10	8,310	1,990	271
Bottom 50	7,770	788	317
All taxpayers	30,000	5,170	1,370
England			
Top 1	27,800	9,420	257
Top 5	65,200	18,900	1,280
Top 10	96,500	25,300	2,590
Bottom 50	82,200	9,040	3,340
All taxpayers	323,000	60,000	13,900
Wales			
Top 1	934	288	15
Top 5	2,480	618	69
Top 10	3,950	898	145
Bottom 50	4,180	408	156
All taxpayers	15,300	2,500	700
Northern Ireland			
Top 1	421	131	4
Top 5	1,150	299	28
Top 10	1,770	418	57
Bottom 50	1,610	147	66
All taxpayers	6,270	1,050	271

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

World Bank

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria the United Kingdom's executive director of the World bank uses to determine whether a project merits evaluation by the Overseas Development Administration.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The ODA determines case by case what examination of loan proposals is required, paying particular attention to adjustment operations and environmentally sensitive projects.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will list prospective World bank projects and projects currently being implemented and being evaluated by the Overseas Development Administration and those that are currently being considered for co-financing by the Overseas Development Administration;

(2) if he will list all World bank projects and structural adjustment loans that the Overseas Development Administration has co-financed in each year since 1989.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are compiling the information and I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he proposes to take to assist in resolving conflicts in the Narmada valley following the withdrawal of World bank funding for the project.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Project implementation is the responsibility of the Indian authorities. In bilateral contacts with them, we have urged the correct and sensitive handling of the environmental and resettlement issues.

Kenya

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he took to ensure that the World bank and the IMF took full account of reported corruption in Kenya prior to resuming financial assistance.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We maintain close contact with the World bank and the International Monetary Fund on Kenya and regularly discuss shared concerns, including corruption. We are confident that the IFIs took full account of all relevant factors during their recent review of Kenya's economic position and prospects. At the consultative group meeting last month donors emphasised the need for the Kenya Government to act to ensure that prompt legal action is taken against those involved in corruption.

Thailand

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place a copy of the mid-term review of the World's bank's Pak Mun dam project in Thailand in the Library.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Under the Disclosure of Information policy approved by the Bank's board, this report remains confidential. I regret, therefore, that I cannot place a copy in the Library.

South Africa

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the present and planned resources that are being used by the United Kingdom, European Union, Commonwealth and agencies of the United Nations to assist South Africa to hold free and fair elections and make the transition to a multiparty, multi-ethnic democracy.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: All aid from Britain and the organisations listed supports change to a democratic and non-racial society in South Africa. Our bilateral aid of £11·7 million in 1992-93 is expected to increase to up to £15 million in 1993-94, plus about £11 million as our annual share of the EC's £68 million programme. We do not have figures for Commonwealth and United Nations activities. The Commonwealth has provided international observers to help monitor and defuse violence during the transition; and the United Nations is providing training for black South Africans. We and the other organisations plan to assist with next year's elections. Our main bilateral contribution will be international election observers.

Kenya (Cereals Shortage)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Kenyan Government as to the possible supplying of cereals now held in EC intervention to alleviate the shortage of cereals in Kenya; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My noble Friend, the Minister for Overseas Development will be visiting Kenya in January. We expect the question of how donors can most appropriately help to meet Kenya's food needs during 1994 to be discussed during this visit.

HEALTH

Fundholders

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the registered population were covered by general practitioner fundholders in total and in each region at *(a)* 1 April 1992 and *(b)* 1 April 1993; and what figure she expects to be achieved by 1 April 1994.

Dr. Mawhinney: At 1 April 1992 13 per cent. of the population were registered with general practitioner fundholders. At 1 April 1993 the figure was 25 per cent. and this is expected to grow to about a third of the population from 1 April 1994.

The regional breakdown is:

	Per cent.
At 1 April 1992:	
Northern	16
Yorkshire	21
Trent	14
East Anglia	8
North West Thames	14
North East Thames	7
South East Thames	9
South West Thames	15
Wessex	15
Oxford	23
South Western	14

	Per cent.
West Midlands	13
Mersey	19
North Western	9
At 1 April 1993:	
Northern	25
Yorkshire	23
Trent	31
East Anglia	25
North West Thames	27
North East Thames	14
South East Thames	22
South West Thames	25
Wessex	22
Oxford	33
South Western	19
West Midlands	26
Mersey	25
North Western	17

Note: All figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide an estimate for the value of fund-holding allocations retained by general practitioner fund-holders at the year end.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* Although not all general practitioner fundholders' accounts for the year 1992-93 have been audited yet, it is estimated that fundholders achieved efficiency savings of about £28 million or 3·3 per cent., of total budgets. These impressive efficiency gains will be re-invested in further service improvements for patients.

Nursing Staff

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital nurses, midwives, health visitors and district nurses there were in England at 30 September in each year since 1988.

Mr. Sackville: The information available is shown in the table.

Hospital nurses, midwives, health visitors and district nurses England 30 September each year

Whole-time equivalents

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Hospital nurses	330,670	332,820	328,060	326,090	312,760
Midwives	19,090	19,110	19,860	19,640	20,250
Health visitors	10,680	10,050	10,480	10,380	10,250
District nurses	9,390	10,160	10,380	9,900	9,650
Practice nurses	3,480	4,630	7,740	8,780	9,120
Project 2000 nurses	—	—	[1]3,000	10,500	18,300

[1] Approximate figure.

Notes:

1. All figures are rounded to the nearest ten and exclude agency staff.
2. Project 2000 students are shown separately because Project 2000 students are supernumerary and therefore not included in workforce totals.

Mental Health

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to amend sections 35 and 36 of the Mental Health Amendment Act 1983 *(a)* to endorse treatment to be given to patients detained under section 35 and *(b)* to enable magistrates to remand mentally disordered offenders to hospital for treatment.

Mr. Bowis: None at present, but we shall be keeping in mind the case for amending these provisions should a suitable opportunity arise.

NHS Pensions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the definition of a national health service pension enhancement; and if such enhancements are available to all national health service pensionable staff.

Dr. Mawhinney: There is no statutory definition of a national health service pension enhancement, but payments based on the crediting of additional services can be made to compensate for the loss of future pension rights on premature or ill-health retirement. Such enhancements are available to all national health service pensionable employees who satisfy certain criteria.

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the annual cost to her Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

Mr. Sackville: There were four cars and the basic cost was £175,543.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those areas in which it is inappropriate for her to intervene within NHS trusts.

Dr. Mawhinney: National health service trusts have the freedom to:

Aquire, own and dispose of assets to ensure the most effective use is made of them.

Make their own cases for capital development direct to the NHS Management Executive (NHSME).

Borrow money, within annually agreed limits, primarily for new buildings and equipment and for upgrading existing buildings.

Create their own management structures.

Employ their own staff, determine their own staffing structures, and set out terms and conditions of employment.

Advertise their services, within guidelines set down by professonal codes of practice on such advertising.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has a range of reserve powers to intervene in trusts' affairs. These are not to be used routinely.

NHS Commercial Activities

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what controls she exercises over commercial activities carried out on behalf of the NHS within trust hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: It is for each individual national health service trust to determine the level of commercial activity carried out on its premises, subject to this not being to the detriment of other obligations.

Oral Contraceptives

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total cost to the national health service of the free prescription of oral contraceptives.

Mr. Sackville: The net ingredient cost of oral contraceptives dispensed or administered on the prescription of general practitioners in England in 1992 was £42·5 million.

Firearm Deaths

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide a table on the occupations of people who died as a result of *(a)* suicides, *(b)* homicides and *(c)* accidents and other causes involving (i) shotguns and (ii) other firearms in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Special Hospitals

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to publish the findings of the Swann inquiry into women's services at Ashworth special hospital.

Mr. Bowis: The inquiry was set up by and submitted its report to the Special Hospitals Service Authority.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to inquire into allegations of over-medication in certain wards of Ashworth special hospital.

Mr. Bowis: These allegations have been fully considered and investigated by local management in consultation with the clinical staff concerned. The Special Hopitals Service Authority is currently implementing an action plan for women patients, which includes a review of levels of medication.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the future of the social work service in special hospitals.

Mr. Bowis: Social workers play an important role within multi-disciplinary teams at the special hospitals.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients in special hospitals have become schizophrenic as a result of the withdrawal of neuroleptic drugs; and how many patients in special hospitals have been over-medicated on neuroleptic drugs in each of the past two years.

Mr. Bowis: Information about the treatment of individual patients in special hospitals is not available centrally. It is a matter for the Special Hospitals Service Authority.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the incidents of patient violence at Ashworth special hospital *(a)* against staff and *(b)* against other patients, in each of the last two years.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mrs. Anne-Marie Nelson, chairman of the Special Hospitals Service Authority, which has responsibility for Ashworth hospital, for details.

Southend Health Authority

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in resolving the relative underfunding of the Southend health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: In 1992-93 Southend health authority received £2·695 million extra funding and in 1993-94 £1·550 million. Under the weighted capitation funding system, health authorities are funded for their resident population. Departmental guidance, EL(92)47 copies of which are available in the Library, gives regional health authorities discretion to use their judgment about the precise distribution of funds which suits their districts' needs, based on the analysis of local information. The present allocation for South Essex health authority is a matter for North East Thames regional health authority and the hon. Member may wish to contact Sir William Staveley, the chairman for details.

Mental Health

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of all grants currently approved by her Department to support projects connected with mental health.

Mr. Bowis: The mental illness specific grant, introduced in April 1991, is payable to local authorities to enable them to make a significant improvement in the social care services they provide for mentally ill people in the community. This year, 1993-94, £34·4 million is available to 108 local authorities. Their individual allocations are listed in table A, the total includes £1,770,000 approved for revenue costs of short stay hostels under the Department's homeless mentally ill initiative for London. Other grants approved in 1993-94 to support this initiative are as follows:

Capital costs of short stay hostels—£1,585,986
Community psychiatric teams—£1,695,000

Under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 the Department gives grants towards the administrative—core—costs of national voluntary organisations and to support national development projects or innovative local projects with potential for national application. In the field of mental illness 56 grants are being made to 36 voluntary bodies at a total cost of £2,336,020 in 1993-94. These grants are listed in table B.

Table A

Local Authority	*Authorised allocations*
Avon County Council	585,147
Barking and Dagenham London Borough Council	128,955
Barnet London Borough Council	253,962
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council	128,000
Bedfordshire County Council	302,000

Local Authority	*Authorised allocations*
Berkshire County Council	428,000
Bexley London Borough Council	167,263
Birmingham Metropolitan Borough Council	793,567
Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council	188,998
Bradford Metropolitan Borough Council	347,456
Brent London Borough Council	280,500
Bromley London Borough Council	223,424
Buckinghamshire County Council	319,657
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council	108,737
Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council	141,000
Cambridgeshire County Council	379,312
Camden London Borough Council	252,497
Cheshire County Council	531,496
Cleveland County Council	332,657
Cornwall County Council	287,000
Coventry City Council	207.139
Croydon London Borough Council	277,000
Cumbria County Council	289,443
Derbyshire County Council	567,000
Devonshire County Council	614,185
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council	173,209
Dorset County Council	427,000
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	162,000
Durham County Council	378,914
Ealing London Borough Council	298,499
East Sussex County Council	526,110
Enfield London Borough Council	190,870
Essex County Council	873,995
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council	176,876
Gloucestershire County Council	305,000
Greenwich London Borough Council	195,388
Hackney London Borough Council	289,062
Hammersmith and Fulham London Borough Council	234,552
Hampshire County Council	879,291
Haringey London Borough Council	235,072
Harrow London Borough Council	146,554
Havering London Borough Council	140,193
Hereford and Worcester County Council	351,571
Hertfordshire County Council	565,335
Hillingdon London Borough Council	165,623
Hounslow London Borough Council	161,000
Humberside County Council	544,964
Isle of Wight County Council	89,000
Isles of Scilly Council	658
Islington London Borough Council	242,386
Kensington and Chelsea London Borough Council	177,218
Kent County Council	949,700
Kingston-upon-Thames Royal London Borough	129,477
Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council	264,649
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	110,429
Lambeth London Borough Council	340,064
Lancashire County Council	871,793
Leeds Metropolitan Borough Council	505,000
Leicestershire County Council	568,242
Lewisham London Borough Council	271,260
Lincolnshire County Council	345,000
Liverpool Metropolitan Borough Council	399,707
Manchester Metropolitan Borough Council	386,026
Merton London Borough Council	178,456
Newcastle-upon-Tyne Metropolitan Borough Council	231,000
Newham London Borough Council	240,858
Norfolk County Council	494,500
North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council	126,960
North Yorkshire County Council	404,693
Northamptonshire County Council	320,000
Northumberland County Council	175,421
Nottinghamshire County Council	657,105
Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council	156,494
Oxfordshire County Council	327,116
Redbridge London Borough Council	173,819
Richmond-upon-Thames London Borough Council	141,282
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council	150,912
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council	178,980
Salford Metropolitan Borough Council	159,762
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	235,493
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council	122,820
Sheffield Metropolitan Borough Council	397,000
Shropshire County Council	219,873
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	112,750
Somerset County Council	287,859
South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council	111,816
Southwark London Borough Council	256,000
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	126,461
Staffordshire County Council	582,540
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council	175,300
Suffolk County Council	365,019
Sunderland Metropolitan Borough Council	208,344
Surrey County Council	589,000
Sutton London Borough Council	125,396
Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council	152,250
Tower Hamlets London Borough Council	194,143
Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council	123,500
Wakefield Metropolitan Borough Council	201,179
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council	165,109
Waltham Forest London Borough Council	234,000
Wandsworth London Borough Council	335,277
Warwickshire County Council	276,841
West Sussex County Council	441,328
Westminster City Council	255,729
Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council	176,291
Wiltshire County Council	303,700
Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council	248,113
Wolverhampton Metropolitan Borough Council	193,381

Table B
Section 64 grants to voluntary organisations
1993-94

Voluntary organisation	*Core/Project*	*Total £*
Alzheimer's Disease Society	Core	130,000
Alzheimer's Disease Society	Open learning programe project	38,000
Alzheimer's Disease Society	Influencing community care project	10,000
Association for Post Natal Illness	Core	10,000
Association for Professionals in Services for Adolescents	Child and adolescent services project	20,000
Association for Professionals in Services for Adolescents	Core	10,000
Brandon Centre	Adolescent health project	15,000
British Institute of Industrial Therapy	Core	25,000
Child Psychotherapy Trust	Core	15,000

Voluntary organisation	*Core/Project*	*Total* £
Child Psychotherapy Trust	Development project	20,000
CRUSE—Bereavement Care	Core	114,000
Eating Disorders Association	Standard setting project	5,000
Eating Disorders Association	Core	29,000
Good Practices in Mental Health	Core	40,000
Good Practices in Mental Health	Mental health rural initiative project	20,630
Hyperactive Children's Support Group	Core	7,000
King's Fund Centre	Positive action project	25,000
Making Space	Charitable project bereavement support project	40,000
Manic Depression Fellowship	Core	10,000
Manic Depression Fellowship	Self help groups project	20,000
Manic Depression Fellowship	Factsheet for children project	1,920
Mental Aftercare Association	Core	50,000
Mental Health Foundation	Core	50,000
Mental Health Foundation	Homeless in London project	80,000
Mental Health Foundation	Special core grant	50,000
Mental Health Foundation	Young minds project	70,000
Mental Health Media Council	Core	20,000
NAFSIYAT (Intercultural Therapy)	Core	15,000
National Association for Mental Health (MIND)	Stress on women project	10,000
National Association for Mental Health (MIND)	Code of practice training	10,000
National Association for Mental Health (MIND)	Audit development project	55,000
National Association for Mental Health (MIND)	Core	415,000
National Pyramid Trust	Outreach project	20,000
National Schizophrenia Fellowship	Advisory service project	15,000
National Schizophrenia Fellowship	Core	91,000
National Schizophrenia Fellowship	Forresters respite care project	35,000
National Schizophrenia Fellowship	Training project	30,000
New Parent Infant Network (NEWPIN)	Core	35,000
New Parent Infant Network (NEWPIN)	Development officer and training officer	25,000
New Parent Infant Network (NEWPIN)	National newpin development project	50,000
Phobic Action	Core	20,000
Rape Counselling and Research Project	Core	10,000
Richmond Fellowship	Core	97,000
Samaritans	Core	155,000
Samaritans	Multi-cultural outreach project	8,000
Schizophrenia A National Emergency (SANE)	Saneline project	125,000
Triumph Over Phobia (TOP)	Development project	20,000

Voluntary organisation	*Core/Project*	*Total* £
UK Advocacy Network (UKAN)	Core	40,000
Vietnamese Mental Health Project	Core	40,000
Westminster Pastoral Foundation	Reduction in suicide risk project	10,000
Widows Advisory Trust	Core	18,000
Women in Special Hospitals (WISH)	Core	25,000
Women's Therapy Centre	Core	15,000
Women's Therapy Centre	Information project	10,000
Young Minds	Core	10,000
Young Minds	Leaflet on effect of violence	1,470

Birmingham District Health Authorities

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria were used for the awarding of the contract to oversee personnel issues for the merger of North Birmingham district health authority, East Birmingham district health authority and West Birmingham district health authority to E. M. Knock Associates.

Mr. Sackville: We understand that the tender was awarded by North Birmingham district health authority in line with its standing financial instructions. Quotations for the human resources project were invited from five organisations and one individual. The contract was awarded to the lowest priced tender.

Charing Cross Hospital

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when the last structural survey of Charing Cross hospital in London was completed;

(2) if there was any evidence of concrete fatigue in the last structural survey of Charing Cross hospital in London.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the North West Thames regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir William Doughty, chairman of the regional health authority for details.

Heart Attacks

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has of the number of deaths each year following a heart attack.

Mr. Sackville: Information for 1988-92 is shown in the table.

Number of deaths following a heart attack [1](ICD's 410, 411, 412, 413, 414) in England and Wales 1988-92.

ICD's

Years	*410*	*411*	*412*	*413*	*414*	*Total*
1988	96,404	795	1	103	55,781	153,084
1989	92,466	610	0	71	57,597	150,744
1990	89,336	568	4	119	58,132	148,159
1991	87,834	504	3	120	61,629	150,090
1992	82,932	463	0	125	62,384	145,904

[1] International Classification of Diseases, 9th revision.

410 Acute myocardial infarction.

411 Other acute and subacute forms of ischaemic heart disease.

412 Old myocardial infarction.

413 Angina pectoris.

414 Other forms of chronic heart disease.

Registered Homes Act 1984

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what statistics she collects on the operation of the Registered Homes Act 1984; and if she will publish them.

Mr. Bowis: The Department collects information on the number of homes registered under the Registered Homes Act 1984 as at 31 March each year. This relates to registered residential care homes, registered nursing homes and homes registered both as residential homes and nursing homes.

Information on registered residential care homes is published annually in "Residential Accommodation for Elderly and for Younger Physically Disabled People: All Residents in Local Authority, Voluntary and Private Homes England" and "Residential Accommodation for mentally ill people and people with learning disabilities: Number of local authority, voluntary and private homes and places England".

For registered nursing homes the information is published annually in "Private Hospitals, Homes and Clinics Registered Under Section 23 of the Registered Homes Act".

Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of sampling points and the frequency of sampling in each district health authority where samples have been taken to test for the incidence of paralytic shellfish poisoning for the last 24 months; and what have been the results.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

Samples of mussels have been taken by environmental health officers for many years from the NE coast of England, where PSP is known to occur seasonally from April to September. Sampling begins fortnightly in April from eight sites from Berwick-on-Tweed to Bridlington, increasing at the height of the season to sampling from each site every week. Results followed the expected pattern in 1992 and 1993, peaking at 148·2 microgrammes of Saxitoxin equivalent/100g in June 1992 and 1,587·5 microgrammes of Saxitoxin equivalent/100g in May 1993.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give details of the savings achieved by the competing for quality programme; on what basis he has calculated the figure; and whether this figure was offset against the total cost of the market-testing programme.

Mr. Waldegrave: In the 18 months to September 1993, provisional estimates suggest the programme will lead to savings of approximately £100 million of savings per year.

This figure is the difference between the annual cost of activities before testing and their annual cost afterwards, taking account of the redundancy and other costs attributable to the individual market tests. Where costs before testing have not been reported, no savings have been attributed.

European Parliament (Administration)

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what errors there were in the information the Cabinet Office communicated to candidates for the European Parliament open competition mentioned in his answer of 14 June, *Official Report*, column *398*, on the status of their application for these posts; and what communication he will make to those candidates with regard to the status of their application.

Mr. Davis: I am unaware of any errors in the information given by the Cabinet Office to candidates for this competition but I would be happy to look into any specific case brought to my attention.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will seek from his Italian counterpart a copy of the report prepared by the Italian Nuclear Regulatory Authorities—DISP—evaluating the readiness of Italian nuclear waste storage facilities to receive back reprocessing radioactive wastes from Sellafield.

Mr. Eggar: Arrangements for the return of waste are, in the first instance, a matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc and its customers in line with the contracts between them. These arrangements are supported by inter-governmental letters. Since 1976, BNFL's contracts for the reprocessing of overseas spent fuel have contained options for the return of wastes. The Government intend that these options will be exercised and wastes returned.

Textiles

Sir David Knox: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of the current average rates of import duties and other restrictions on both textile and clothing products in the United States of America, Australia, South Africa, China, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Brazil, Lithuania, Malaysia, Bulgaria, Philippines, Mexico, Argentina and South Korea.

Mr. Needham: A table showing import duty rates and remarks on restrictions for textiles and clothing products in the 16 named countries follows.

In most cases a minimum and maximum rate are shown instead of an average duty rate because textile and clothing products cover a large range of tariff headings. Duty rates for a number of countries are likely to change as a consequence of the Uruguay round agreement. Further information on restrictions may be available from United Kingdom Posts overseas; to check this would have incurred disproportionate costs.

	Duty rate (per cent.)	*Remarks*
USA	0-38	38 per cent. plus 48·5c/Kg No restrictions for United Kingdom textiles.
Australia	3-34	No restrictions. Quota system finished.
South Africa		Textiles: Duty calculated on weight, 10 Rand per kilogram, or value, 50 per cent. of total consignment value (FOB), whichever is the greater. Surcharge of 5 per cent. Clothing: Duty calculated on weight, 50 Rand per kilogram, or value, 100 per cent. of total consignment value, which-ever is the greater. Surcharge of 15 per cent. Quotas are in place but have not been reached.
China	3-100	No known restrictions.
India		Textiles: 85 per cent. plus 35 per cent. central excise tariff. Import licence required. Clothing: Imports banned.
Pakistan	*(a)* 95 *(b)* 110	*(a)* Does not include manufacturing tax. *(b)* Includes manufacturing tax. No known restrictions.
Indonesia	5-45	Licensing requirements.
Sri Lanka	10-50	No known restrictions.
Brazil	10-20	No known restrictions.
Lithuania	15	No known restrictions.
Malaysia	*(a)* 2-30 *(b)* 25-35	*(a)* Textiles: some products have sales tax 10 per cent. and 5 per cent. Surtax. *(b)* Clothing: 10 per cent. sales tax and 5 per cent. surtax for a majority of imports. No other restrictions.
Bulgaria	5-25	Temporary import surcharge on all goods of 3 per cent. 1993, 2 per cent. 1994.
Philippines	3-50	No restrictions.
Mexico	5-20	Certificate of origin and labelling requirements.
Argentina	15-20	No restrictions.
South Korea	2-10	No restrictions.

Export Licences

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, columns *252-53*, if he will publish a table showing the number of export licences *(a)* approved and *(b)* refused in each year since 1984 under the heading ML7, relating to military defence against biological agents.

Mr. Needham: Export licences *(a)* approved and *(b)* refused for goods under the heading ML7 from 1992 to 8 December 1993 are as follows:

Year	*Number*
(a)	
1992	310
1993	206
(b)	
1992	2
1993	0

ML7 is an entry in the Export of Goods (Control) Order which includes controls on biological agents themselves, as well as equipment for military defence against them. Records of export licences are kept for seven years. It would be possible for the precise information requested covering the period 1986 to date to be provided, but only at a disproportionate cost.

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

Mr. Eggar: The annual cost in 1990-91 of the car service for Ministers was £223,966 (including VAT), for five cars.

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what responsibilities fall on British Nuclear Fuels to cover the full costs of application of *(a)* Euratom safeguards, *(b)* International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards and *(c)* safeguards, pursuant to Cmnd 6730, at (i) the Magnox reprocessing line and (ii) the thermal oxide reprocessing line at Sellafield.

Mr. Eggar: In accordance with the Euratom treaty and the statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the costs of the application of safeguards by these two bodies are met through the contributions made to their budgets by their member states.

Enforcement Agencies Code

Mr. Steen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 2 December, *Official Report*, column *738*, on the publication of a code for enforcement agencies, what estimate he has made of the cost of publication by the agencies of their own codes of practice.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Deregulation Ministers are responsible for ensuring that enforcement agencies publish their own codes of practice setting out how they have met the principles in "Working with Business: a code for enforcement agencies". Therefore, it is for Departmental Deregulation Ministers to determine what resources should be devoted to publication of the codes of practice taking into account the size and nature of the business community with whom each of the enforcement agencies deal.

Atomic Energy Authority

Mr. Mills: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the current level of public funding of the Atomic Energy Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Atomic Energy Authority operates as a trading fund and does not receive grant in aid from the Government. The Atomic Energy Authority currently has outstanding long-term borrowing from the national loans fund of £124·4 million. It is intended that the Atomic Energy Authority's borrowing should progressively decrease over the public expenditure planning period. In 1992-93 approximately £320 million of the Atomic Energy Authority's turnover came from work undertaken for Government Departments and other public sector organisations. Where practicable work for the Government is increasingly subject to competition in line with Government policy.

Business Licences

Sir Donald Thompson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the business licence requirements which the Government have reviewed since 1990.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: All regulations affecting business, including licensing requirements are currently under review as part of the deregulation initiative. No information has been centrally collected on reviews of business licensing prior to the current exercise.

Statistical Forms

Sir Donald Thompson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action has been taken to identify the potential for limiting the burden of statistical form filling on business.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Government Departments are reviewing the forms they issue to business as part of their overall review of regulations which affect industry. The deregulation task forces have also been looking at how the burden of form filling can be reduced and have made a number of proposals which we are considering.

THORP

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 3 December, *Official Report*, column *766*, for what period of time the THORP receipt and storage pond at Sellafield has been designated for safeguards inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mr. Eggar: No time scale has been set.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the level 4 uranium commissioning at THORP has been completed; and what modifications have been demanded by the nuclear installations inspectorate before commissioning can proceed to level 5.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 9 December 1993]:* Progress on level 4 commissioning of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant is a matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc. Level 5 commissioning can commence only if the new discharge authorisations for Sellafield are granted and the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate is satisfied as to its safety.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what economic costs expressed in net present value term were estimated by Touche Ross for a two-year delay in THORP to (i) the United Kingdom economy, (ii) BNFL and (iii) overseas customers.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 9 December 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) on 15 April 1993, *Official Report*, column *680*.

Departmental Office, Teesside

Mr. Bates: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to establish a permanent office of the DTI on Teesside.

Mr. Eggar: The DTI already has an office in Billingham.

Tourism

Mr. Bayley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how he intends to clarify the EC Package Travel Regulations for the United Kingdom tourist industry.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: All guidance issued by my Department is kept under review and we will be considering what revisions to make to the guidance notes on the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992 in the light of recommendations from the retail, tourism and services deregulations task force.

Frogs' Legs

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will state the quantities and country of origin of frogs' legs imported into the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham: The available information is given in the following table.

United Kingdom imports of frogs' legs

(metric tonnes)

Country of origin	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
France	31·6	8·6	2·5	5·6	4·9
Belgium-Luxembourg	11·7	10·1	9·8	8·6	6·4
Netherlands	0·6	6·4	3·9	4·7	0·9
Bangladesh	—	—	—	—	3·2
Indonesia	16·2	11·4	12·6	10·2	7·3
Total	60·2	36·4	28·7	29·1	22·8

Note: Frogs' legs are classified as heading 012.92 of the Standard International Trade Classification.

Accounts Services Agency

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much operating surplus has been surrendered by the Accounts Services Agency to the Exchequer each year since 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will retain in the public sector the Accounts Services Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) on 29 October, *Official Report,* column *805.* The review of the Accounts Services Agency has yet to be concluded. In due course a decision will be taken and an announcement made.

Sizewell B

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will ensure that the Sizewell B nuclear power station will be provided with containment which is demonstrated to be no less effective than the containment provided for test explosions of nuclear weapons; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what estimate he has made of the consequences of a disruptive explosion of the reactor pressure vessel of the Sizewell B nuclear power station in terms of *(a)* the total value today of expected losses and *(b)* the total numbers of injuries and premature deaths; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: All aspects of the Sizewell B pressurised water reactor (PWR) design including the operational safety of the reactor pressure vessel (RPV) and containment building, and the possibility of the catastrophic failure of the RPV were carefully scrutinised by eminent independent assessors during the extensive public inquiry into the Sizewell B proposal. These matters are further re-examined at the public inquiry for Hinkley Point C when a similar design of PWR to that for Sizewell B was proposed. The conclusion of both inquiries was that the possibility of RPV explosion was extremely remote. Moreover, Sizewell B has been built to a very high technical standard and the independent Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate will not consent to its operation if they are not completely satisfied that it is safe to do so.

Electricity

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the total *(a)* value and *(b)* number of kilowatt hours of electricity supplied to the United Kingdom by Electricité de France in each year since such supplies commenced.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* The net amount and value of electricity supplied to the United Kingdom from France has been as follows. Estimates of value since April 1990 are based on prevailing pool prices.

	Value £ million	*Volume TWh*
1986	80	4·3
1987	242	11·6
1988	268	12·8
1989	305	12·6
1990	200	11·9
1991	343	16·4
1992	369	16·7

Source: United Kingdom Digest of Energy Statistics: 1993, tables 49 and 66; 1992, tables 48 and 65; 1991, tables 50 and 66.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what projections he has made of the *(a)* value and *(b)* volume of electricity which is expected to be imported from France in each of the next 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* A description of how trade across the interconnector with France was expected to develop in the foreseeable future was given in the Government's Coal Review White Paper (Cm. 2235), paragraphs 7.100 to 7.101.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will make it his policy to cease to import electricity from France; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will commission an independent report into the total employment effect, implications for the balance of payments, and impact upon Exchequer revenues and social security spending which have occurred or which will occur in the future as a result of the importation of electricity from France.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* The Government's policy towards trade in electricity across the interconnector was set out in chapter 7 of the Government's Coal Review White Paper (Cm. 2235).

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has concerning the percentage of electricity produced in each member country of the European Community from *(a)* nuclear, *(b)* coal, *(c)* gas, *(d)* orimulsion, *(e)* oil, *(f)* hydroelectric and *(g)* other powered generators.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* The information requested is shown in the following table. Separate figures for orimulsion are not available.

Total Net Production of Electrical Energy in 1991

Per cent

	Nuclear	*Coal*	*Gas*[1]	*Oil*[2]	*Hydro-electricity*[3]	*Other*[4]
Belgium	59·7	22·9	12·4	2·5	1·4	1·1
Denmark	—	90·9	2·4	3·7	2·3	0·7
Germany	27·9	56·6	8·4	2·7	3·6	0·9
Greece	—	65·7	0·3	24·5	9·6	—
Spain	35·9	37·1	1·5	6·4	18·8	0·4
France	72·7	8·6	1·4	3·1	14·0	0·2
Ireland	—	[5]52·6	24·7	16·0	6·7	—
Italy	—	12·7	17·4	46·5	21·4	2·1
Luxembourg	—	—	38·8	1·8	56·8	2·7
Netherlands	4·4	30·6	59·0	4·6	0·2	1·4
Portugal	—	32·3	0·2	33·3	31·5	2·7
United Kingdom	20·8	65·2	1·8	9·5	2·0	0·8

Source: Eurostat: Energy - Yearly Statistics

[1] includes both natural gas and derived gases such as coke oven gas and blast furnace gas.

[2] includes Orimulsion.

[3] includes production from pumped storage stations.

[4] includes wood, peat (except in Ireland), industrial residues and geothermal.

[5] Irish figure includes peat.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last met representatives of Electricité de France; and what was said at that meeting.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* I met the French Industry Minister, M. Longuet, in the summer. We discussed the liberalisation of the French energy market, opportunities for United Kingdom generators to export to and through France, and the levy-exempt status of Electricité de France's electricity exports to the United Kingdom.

WALES

Forestry

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which of the woods owned by the Forestry Commission in Wales are now for sale; which have been sold; and what is the amount of sales receipts so far.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The following areas of forest land in Wales are currently being offered for sale on the open market by the Forestry Commission.

County	*Name*	*Area (hectares)*
Clwyd	Nantyffrith	111
Dyfed	Allt Cil y Llyn Fawr	3
	Allt Crychdu	18
	Allt Fawr	7
	Allt Llwyn Dyfrion	11
	Allt y Down/Allt Pant Lleuci	16
	Allt y Fergwm	23
	Bwlch Newydd	8
	Bylchau Duon	62
	Cefn Eithin	5
	Cilfowyr	3
	Cilgwyn Wood	11
	Coed Cefn Pwll Hen	20
	Coed Ffridd Cwmere	20
	Court Wood	19
	Cynheidre Uchaf	24
	Fforest	22
	Glanteifi	3
	Havod Wood	12
	Llwyn y Gwair	14
	Lon Isaf	7
	Maestwynog	12
	Pencwm Fawr	9
	Penhill Wood	4
	Penrallt Ddu	13
	Pont Eynon and Allt y Forlan	29
	Pont Henri	14
	Portis Pant	30
	Ty'r Shyme	7
	Waun Baglan Woods	26
Gwent	Craig y Merchant	24
	Tyllys	12
	Ty Fry Big Wood	17
	Llandafal Wood	10
Gwynedd	Coed Ty Uchaf	15
	Coed Dyfi	17
	Glyn Estate	49
Powys	Great Wood	9
	Pwll Llydan	31
	Tirabad	2
South Glamorgan	Breach Wood	9
West Glamorgan	Blaen y Cwm	32
	Bryn Llefrith	26
	Craig Ynysgollen	10
	Gelligaer	33
	Nant y Stalwyn	44
	Tir y Gof	47

Lists giving details of the areas of forest land sold by the Forestry Commission from the start of the disposals programme in July 1981 to December 1992 are held in the Library of the House. A list of the forest land sold by the Commission in 1993 will be drawn up and placed in the Library of the House in the new year.

The receipts from the sales of forest land in Wales from July 1981 to 31 March 1993 were £18 million.

School Pupils

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will give a percentage breakdown of all subjects attempted at A-level during each of the last three years in English-medium schools in Wales, in Welsh-medium schools and in bilingual schools in Wales;

(2) what was the proportion of passes in each grade for each subject attempted at A-level during each of the last three years in English-medium schools in Wales, Welsh-medium schools and in bilingual schools in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information is not collected in the form requested. Maintained secondary schools are designated as either Welsh speaking or not under the Education Reform Act 1988. Tables giving information on the proportion of passes at each grade for A level and a percentage breakdown for each subject for Welsh speaking and non Welsh speaking schools for available years has been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of children from *(a)* Welsh-medium schools, *(b)* English-medium schools and *(c)* bilingual schools went on to university; what proportion of those undertook to read mathematics or science; and if he will give comparable data for English-medium schools in Wales and bilingual schools.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is not available in the form requested. Maintained secondary schools are classified as either Welsh speaking or not Welsh speaking under the Education Reform Act 1988. In 1991-92, 25 per cent. of all pupils leaving Welsh speaking schools and 18 per cent. of those leaving schools not designated as Welsh speaking entered higher education institutions. Information is not collected on the subjects which pupils intend to study.

Cormorants

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications his Department has received in the last 12 months for licences to control the number of cormorant on Welsh fisheries; and how many of these have been approved.

Mr. Redwood: Four applications have been received in the last 12 months; three have been rejected and one is under consideration.

Crickhowell Bypass

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current level of financial commitment for the employment of consultants for the investigation into the Crickhowell bypass scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Some £593,000 has been expended since mid-1989 on fees and expenses to consultants employed for the two public consultations and the preparation of the necessary engineering, environmental, archaeological and town planning studies in connection with this scheme.

All views expressed following the recent public consultation are being carefully considered before a decision is taken on whether or not to proceed with any of the published routes.

Trawsfynydd

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will reverse the decision to allow Nuclear Electric plc to burn radioactive waste oil and other contaminated materials at Trawsfynydd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No, my right hon. Friend sees no grounds for doing so, especially as high temperature incineration is widely accepted to be the most suitable environmental option for this type of waste.

Opencast Coal Mines

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy in respect of the construction of opencast coal mines in sites of special scientific interest, with particular reference to the proximity of national parks; what such proposals he has recently received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Minerals Planning Guidance Note 3, "Opencast Coal Mining", advises that opencast coal proposals in sites of special scientific interest or affecting national parks should be subject to a most rigorous examination. Currently there are no proposals before me for determination.

Forestry Commission Land

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, for each separate piece of land currently owned or leased by the Forestry Commission in Mid Glamorgan, South Glamorgan and West Glamorgan *(a)* its land and *(b)* its area in hectares; and whether he will place a map in the Library which names and identifies each of these pieces of land.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 8 December 1993 at columns *237-238*.

Nuclear Industry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to place on the agenda of the European Union Heads of Government summit meeting in Brussels on 10 to 11 December the matter of nuclear reprocessing and plutonium stockpiles in the European Community.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

No.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the policy of the Child Support Agency in respect of payments to children whose fathers are dead.

Mr. Burt: Child support legislation is applicable only where there is an absent parent. Where a child's natural or adoptive father is dead, no application for child support maintenance can be made.

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

Mr. Hague: Five vehicles were provided and the net cost, exclusive of VAT, was £209,989.

Child Benefit

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much money families will receive in total in child benefit this year; and how much more would have been received if the number of children were the same as in 1979.

Mr. Burt: It is estimated that families will receive about £6 billion in total in child benefit in 1993-94 and that a further £500 million would have been received if the number of children were the same as in 1978-79.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what dates since 1978 there has been an announcement of change in the level of child benefit; when each change came into effect; and by which Minister each change was announced.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table.

Announced by	*Date of announcement*	*Effective date of change*
Secretary of State for Social Security[1]	12 April 1978	13 November 1978 and 2 April 1979
Chancellor of the Exchequer	26 March 1980	24 November 1980
Secretary of State for Social Security	11 March 1981	23 November 1981
Secretary of State for Social Security	10 March 1982	22 November 1982
Secretary of State for Social Security	23 June 1983	21 November 1983
Secretary of State for Social Security	18 June 1984	26 November 1984
Secretary of State for Social Security	18 June 1985	25 November 1985
Secretary of State for Social Security	24 February 1986	28 July 1986
Secretary of State for Social Security	22 October 1986	6 April 1987
Secretary of State for Social Security	24 October 1990	8 April 1991
Chancellor of the Exchequer	19 March 1991	7 October 1991
Secretary of State for Social Security	21 October 1991	6 April 1992
Secretary of State for Social Security	12 November 1992	12 April 1993
Secretary of State for Social Security	1 December 1993	11 April 1994

[1] Labour administration.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cases to date have been considered by the Child Support Agency; how many and what percentage of those cases have resulted in the establishment of new financial support arrangements; and in how many and what percentage of those cases a court maintenance order was already in operation.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mrs. Ann Winterton, dated 10 December 1993:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking questions about the operations of the Child Support Agency.

To 31 October 1993, the Agency has processed over 107,000 cases. Of these, 47,000 (44% of the total) have resulted in the arrangement of maintenance. Figures are not not kept on the proportion of these cases in which a court order for maintenance was already in operation. We estimate, however, that about 50% of cases taken on by 31 October were already receiving maintenance.

I hope you will find this reply helpful.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how the planned changes to incapacity benefit will affect the entitlements of patients who suffer from severe heart conditions and strokes.

Mr. Scott: A new, more objective, medical test of incapacity for work will apply to claims for incapacity benefit. The new test will assess, on a case-by-case basis, the incapacitating nature of a condition or combinations of conditions on the ability to work. Specific medical conditions such as strokes can have a wide range of effects from severe to very mild. We expect that those with more severe conditions would satisfy the test.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will consider reintroducing earnings-related unemployment benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The Government have no plans to reintroduce earnings-related unemployment benefit.

Official Travel

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 23 November, *Official Report,* column *35,* which company arranges travel for his officials; and what form bills take if records are kept by mode of travel only.

Mr. Hague: Wagon-Lits Travel Ltd. is the approved contractor for business travel by officials of the Department. The company presents its bills in two forms. Each month, a list of all travel transactions is provided in invoice date order together with cost centre analyses of individual expenditure for internal accounting purposes.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on how many occasions and at what cost to public funds officials have visited his private residence in France.

Mr. Hague: Department of Social Security officials have visited the house of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in France on one occasion. The cost of the visit was £449·24.

Family Credit

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a table showing the number of families receiving family credit per week of *(a)* less than £100, *(b)* between £100 and £120, *(c)* between £120 and £140, *(d)* between £140 and £150, *(e)* between £150 and £160, *(f)* between £160 and £180, *(g)* between £180 and £200, *(h)* between £200 and £250 and *(i)* over £300; and in each category how many he expects will gain (i) nothing, (ii) between £0 and £10, (iii) between £10 and £20 and (iv) between £20 and £28 as a result of the proposed changes announced in the Budget statement relating to family credit.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is in the table:

Family credit recipients

	All cases
Total	486,720
Under £100	480,520
£100 to £119·99	4,620
£120 to £139·99	1,300
£140 to £149·99	180
£150 to £159·99	80
£160 to £179·99	20

Note: Awards of Family Credit current at 30 April 1993, analysed by amount of Family Credit in payment. Based on 5 per cent. sample of awards.

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will estimate the number of families receiving family credit which he expects will gain *(a)* nothing, *(b)* between £0 and £10, *(c)* between £10 and £20 and *(d)* between £20 and £28 as a result of the proposed changes announced in the Budget statement relating to family credit;

(2) how many families he expects to benefit from the change in rules announced in the Budget statement relating to family credit.

(3) how many more families he expects will be entitled to family credit as a result of the change in rules announced in the Budget statement relating to family credit; and how many of these he expects to gain *(a)* the full £28 and *(b)* less than £28.

Mr. Burt: We estimate that the assistance with child care costs will give substantial help to 150,000 families. A total of 80,000 families already on family credit will benefit and 20,000 at present just outside the family credit scheme will become entitled. We estimate that 50,000 families presently on income support will be enabled to take up work as a result of the change.

The amount of increase in the family credit award for those already receiving the benefit will be related to the actual child care costs up to a maximum of £40 which they incur.

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families receiving family credit have *(a)* two parents with (i) one child, (ii) two children, (iii) three children and (iv) four children or more and *(b)* one parent with (i) one child, (ii) two children, (iii) three children and (iv) four children or more; and if he will estimate how many in each category will gain (1) nothing, (2) between £0 to £10, (3) between £10 to £20 and (4) between £20 to £28 as a result of the proposed changes to family credit announced in the Budget.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is in the table:

Family credit recipients

	Couples	*Singles*	*All cases*
With one child	72,220	106,240	178,460
With two children	106,700	71,840	178,540
With three children	64,040	21,460	85,500
With four or more children	37,880	6,340	44,220
Total	280,840	205,880	486,720

Note: Awards of family credit current at 30 April 1993, analysed by family size and type. Based on 5 per cent. sample of awards.

Income Support

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons without accommodation claimed income support in the Newbury constituency in each month between December 1992 and November 1993.

Mr. Burt: I am informed by Mr. Michael Bichard, the Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Child Care

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families receiving family credit currently make child care arrangements by *(a)* child minding, *(b)* playgroups, *(c)* workplace nurseries, *(d)* nurseries and *(e)* a nanny; and what information he has on the costs of each type of arrangement.

Mr. Burt: Information about the child care arrangements of families receiving family credit is not available. Information about families in general is in the tables and further elaborated in the sources quoted, copies of which are in the Library.

Weekly cost of child care

Working parents group	*Percentage that pay*	*Average weekly cost £*
All working parents	23	30·70
Working couples	22	32·40
Working lone parents	29	24·60

Low income working lone parents

	Percentage that pay	*Average weekly cost £*
Lone parents	19	N/a
Lone parents working full-time	27	21·50

N/a—Not available.

Cost of professional[1] child care
All working parents

Type of care used	*Average weekly cost £*
Professional care as sole method	42·40
Two methods of child care, professional/non-professional	30·00

[1] "Professional"—not care provided by friends and relatives.

Sources:

PSI reports—Families, Work and the Use of Childcare (*Employment Gazette,* August 1993.)

Families, Work and Benefits (September 1993).

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Policing

35. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission what is the annual amount paid by the House of Commons administration for the supply of police cover.

Mr. Beith: The estimate for the provision of security services to the House of Commons in the current financial year is £9·82 million—a figure which the hon. Member will find on page 7 of the Commission's annual report, published earlier this year.

Health and Safety Training

38. **Mrs. Bridget Prentice:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission what representations he has received about health and safety training for staff of the House of Commons.

Mr. Beith: Since last May I have replied to five questions tabled on this and similar issues related to health and safety. I have received no other representations. A number of training schemes have been organised by House Departments or are in prospect.

European Legislation

42. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will review the arrangements for considering EC legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to do so.

Recesses

43. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will give the figures for the total lengths of recesses in each parliamentary Session since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick).

The table sets out sitting and non-sitting days since 1979.

Sitting and non-sitting days since 1979
(Calendar years)

	Sitting days	*Non-sitting days*
1979	146	[1]107
1980	173	81
1981	177	76
1982	175	78
1983	154	[1]99
1984	171	83
1985	171	82
1986	166	87
1987	150	[1]103
1988	173	81
1989	176	77
1990	176	77
1991	165	88
1992	148	[1]106
1993	165	88
Average	166	88

[1] General election year.

Sitting days
(By session)

	Number of days
1979-80	244
1980-81	163
1981-82	174
1982-83	115
1983-84	213
1984-85	172
1985-86	172
1986-87	109
1987-88	218
1988-89	175
1989-90	167
1990-91	160
1991-92	83
1992-93	240
Average	172

Note: It is assumed that weekends and bank holidays account for 112 days each year.

Motions and Questions

44. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will bring forward proposals to allow hon. Members to table early-day motions and written questions during the parliamentary recesses.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to do so but the hon. Member may in the first instance wish to put his suggestions to the Procedure Committee.

Sitting Days

45. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the number of days that the House sat in each parliamentary Session since 1979; and the number of days that the House was in recess.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick).

Mice

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee how much has been spent on the attempts to eradicate the presence of mice from the public rooms of the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Ray Powell: This is a matter for the Director of Works; I shall ask him to write to my hon. Friend.

Chairs

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what is the cost of putting out and removing chairs within the precincts of the House of Commons; and how many contractors there are.

Mr. Ray Powell: This is a matter for the Director of Works.

Dining Rooms (Standards of Dress)

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Chairman of the Catering Committee what representations have been received concerning standards of dress in the Strangers' Dining Room and Churchill Room.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Numerous complaints have been received from hon. Members concerning the standards of dress of a few users of the Strangers Dining Room and the

Churchill Room. The Catering Committee considered this matter at its meeting on 16 June and laid down the following dress code to be observed by gentleman Members and male guests in these two dining rooms:

Jackets to be worn except in unbearably hot weather.
Ties to be worn at all times.
No jeans to be worn.

Visitors' Facilities

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he will list the facilities available to visitors to the House *(a)* when the House is sitting and *(b)* when the House is in recess; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Martin: A detailed description of the facilities available for visitors to the House on sitting and non-sitting days is contained in various leaflets issued by the Serjeant of Arms, and principally that entitled "Regulations for Visitors". These leaflets are reprinted in the Members' handbook.

Strangers Gallery

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has plans to increase the number of seats available to members of the public in the Strangers' Gallery.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: There are no such plans at present. However, the hon. Member may wish to write to me with any specific point of concern he has about the Strangers Gallery.

Fire Certificates

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee when was the last time the Houses of Parliament received a fire certificate; what have been the reasons for refusals since; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ray Powell: A fire certificate was last issued to the Houses of Parliament in 1969. Since then no certificate has been applied for or refused. A programme of work on fire precautionary measures is progressing in order that a new certificate may be issued in the coming year.

Value Added Tax

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Lord President of the Council what happens to the VAT reclaimed by the Fees Office on items of expenditure paid for by hon. Members from the office costs allowance.

Mr. Newton: The Fees Office do not reclaim VAT paid by hon. Members on expenditure paid by them from their office costs allowance.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement regarding the long-term future of HLCA grants.

Mr. Jack: The terms and conditions of hill livestock compensatory allowances will continue to be reviewed annually in the context of the autumn review of economic conditions in the hills and uplands.

Badgers

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will show the number of badgers shot and gassed in each of the last three years in each county in the south-west region; and how many of these badgers were subsequently shown to have tuberculosis.

Mr. Soames: The numbers of badgers shot in the year to date and in the previous three years in each county in the south-west of England, and the numbers of badgers that were subsequently shown to be positive for tuberculosis —*M. bovis*—are as follows. Gassing has not been used as a means of controlling badgers since 1982.

1990

	Number shot	*Number positive for M.bovis*
Avon	55	13
Cornwall	385	63
Devon	188	45
Dorset	7	2
Gloucester	109	27
Somerset	17	—
Wiltshire	3	—
TOTALS	764	150
		19·6 per cent.

1991

	Number shot	*Number positive for M.bovis*
Avon	55	17
Cornwall	422	75
Devon	159	20
Dorset	49	2
Gloucester	75	12
Somerset	—	—
Wiltshire	178	34
TOTALS	938	160
		17 per cent.

1992

	Number shot	*Number positive for M.bovis*
Avon	159	38
Cornwall	470	68
Devon	162	35
Dorset	—	—
Gloucester	96	38
Somerset	—	—
Wiltshire	141	30
TOTALS	1,028	209
		20·3 per cent.

1993[1]

	Number shot	*Number positive for M.bovis*	*Number of results awaited*
Avon	118	24	3
Cornwall	330	63	22
Devon	119	33	29
Dorset	49	8	—

	Number shot	*Number positive for M.bovis*	*Number of results awaited*
Gloucester	119	31	25
Somerset	125	48	5
Wiltshire	125	28	39
Totals	985	235	123 23·8 per cent.

[1] 1 January to 6 December 1993.

Agriculture Tenancies

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she has to retain the 15-year minimum fixed term for agriculture tenancy; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: A statutory minimum term has never featured in our proposals for tenancy reform; nor is it included in the common position agreed by industry organisations last week.

In the light of that agreement, we shall be going ahead with all the necessary steps so that we shall be ready to introduce legislation as soon as parliamentary time becomes available.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what spending she plans following the allocation made to her Department in the Budget directly in 1994-95 on *(a)* sea defence and coast protection, *(b)* inland drainage and flood protection and *(c)* supporting the common fisheries policy.

Mr. Jack: The information requested on 1994-95 spending plans is as follows:

	£ million
Grants to the National Rivers Authority	
sea defence, inland drainage and flood protection	38·4
Grants to local authorities	
coast protection	26·6
sea defence, inland drainage and flood protection	2·1
Grants to Internal Drainage Boards	
inland drainage and flood protection	1·0
Supporting the Common Fisheries Policy (including market support, degressive withdrawal scheme and flat rate aid scheme)	2·0

Forestry Commission Land

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if she will include Forestry Commission woods in Nottinghamshire in her list of commission land in England for which there is no question of privatisation;

(2) if she will list all those Forestry Commission landholdings in England for which there will be no question of privatisation.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 25 November 1993]:* Forestry Ministers have asked the forestry review group to review options for the ownership and management of Forestry Commission woodlands, and to make proposals for changes which would improve the effectiveness of the delivery of the Government's forestry policy objectives, having regard to the Government's other economic and envrionmental policies.

We will await the advice of the review group before considering what further action, if any, should be taken in respect of the ownership and management of Forestry Commission woodlands.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what plans she has to take into account the views of local people, organisations and local authorities in England when deciding which areas of Forestry Commission land will not be privatised;

(2) what account she takes of the views of local people when confirming that there is no question of privatising particular areas of Forestry Commission land in England.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 25 November 1993]:* About 3,000 individuals and 300 organisations have already written to Ministers and the forestry review group, setting out their views. The group is taking full account of these as it prepares its report.

There will be full consultation of the general public and interested bodies on the options preferred by Ministers before matters are taken forward. The form and timing of consultation will depend on the advice which the review group offers Ministers and what conclusions Ministers draw from that advice.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list, for each separate piece of land currently owned or leased by the Forestry Commission in Hereford and Worcester, Oxfordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire *(a)* its name and *(b)* its area in hectares; and if she will place a map in the Library which names and identifies each of these pieces of land.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* The Forestry Commission manages the following areas of land in Cheshire, Cumbria and Lancashire:

County	*Area (hectares)*
Cheshire	948
Cumbria	26,508
Lancashire	1,816

I have made arrangements for a map showing the location of the individual areas to be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

The more detailed information requested on the individual areas is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

EMPLOYMENT

Enterprise Allowances

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many enterprise allowances were granted in each training and enterprise council area and in each standard region in the 1992-93 financial year; in how many such cases the term of the allowance was completed; and in how many cases the enterprise allowance resulted in the continuation of a business after completion.

Miss Widdecombe: The business start-up scheme replaced the enterprise allowance scheme in April 1991. Table 1 gives the number of business start-up scheme starts in 1992-93 for each training and enterprise council—TEC —and region in England and Wales.

Information about whether the period of allowances was completed is not held centrally.

Information on the continuation of business is not available for individual TECs, but is available regionally from special surveys. The latest figures cover starts in April and May 1991 which were still in business 18 months later in November 1992. These are shown in table 2.

Table 1
BSUS: Cumulative starts by TEC 1992-93

	Numbers
Hampshire	1,160
Heart of England	130
Isle of Wight	100
Kent	820
Milton Keynes	130
Surrey	270
Sussex	300
Thames Valley	450
REGION TOTAL	3,370
AZTEC	340
North London	430
North West London	230
CILNTEC	440
Central London	400
London East	310
SOLOTEC	680
West London	350
South Thames	550
REGION TOTAL	3,730
Bedfordshire	180
Central and South Cambridgeshire	180
Greater Peterborough	150
Suffolk	460
Norfolk and Waveney	690
Essex	380
Hertfordshire	430
REGION TOTAL	2,460
Avon	320
Devon/Cornwall	1,510
Dorset	320
Gloucester	690
Somerset	200
Wiltshire	560
REGION TOTAL	3,600
Birmingham	840
Central England	430
Coventry/Warwickshire	660
Dudley	210
Hereford and Worcester	350
Sandwell	210
Shropshire	280
Staffordshire	500
Walsall	140
Wolverhampton	240
REGION TOTAL	3,830
North Derbyshire	290
South Derbyshire	400
Leicestershire	1,020
Lincolnshire	610
Northamptonshire	380
Greater Nottinghamshire	700
North Nottinghamshire	440
REGION TOTAL	3,830
Bradford	570
Calderdale/Kirklees	380
Humberside	750
Leeds	540
Rotherham	300
Sheffield	600
Wakefield	200
Barnsley/Doncaster	780
North Yorkshire	980
REGION TOTAL	5,100
Bolton/Bury	350
Rochdale	110
Stockport/High Peak	330
Wigan	300
Oldham	150
South and East Cheshire	180
Central Manchester	1,020
REGION TOTAL	2,440
North Cheshire	400
Merseyside	1,140
Cumbria	350
East Lancashire	440
West Lancashire	380
CEWTEC (Cheshire/Wirral)	480
QUALITEC (St. Helens)	220
REGION TOTAL	3,410
County Durham	570
Northumberland	250
Teesside	510
Tyneside	390
Wearside	170
REGION TOTAL	1,890
Gwent	450
Mid. Glamorgan	370
North East Wales	170
North West Wales	400
Powys	190
South Glamorgan	300
West Wales	800
REGION TOTAL	2,680

Source: TEC Operating Agreement (Annex J) and Welsh Office MIS.
Note: The sum of TEC total will not necessarily add up to regional totals due to independent rounding.

Table 2
BSUS: 18 month business survival rates for starts in April and May 1991 by region

	Survial rates[1] *(per cent.)*
South East	73
London	71
South West	70
Eastern[2]	72
East Midlands[2]	
West Midlands	72
Yorkshire and Humberside	72
Greater Manchester	68
North West	69
Northern	76
Wales	74

[1] November 1992 survey of people who started in April/May 1991 and were still in business 18 months later.

[2] Due to small sample sizes a combined survival rate is given for the Eastern and East Midlands regions.

Source: The November 1992 Business Start-Up Scheme 18 Month Follow-Up Survey.

Unemployed People (Training)

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of people unemployed for over six months each Employment Service regional office has referred to providers of training each month since January.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Andrew Hunter, dated 13 December 1993.

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question about referrals to providers of training.

The information you requested is set out in the attached table.

I should explain that people who are unemployed for six months are interviewed by a Client Adviser (and at six month intervals thereafter should they remain unemployed). At this interview their employment needs are discussed with a view to helping them back to work by agreeing a referral to a job, training or other suitable opportunity, e.g. a Jobclub.

I hope this is helpful.

By each employment service region, percentage of people unemployed for over six months referred to training providers by month from January to October 1993

	Northern	*Yorks. and Humber.*	*East Midlands*	*London and South East*	*South West*	*Wales*	*West Midlands*	*North West*	*Scotland*
January	2·9	3·1	2·1	2·0	1·8	3·0	2·4	2·9	2·7
February	2·7	2·6	2·0	1·9	1·6	2·6	2·2	2·6	2·6
March	2·2	2·1	1·6	1·5	1·1	1·7	1·9	2·0	2·0
April	2·6	2·4	1·6	1·4	2·1	1·9	1·9	1·8	1·8
May	2·4	2·2	1·5	1·5	1·9	1·7	1·9	1·7	1·8
June	2·3	2·2	1·6	1·5	1·9	1·7	1·8	2·0	2·0
July	2·9	2·7	2·1	1·8	2·6	2·2	2·2	2·4	2·6
August	2·2	2·3	1·8	1·6	2·1	1·7	1·9	2·0	2·2
September	2·3	2·1	1·7	1·5	2·0	2·5	2·0	1·9	2·4
October	3·2	2·0	2·2	2·0	2·6	2·2	2·4	2·6	2·9

Sources: 1. Employment Service.
2. NOMIS.

Note:—Training For Work replaced Employment Training and Employment Action in April of this year. The figures for January-March 1993 are the recorded referrals to Employment Training and Employment Action.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his policy in respect of the surplus revenue over expenditure which is being held by training and enterprise councils.

Miss Widdecombe: Training and enterprise councils —TECs—need reserves to protect the viability of their businesses. Beyond that, TECs are required to use their efficiency savings to further the objectives of their corporate plans and business plans. I know that many TECs have plans for spending their reserves effectively.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much funding has been made available to each training and enterprise council each year, expressed in cash and real terms using prices from the first year's funding and as a real terms percentage increase or decrease on the previous year.

Miss Widdecombe: Funding made available to each training and enterprise council by the Department for the last three years, expressed in cash terms and real terms using prices from the first year's funding and as a real term percentage increase or decrease on the previous year, is shown in the following table:

	1991-92		*1992-93*			*1993-94*	
	Cash terms *£ million*	*Cash terms* *£ million*	*Real terms* *£ million*	*Real terms +/– Per cent.*	*Cash terms* *£ million*	*Real terms* *£ million*	*Real terms +/– Per cent.*
Hampshire	32·00	34·13	32·87	2·71	35·63	33·23	1·11
Heart of England	10·50	12·18	11·73	11·71	11·89	11·09	–5·49
Isle of Wight	4·30	4·26	4·10	–4·59	4·34	4·04	–1·44
Kent	31·60	35·13	33·83	7·06	39·36	36·71	8·51
Milton Keynes/ North Buckinghamshire	7·10	8·04	7·74	9·05	10·12	9·44	21·96
Surrey	13·30	13·83	13·32	0·14	14·07	13·13	–1·44
Sussex	24·20	27·16	26·16	8·08	26·95	25·13	–3·91
Thames Valley Enterprise	19·60	21·21	20·43	4·21	27·45	25·60	25·34
AZTEC	11·10	11·73	11·30	1·77	14·45	13·47	19·29
CENTEC	12·70	24·24	23·34	83·81	28·58	26·66	14·20
CILNTEC	9·10	22·62	21·78	139·38	27·06	25·24	15·87
LETEC	28·70	35·90	34·57	20·46	44·42	41·43	19·83
North London	10·40	18·92	18·22	75·20	21·98	20·50	12·54

	1991-92		*1992-93*			*1993-94*	
	Cash terms *£ million*	*Cash terms* *£ million*	*Real terms* *£ million*	*Real terms* *+/–* *Per cent.*	*Cash terms* *£ million*	*Real terms* *£ million*	*Real terms* *+/–* *Per cent.*
North West London	5·80	10·03	9·66	66·54	13·48	12·57	30·17
SOLOTEC	18·90	20·12	19·38	2·52	21·94	20·47	5·63
South Thames	22·10	32·92	31·70	43·45	44·06	41·10	29·63
West London	9·80	17·27	16·63	69·71	19·79	18·46	10·97
Bedfordshire	12·60	11·72	11·29	–10·42	13·40	12·49	10·70
Cambridgeshire	6·60	6·37	6·13	–7·05	7·87	7·34	19·58
Essex	28·50	35·49	34·18	19·92	35·10	32·74	–4·21
Greater Peterborough	8·40	9·30	8·96	6·62	11·06	10·31	15·17
Hertfordshire	19·20	24·81	23·89	24·44	26·16	24·40	2·10
Norfolk/Waveney	23·90	22·57	21·74	–9·06	25·84	24·10	10·90
Suffolk	14·70	15·54	14·97	1·81	16·93	15·79	5·49
Avon	28·60	28·84	27·77	–2·89	32·21	30·04	8·18
Devon/Cornwall	52·50	52·47	50·53	–3·75	59·32	55·33	9·50
Dorset	15·20	16·53	15·92	4·73	19·28	17·98	12·97
Gloucestershire	12·80	13·92	13·41	4·73	15·21	14·19	5·85
Somerset	12·50	13·75	13·24	5·93	14·08	13·13	–0·84
Wiltshire	12·30	14·66	14·12	14·78	15·90	14·83	5·04
Birmingham	46·70	49·77	47·93	2·63	48·99	45·69	–4·67
Central England	10·90	11·71	11·28	3·46	11·81	11·01	–2·34
Coventry/Warwickshire	26·20	25·38	24·44	–6·71	30·91	28·83	17·95
Dudley	11·20	11·72	11·29	0·77	12·92	12·05	6·77
HAWTEC	10·30	11·81	11·37	10·42	13·64	12·72	11·86
Sandwell	11·40	11·99	11·55	1·29	13·44	12·53	8·56
Shropshire	13·40	14·68	14·14	5·50	14·91	13·91	–1·61
Staffordshire	34·00	35·60	34·28	0·83	37·66	35·12	2·44
Walsall	10·60	9·99	9·62	–9·24	10·52	9·81	1·96
Wolverhampton	11·50	12·12	11·67	1·49	12·52	11·68	0·04
Greater Nottingham	20·90	20·98	20·20	–3·33	24·36	22·72	12·47
Leicester	25·40	26·21	25·24	–0·63	27·05	25·23	–0·05
Lincolnshire	19·20	20·70	19·93	3·83	26·89	25·08	25·80
North Derbyshire	11·20	10·58	10·19	–9·03	11·96	11·16	9·51
North Nottinghamshire	17·50	17·12	16·49	–5·79	17·58	16·40	–0·53
Northamptonshire	12·80	13·76	13·25	3·53	14·45	13·48	1·72
South Derbyshire	17·80	18·33	17·65	–0·83	19·20	17·91	1·47
Barnsley/Doncaster	27·30	25·08	24·15	–11·53	31·21	29·11	20·52
Bradford and District	19·20	20·75	19·98	4·08	22·21	20·71	3·66
Calderdale/Kirklees	21·40	21·39	20·60	–3·74	29·15	27·19	32·00
Humberside	37·60	37·77	36·77	–3·26	39·68	37·01	1·76
Leeds	22·50	21·34	20·55	–8·66	2[illegible]41	23·70	15·33
North Yorkshire	17·40	17·56	16·91	–2·81	18·75	17·49	3·42
Rotherham	12·50	12·54	12·08	–3·39	13·96	13·02	7·78
Sheffield	25·70	23·38	22·52	–12·39	28·77	26·83	19·16
Wakefield	12·60	12·54	12·08	–4·16	14·05	13·10	8·51
Bolton/Bury	13·50	14·38	13·85	2·58	15·89	14·82	7·04
Manchester	39·10	39·31	37·86	–3·18	42·58	39·71	4·91
METROTEC	12·00	11·29	10·87	–9·39	12·13	11·31	4·03
Oldham	9·10	9·19	8·85	–2·74	9·80	9·14	3·30
Rochdale	7·80	8·87	8·54	9·51	10·32	9·63	12·72
South and East Cheshire	11·10	12·83	12·36	11·31	15·27	14·25	15·29
Stockport	9·90	10·47	10·08	1·85	11·86	11·06	9·72
CEWTEC	22·30	20·96	20·19	–9·48	24·75	23·09	14·37
Cumbria	18·60	17·68	17·03	–8·46	18·82	17·56	3·11
ELTEC	18·00	18·80	18·10	0·58	21·85	20·38	12·58
LAWTEC	26·80	28·35	27·30	1·87	31·51	29·39	7·64
Merseyside	40·10	51·00	49·11	22·48	64·80	60·44	23·06
NORMID	11·82	14·57	14·03	18·71	16·32	15·22	8·48
QUALITEC	9·60	9·83	9·47	–1·39	11·89	11·09	17·19
Durham	34·70	30·09	28·98	–16·49	33·52	31·27	7·90
Northumberland	15·30	15·28	14·72	–3·82	16·72	15·60	5·98
Teeside	35·50	33·48	32·24	–9·18	38·19	35·62	10·47
Tyneside	45·80	40·45	38·95	–14·95	49·47	46·15	18·46
Wearside	21·40	18·47	17·79	–16·88	22·61	21·09	18·55

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what criteria determine the amount of funding for individual training and enterprise councils.

Miss Widdecombe: A training and enterprise council —TEC—negotiates with the Employment Department for the allocation of funds for training programmes based on its business plans for the year. When allocating funds, the Department takes account of a range of factors, including the quality of training to be provided, the balance of training between occupations, the expected demand for places by unemployed people, and contributions from employers towards the cost of training. The Department will also take efficiency savings made by a TEC into account when negotiating prices for training.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will place in the Library a list of the directors of each training and enterprise council and the companies or organisations they represent.

Miss Widdecombe: Yes. I am doing so for all training and enterprise councils—TECs—in England. Information for the TECs in Wales is for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales to supply.

Directors of TECs are chosen to represent the range and diversity of the local labour market and not a particular company or organisation.

I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as this has been done.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total budget for training and enterprise councils in England and Wales for *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94; and what is the planned budget for 1994-95.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The budget for training and enterprise councils—TECs—in England for 1992-93 was £1·536 million. The total budget for 1993-94 is £1·738 million, including allowance payments for training and work participants, excluded from the 1992-93 budget.

Details of TEC budgets in 1994-95 will not be known until contract negotiations with councils are finalised in the spring of 1994.

Budget information relating to Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Training Allowances

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* 16-year-olds and *(b)* 17-year-olds in (i) Dundee and (ii) Scotland were in receipt of a bridging allowance at the latest available date and on that corresponding date in each of the previous five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. John McAllion, dated 13 December 1993.

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question about bridging allowance.

The information you have requested, taking 16 year olds and 17 year olds together, is provided in the attached table. Unfortunately, a breakdown by age is not available, nor is the November 1988 figure for Dundee.

Bridging Allowance can be paid to young people as long as they are registered at a Careers Office for Youth Training (YT) and have left or lost a job or YT place.

It is a short-term allowance paid for up to 40 days in any 52 week period while a young person finds another job or YT place.

I hope this is helpful.

Numbers in receipt of Bridging Allowance in Dundee and Scotland November 1988—November 1993

November	Dundee	Scotland
1988	—	2,102
1989	37	1,157
1990	54	1,349
1991	34	1,099
1992	34	957
1993	17	553

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the training allowance paid to *(a)* 16-year-olds and *(b)* 17-year-olds on YTS and YT schemes in each of the past five years; and what the current allowance would be if it had been uprated in line with inflation over those five years.

Miss Widdecombe: The training allowances over each of the last five years have been £29·50 per week for 16-year-olds and £35 per week for 17-year-olds. The value of these allowance if they had been uprated in line with inflation is shown in the table:

	Allowance levels	
Year	16-year-old £	17-year-old £
1989-90	29·50	35·00
1990-91	31·88	37·82
1991-92	33·90	40·22
1992-93	35·20	41·76
1993-94	36·34	43·12

Transexuals

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to amend the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 explicitly to include discrimination against transexuals; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The Government deplore all forms of discrimination. It is not persuaded, however, that the Sex Discrimination Act should be extended to cover discrimination against transexuals and has no plans to legislate in this area.

Education Allowance

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are presently on full-time vocational courses as a result of the education allowance introduced in the Budget statement of 16 March 1993, *Official Report,* column 193.

Miss Widdecombe: As at 11 November, the last date for which figures are available, approximately 6,200 people were participating in learning for work.

Community Action Programme

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are engaged in part-time work under the community action programme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Stephen Byers, dated 13 December 1993:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question about the number of people engaged in part-time work under the Community Action programme.

It may help if I explain the background to Community Action and our plans for the provision of the announced places.

Community Action is a programme to help long-term unemployed people back into work, by providing work experience on projects of benefit to local communities. Following the Budget, a further 35,000 opportunities will be made available between now and 1995/6 in addition to the 60,000 announced last Spring.

Community Action opportunities are being delivered, in the main, by voluntary/charitable organisations and my people in the Employment Service Regional Offices are responsible for contracting with them. At 26 November, the latest date for which figures are available, 2,876 places had been taken up by long term unemployed people and numbers are increasing steadily. The programme is planned to build to 20,000 filled places by the end of 1994.

I hope this is helpful.

SCOTLAND

Young People

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many 16 and 17-year-olds there were in *(a)* Dundee and *(b)* Scotland in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is given in the table.

Estimated population aged 16 and 17

	Dundee City District			*Scotland*		
	16	*17*	*16-17*	*16*	*17*	*16-17*
1988	2,511	2,692	5,203	76,813	81,292	158,105
1989	2,211	2,492	4,703	71,291	76,069	147,360
1990	2,088	2,215	4,303	66,248	70,849	137,097
1991	2,012	2,033	4,045	64,501	65,750	130,251
1992	1,978	2,048	4,026	63,397	64,338	127,735

Hospital Closures

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about Ayrshire and Arran health board's plans for the closure of Ravenspark hospital in the longer term; and what actions the health board has been undertaking to safeguard the interests of hospital patients.

Mr. Stewart: For some time it has been the publicly declared intention of Ayrshire and Arran health board to replace facilities at Ravenspark in early 1995.

The contract for the care of the present residents at Ravenspark hospital has been awarded to the Ayrshire and Arran community health care NHS trust and this contract is monitored by the health board.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment has been made by the Scottish Office of the costs involved in establishing the NHS trusts in Scotland; and if he will make a statement on the costs involved in setting up the south Ayrshire NHS Trust, the Community Health Care NHS Trust and the north Ayrshire and Arran NHS Trust.

Mr. Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 6 December 1993, *Official Report* column 77. Already the evidence emerging from NHS trusts in Scotland is of more patients being treated, improved facilities and services better adapted to patient needs. This is very promising and I am sure that the general public in Ayrshire, as elsewhere, will want to encourage trusts in their endeavours to further improve patient care.

Scottish Homes

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make a statement about the guidelines which he has drawn up for Scottish Homes in carrying out the transfer of its housing stock, with particular reference to transfer of Scottish Homes properties to local authority control;

(2) if he will make a statement about the transfer of Scottish Homes properties in Ayrshire; what point the transfer process has reached in Ayrshire; and what is the time scale within which the disposal process will be completed.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has issued guidance to Scottish Homes on the voluntary disposal of its housing stock. This has been taken into account by Scottish Homes in its published procedures which promote substantial safeguards for tenants. All transfer proposals must have the agreement of tenants and are subject to the approval of my right hon. Friend who will be willing to consider a recommendation for a disposal to a local authority where Scottish Homes takes the view that there will be special circumstances such that the disposal would not compromise Ministers' and Scottish Homes' objective of promoting diversity of choice in rented housing. It is expected that such circumstances will rarely arise.

Scottish Homes is currently preparing a local stock strategy which will address the transfer of its stock in Ayrshire. Tenants will be fully consulted on specific proposals and transfers will take place at a pace consistent with tenants wishes.

Forestry

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he now expects the work of the interdepartmental review group on the Forestry Commission will be completed and a report made to Ministers.

Sir Hector Monro: Ministers expect the Forestry review group to present its advice to them early next year.

Homelessness

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the initiatives the Scottish Office is pursuing to tackle the problem of homelessness amongst young people in Scotland, with particular reference to Ayrshire.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Housing authorities have the statutory responsibility for dealing with homelessness. On 1 December I announced £4·35 million extra resources for expenditure on 36 homelessness projects by housing authorities in 1993-94, including £0·456 million for authorities in Ayrshire. Nearly £23 million had already been made available in financial years 1991-92 and 1992-93, including almost £1·83 million for Ayrshire authorities. Many projects supported by those extra resources are for young single homeless.

These extra allocations are in addition to the substantial resources already allocated to housing authorities for investment in public and private housing—£513 million in 1993-94. All local housing authorities have been asked in their housing plans and housing capital programmes to set out strategies and targets for tackling homelessness in their areas.

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

Mr. Lang: The cost to the Scottish Office of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91 was £212,286. The number of vehicles involved was three in London and four —part-time—in Scotland.

New Towns

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the representations he has received from Scottish and Ayrshire Enterprise as regards his decision to consult on the early wind-up of Irvine new town; and if he will indicate which bodies supported amending the wind-up proposals.

Mr. Stewart: Scottish Enterprise and Enterprise Ayrshire welcomed the proposals for early transfer of responsibility for economic development within Irvine. Both organisations recognise that a smooth transition is desirable and discussions to achieve this are underway.

Of the other bodies consulted, Strathclyde regional council expressed opposition to the proposals and Scottish Homes offered no comment. Cunninghame district council, COSLA and SLANT expressed concern that the wind-up would be at the same time as local government re-structuring and outlined the approach which, in their view, would need to be adopted in order to achieve a smooth and orderly transfer of responsibilities.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has given to new town development corporations on the disposal of multi-storey flats in shared ownership between corporations and owner occupiers as part of their winding up; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 9 December 1993]:* The Scottish Office Industry Department has provided the new town development corporations with comprehensive guidance on the disposal of their housing stocks on wind-up. A copy of the guidance was sent to the hon. Member on 31 August 1992.

The guidance requires the corporations to have regard to their existing responsibilities in respect of owner-occupiers, whether in multi-storey flats or any other types of accommodation, and to ensure that owner-occupiers are kept fully informed about any changes which may affect their interests.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in respect of each of the Scottish new towns, what were *(a)* the financial targets set for the sales of assets in each of the last five years, *(b)* the receipts from sales for the separate categories of housing, industrial, commercial and land assets for each of the last five years and *(c)* the receipts from sales in the current financial year for the separate categories of housing, industrial, commercial and land assets.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 9 December 1993]:* The information is shown in the table. A breakdown of non-housing receipts between those derived from the sale of industrial assets, commercial assets and land is not available centrally.

£ million

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Housing						
Cumbernauld						
Target	6·100	5·500	7·600	5·582	6·574	6·523
Receipts	8·587	5·500	10·557	9·774	7·099	4·617
East Kilbride						
Target	10·455	17·135	13·955	8·500	7·055	12·066
Receipts	10·933	18·742	15·313	11·208	7·567	5·920
Glenrothes						
Target	2·867	4·251	7·100	5·180	5·180	9·824
Receipts	4·226	7·314	10·134	6·809	6·225	9·316
Irvine						
Target	1·631	3·776	4·186	4·362	4·000	2·800
Receipts	3·419	4·811	3·506	3·750	2·477	2·142
Livingston						
Target	3·750	7·346	9·450	4·659	5·617	7·157
Receipts	6·750	10·316	7·142	4·094	4·433	6·210

	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Industrial, Commercial and Land						
Cumbernauld						
Target	6·000	8·400	7·492	10·290	11·806	14·500
Receipts	7·806	10·636	8·129	9·196	8·377	11·560
East Kilbride						
Target	10·491	12·212	12·585	13·918	15·930	43·550
Receipts	4·932	12·692	9·340	10·085	12·655	23·411
Glenrothes						
Target	2·519	2·853	6·525	7·758	8·174	15·230
Receipts	5·832	4·695	8·564	7·776	2·655	6·375
Irvine						
Target	5·612	4·354	3·387	3·652	2·281	2·350
Receipts	5·707	2·483	2·619	1·283	1·200	0·685
Livingston						
Target	7·500	10·293	16·964	15·439	12·970	8·800
Receipts	1·663	5·525	14·400	9·783	14·974	5·878

Notes:

1. The receipts figures are expressed in cash.
2. The 1993-94 receipts figures show the position at 6 December 1993.
3. For the last five years the targets shown are those issued at the start of the financial year; for 1993-94 the targets reflect adjustments to 6 December 1993.

Press and Publicity Officers

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the total cost of press liaison and publicity carried out by his Department in each year since 1979; how many press and publicity officers were employed in each such year; and what has been the total cost of their remuneration.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* The following table shows *(a)* the running costs of The Scottish Office information directorate for each year from 1985-86 and *(b)* the number of information officer grades employed in each year since 1979:

Year	£ million	No. of Information Officer Grades	Vacancies
1979-80	[1]—	22·0	3
1980-81	[1]—	24·0	—
1981-82	[1]—	20·0	1
1982-83	[1]—	22·0	—
1983-84	[1]—	20·0	—
1984-85	[1]—	20·0	—
1985-86	0·9	19·0	1
1986-87	1·0	20·0	2
1987-88	1·1	22·0	1
1988-89	1·2	23·0	1
1989-90	1·4	28·0	3
1990-91	1·7	31·5	—
1991-92	1·9	33·5	—
1992-93	1·9	29·5	2

[1] The figures for running costs exclude expenditure on information campaigns. Directly comparable figures for years prior to the introduction of new Scottish Office budgetary arrangements in 1985-86 are not available. Nor is it possible to break down the running costs figures to differentiate between the remuneration of information officer grades and administrative staff within the Directorate.

Departmental Hospitality

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the total cost of hospitality offered by his Department each year since 1979 for *(a)* St. Andrew's house, *(b)* Bute house and *(c)* Dover house.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* The information is not held centrally in the form requested. The total expenditure on ministerial hospitality for the years in question is shown in the table. These figures include the cost of events held in St. Andrew's house, Bute house and Dover house—as well as other venues, including Edinburgh castle.

Year	£
1979-80	15,283
1980-81	18,427
1981-82	20,762
1982-83	31,588
1983-84	26,287
1984-85	27,301
1985-86	35,815
1986-87	38,315
1987-88	41,983
1988-89	42,987
1989-90	60,173
1990-91	65,123
1991-92	62,800
1992-93	94,385
[1]1993-94	35,680

[1] To date.

Press Notices

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many press notices have been released by each office in his Department per month in each year since 1987.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* The Scottish Office information directorate issues news releases for all Departments within the Scottish Office. The following table shows the number issued per month in each year since 1987:

Month	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
January	137	139	156	169	119	157	129
February	139	228	125	150	163	180	152
March	206	132	173	225	194	170	219
April	203	187	198	165	165	56	157
May	150	210	173	193	176	150	150
June	116	211	164	194	204	188	151
July	204	208	134	166	195	179	133
August	140	162	186	123	118	168	107
September	245	125	200	158	167	175	230
October	216	208	195	153	162	184	197
November	184	207	175	161	187	220	160
December	130	214	210	151	178	166	[1]60
ANNUAL TOTAL	2,070	2,231	2,089	2,008	2,028	1,993	[1]1,845

[1] As at 8 December 1993.

Advertising

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the tendering arrangements and controls employed by his Department for advertising campaigns; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* A review of the Scottish Office advertising contract is held every three years. The last review was held in Febuary this year. Advertisements inviting agencies to tender for the work were placed in Scottish national daily newspapers and in the trade journal *Campaign.*

Appointment was made following a three-stage selection appraisal of creativity, strategy planning and value for money. The judging panel comprised representatives from the Scottish Office information directorate, The Scottish Office purchase and supply unit, and the director of advertising, Central Office of Information.

Assessment of the performance of the agencies through campaign evaluation is undertaken throughout the year. An audit of television airtime buying is currently being carried out by an independent consultant. Agencies are appointed on a renewable annual contract.

Departmental Hospitality

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the number of events hosted by his Department in Bute house each year since 1979; and if he will give details of the total cost of running Bute house each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* The number of events hosted by my Department in Bute house each year since 1979 is set out in the table.

Year	*Number of events*
1979	13
1980	8
1981	9
1982	9
1983	9
1984	8
1985	9
1986	5
1987	6
1988	13
1989	8
1990	7
1991	10
1992	7
[1]1993	16

[1] To date.

Information on the running costs of Bute house is only available since 1989-90 when my Department took over responsibility from the Property Services Agency. The information available is set out in the table.

Year	*£*
1989-90	24,100
1990-91	26,057
1991-92	35,482
1992-93	55,169
1993-94	[1]43,640

[1] To date.

The above figures include rent paid to Property Holdings, maintenance, insurance, furniture, miscellaneous household expenses and the housekeeper's salary.

Sheep

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many sheep quota applications his Department administered during 1993 to the nearest convenient estimate; and how many civil servants are allocated to this task.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* The Scottish Office agriculture and fisheries department has allocated sheep quota to 22,300 individual producers during 1993 and processed 1,700 applications to transfer and lease quota for the 1993 sheep annual premium scheme year. The number of staff working on these tasks has varied according to the timing of the application processes and the volume of inquiries received from producers or others on their behalf.

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received from *(a)* farmers, *(b* solicitors and *(c)* hon. Members concerning complaints in the administration of the sheep quota system.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* The Scottish Office agriculture and fisheries department receives several hundred inquiries from producers or their agents each week concerning various aspects of the sheep quota system. Very few have lodged a complaint against the administration of the quota system although some may have experienced difficulties contacting departmental staff by telephone during certain peak periods. I have received letters from 14 hon. Members concerning sheep quotas, three of which have referred to complaints about administration.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many personalised letters he has written to people in East Lothian and Berwickshire, respectively, seeking representations in support of his plans to establish a new local authority covering part of East Lothian and Berwickshire.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* None.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a copy of the response from Scottish Enterprise Tayside to his consultation document on restructuring Scottish local government.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* Scottish Enterprise Tayside has asked that its response to the consultation paper "Shaping the New Councils" be treated as confidential.

Direct Service/Labour Organisations

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many contracts awarded to Scottish local authority direct service/labour organisations have not been subject to the issuing of a notice alleging anti-competitive behaviour; and on how many occasions such actions were taken.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* Information on the number of contracts let to local authority direct service and labour organisations is not held centrally. Thirteen notices have been served to date in respect of anti-competitive behaviour.

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many local authority direct service/labour organisations, operating contracts in Scotland have achieved the required rate of return since 1988.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* The statutory financial objective has been achieved on 1,017 occasions since 1988-89.

Local Government Administration

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the authorities that have been challenged by his Department, in relation to their internal arrangements for establishing client-contractor splits in order to meet the requirements under statute.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* No Scottish authorities have been the subject of Secretary of State's sanctions on the basis of client-contractor splits.

List D Schools

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much financial support central Government contributed to the revenue costs of list D schools in each of the five years preceding their abolition in 1986.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* The information available shows that the Scottish Office paid grants towards the revenue expenditure of those schools as follows:

	£
1981-82	6,486,300
1982-83	6,631,300
1983-84	5,051,200
1984-85	6,253,600
1985-86	6,425,500

Mink Farms

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many mink farms have operated in each region of Scotland in each year since 1984; and what is the current figure.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 7 December 1993]:* The number of licensed mink farms operating at 1 March on each year is set out in the table. No mink farms are currently operating in Scotland.

Region or Islands Area	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Central	1	1	1	1	1	1	—	—	—	—
Grampian	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Lothian	2	1	1	1	1	1	—	—	—	—
Shetland	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Strathclyde	2	2	2	2	2	3	—	1	1	—
Tayside	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	—	—	—
Total	9	8	8	7	7	8	2	2	2	1

Sexual Offences

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his plans to promote the development in other regions of the scheme operating in Lothian region relating to complaints in sexual offence cases.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 December 1993]:* Arrangements to allocate a nominated police officer to support and liaise with the victim are an integral part of the investigation of allegations of sex offences. As such they are operational matters and the responsibility of the appropriate chief constable. I understand however that similar procedures are observed by all eight Scottish forces.

NHS Employees

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidelines have been issued to health boards concerning the procedures for suspension of national health service employees and the length of time during which formal disciplinary inquiries are carried out.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* Guidance has been issued on disciplinary procedures in connection with the professional conduct or professional competence of hospital medical and dental staff. This includes advice concerning the suspension of a practitioner from duty temporarily. The guidance recommends that the suspension should be confirmed or terminated by the chairman of the employing authority within 14 days. If it is decided that there is a prima facie case of a serious disciplinary nature, an investigating panel should report on the matter to the employing authority within 32 weeks.

No specific guidance has been issued as regards other staff groups.

Set-aside Land

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State, (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the figures in hectares for *(a)* set-aside; *(b)* pulses; *(c)* oil seed rape and *(d)* cereals for 1989, 1990 and 1991 which were used to calculate the base area in Scotland;

(2) if he will list the June census set-aside figures for Scotland for 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Sir Hector Munro *[holding answer 29 November 1993]:* The figures used to calculate the base areas in Scotland are as follows:

	1989		*1990*		*1991*		*3 Years Average*	
	LFA	*Non-LFA*	*LFA*	*Non-LFA*	*LFA*	*Non-LFA*	*LFA*	*Non-LFA*
Set-aside[1]	3,643	7,807	4,919	12,949	6,487	15,796	5,016	12,184
Protein crops	526	4,509	358	4,046	353	3,024	412	3,860
Oilseed rape	7,821	28,244	8,919	36,276	9,896	39,999	8,879	34,840
Cereals	188,780	319,270	178,060	303,383	175,843	292,665	180,895	305,106
Total	200,770	359,830	192,256	356,654	192,579	351,484	[2]195,202	[2]355,990

[1] Figures taken from the 5 year and 1 year set-aside scheme returns.

[2] Before submission to the EC Commission in September 1992, these figures were adjusted by switching 34,854 hectares from LFA to non-LFA giving a base area of 160,348 hectares for the LFA and 390,844 hectares for the non-LFA. These figures were further adjusted to reflect the more accurate split betwen LFA and non-LFA arable land established from the IACS returns, and a further 39,303 hectares was switched from LFA to non-LFA giving new base areas of 121,045 hectares for the LFA and 430,147 for the non-LFA. These last figures are now accepted by the EC as the Scottish base areas. Throughout, the total base area has remained constant at 551,192 hectares.

The set-aside figures recorded in the June census for 1989 and 1990 were 29,197 and 44,465 hectares respectively. These figures partly reflect land registered for set-aside and are therefore higher than the area actually set-aside. No specific set-aside questions were asked in 1991.

DEFENCE

IMS Ltd.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give a fuller description of projects 2, 27 and 59 supplied by IMS Ltd.; if he will describe the nature of the oversight services supplied by MOD UK—project 57; if he will describe the nature of the medical equipment supplied by IMS—project 15; and if he will describe the nature of the engineering equipment supplied by IMS—project 47—to which his answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, columns *295-96*, referred.

Mr. Aitken: Certain information about the contracts placed under the Jordan defence package has been made public during oral evidence given to Lord Justice Scott's inquiry. I can therefore provide, exceptionally, the further information requested by the hon. Member, which is as follows:

Project

2 *Tank modifications to improve gun accuracy and range*
15 *Medical and laundry stores for a field military unit*
27 *Various explosive ordnance disposal equipment such as mine detectors*
47 *Mechanical handling equipment and fire fighting tenders*
57 *Supervision services in respect of Project 54 (Fast Patrol Boats)*
59 *Machine guns for the Royal Guard vehicle*

Export Sales Agreements

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the quantities and value of *(a)* project 1—120 mm and 105 mm ammunition supplied by Royal Ordnance, *(b)* project 4—main battle tank spares supplied by Royal Ordnance—to which his answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, columns *295-96*, relates.

Mr. Aitken: The information contained in my answer of 3 November—*Official Report*, columns *295-96*—was given exceptionally and contrary to the established practice of successive administrations not to release information about individual defence exports. This was because some of the detail of these contracts had been made public during oral evidence given to Lord Justice Scott's inquiry. It would not be appropriate to give further details about the quantities and values of these contracts.

International Signal and Control Company

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what applications his Department received prior to 1987 from the International Signal and Control Company of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, for clearance to work with British military contractors in military sales.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has no record of any such applications.

Animal Research

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *605*, regarding the research use of animals, if he will specify the nature of the research and experimentation carried out on *(a)* sheep, *(b)* goats, *(c)* pigs, *(d)* miniature pigs, *(e)* marmosets and *(f)* rhesus monkeys.

Mr. Aitken: It is not our practice to make available detailed information on the usage of particular species for defence research. Such information could enable a potential aggressor to assess the current state of our medical countermeasures against the threat of attack by chemical or biological weapons. It is not in the national interest to provide such information.

Animal experiments are carried out only when it is judged essential and when no adequate alternative exists. The total number of animal experiments carried out by the Ministry of Defence is about one half of one per cent. of all animal experiments carried out in the United Kingdom.

L85 Mechanical Fuse

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people have been killed or injured by the use of the Italian L85 mechanical fuse; when the fuses will be replaced and at what cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: There is no record of any deaths or injuries attributable to the use by British service men of the Italian L85 mechanical fuse. There is a continuing limited operational role for this fuse in training, but its use will gradually reduce as the weapon systems for which it is required are withdrawn from service.

Should a further purchase of this type of fuse be required, this will be open to competition in the usual way. As I announced to the House on 23 November 1993, at column 309-10, we will not award any new contracts to the manufacturer of the L85 fuse, Barletti, until the facts surrounding the Gordon Foxley case have been fully investigated.

F3 Tornados

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to initiate legal action against Airwork in relation to the damage incurred in the cost of the modification contract in the F3 Tornados at RAF St. Athan.

Mr. Aitken: A sample of the damaged aircraft is being surveyed to establish the precise extent of the damage and its structural implications. This work is expected to take at least until March 1994. Thereafter the aircraft design authority will be in a position to make recommendations on repair schemes. When these have been costed we will be able to assess the amount of the Department's claim against Airwork Limited. The claim will be presented within the period allowed in law.

Ferranti International

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his his answer of 6 December, *Official Report*, column *54*, what consideration he has given to discussing with the receivers of Ferranti International the possibility of bidding for future MoD orders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Officials of my Department discussed this with the receivers of Ferranti International at their first meeting on 1 December. There is no objection to their tendering for future defence orders, although naturally our standard criteria for the financial soundness of our contractors would have to be satisfied before a contract could be placed.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 6 December, *Official Report*, column *54*, what information he has provided to the receivers of Ferranti International regarding his policy on the long-term future for the defence industrial base; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has provided no such information to the receivers, who have made no request for it.

GEC

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *176*, what information he has provided to the management of GEC regarding his future procurement plans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Officials of my Department have a standing instruction that, within the constraints of security and commercial confidences, they should be as forthcoming as possible with defence companies about future procurement plans. The management of GEC, as of any other defence contractor, will therefore have been kept informed of these plans through the many contacts between the Department and the company.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 14 December 1993

HOME DEPARTMENT

Mrs. Naheem Ejaz

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what attempts the Home Office made to legally deprive Mrs. Naheem Ejaz of Bracknell, Berkshire, of her citizenship before moving to deport her;

(2) what is the total cost to the taxpayer of the failed attempt to deport Mrs. Naheem Ejaz of Bracknell, Berkshire.

Mr. Charles Wardle: One of the requirements for naturalisation under section 6(2) of the British Nationality Act 1981 is that the applicant is married to a British citizen. Mrs. Ejaz's husband has never been such a British citizen. When this came to light, Mrs. Ejaz was informed that her naturalisation was a nullity. Since her certificate on naturalisation was considered not to have been granted to her lawfully in the first place, it was not thought necessary to proceed to formal deprivation of citizenship under section 40 of the 1981 Act.

It is not the practice of the immigration and nationality department routinely to record the administrative costs of individual case handling. The cost of detaining Mrs. Ejaz prior to her planned removal in September 1992 was £550. The legal costs in her case have not yet been finally determined.

Sexual Offences

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to bring the sentences available for non-consensual buggery in line with those for rape.

Mr. Mclean: The law in this area is kept under review, but there are no current plans to amend it.

Overseas Police Training

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what foreign police personnel are at present on training programmes with police forces in the United Kingdom; and if he will list each country, the number of personnel involved and the courses they are taking.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I regret that this information is not available.

M11 Link Road

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of the police operation against the anti-M11 link campaigners in Wanstead on 7 December.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the additional manpower costs of the operation were £97,532. Information on the cost of support services and other resources involved is not available.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers and from which divisions were involved in the operation against M11 link road protestors in Wanstead on 7 December.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that 371 officers from all parts of the Metropolitan police district were involved in the operation.

Shotguns

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many shotgun certificates were on issue at 31 December in each year from 1985 in each police force area.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Statistics of shotgun certificates on issue in each police force in England and Wales have been published annually since 1986 in Home Office statistical bulletins "Firearm Certificate Statistics"—prior to 1991, "Statistics on the operation of the Firearms Acts 1968 to 1988"—copies of which are available in the Library. Figures for 1985 are not readily available by police force area.

The bulletin issue numbers are as follows: 2/88, 33/88, 18/89, 26/90, 23/91, 19/92, 23/93.

Prisoners' Work (Pay)

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what consideration he has given to establishing projects for prisoners' work to justify a competitive wage of a nature to enable them to contribute to the costs of their keep, their families and victim support;

(2) what plans there are to review paid work undertaken by prisoners in gaol.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Lady Olga Maitland, dated 14 December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about paid work undertaken by prisoners in jail.

A high priority for the Prison Service is to ensure that prisoners participate in active and demanding regimes centred on work, training and education. Improvements in the quantity, quality, productivity and realism of work form an important part of the Service's plans.

Prisoners are paid for engaging productively in work and other activities. This includes participation in education and training programmes, manufacturing goods in prison workshops and duties directly contributing to the running of an establishment such as cleaning and working in prison kitchens.

To extend the range and quality of work available pilot schemes are in progress where prisoners are paid closer to market rates. The wider introduction of higher rates of pay for prisoners as suggested in the White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice, the Way Ahead for the Prison Service in England and Wales" is under consideration.

It may be possible in the longer term to increase pay for productive work more generally. If so payments would be made from increased wages towards accommodation and maintenance costs in prison, compulsory compensation payments to victims and maintenance payments for family and dependents outside. Currently the Secretary of State has a legal obligation to meet the costs of imprisonment for all prisoners.

Elderly Prisons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female prison inmates held in prisons in England and Wales were over the age of 80 years as of 1 December.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 14 December 1993:

Inmates over 80 years of age in prison service establishments

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women in Prison Service establishments who were over the age of 80 years on 1 December.

The lastest available information is for 31 October 1993. On that date there were four inmates (all of whom were male) aged over 80 in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales.

Horserace Betting Levy Board

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what discussions his Department has entered into with Opposition parties over the recent appointments of persons to the Horserace Betting Levy Board;

(2) what are the reasons for and criteria behind his decision to reappoint Mrs. Anna McCurley to membership of the Horserace Betting Levy Board;

(3) if he will list the necessary qualifications and qualities necessary for an appointment to membership of the Horserace Betting Levy Board.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have had no discussion with Opposition parties about recent appointments of members to the Horserace Betting Levy Board. The Government-appointed members of the levy board are expected to have skills relevant to the work of the board, which this year included trying to reach agreement on the levy payable by bookmakers.

Mrs. McCurley has wide experience of the board's work and her commitment to its affairs is valued by the chairman and the Home Secretary.

Crime

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what analysis his Department has made of the relationship between the level of house burglaries in England and Wales and the levels of unemployment, since 1979; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what analysis his Department has conducted into the relationship between the level of car crime in England and Wales and the levels of unemployment since 1979.

Mr. Maclean: Work on these subjects was covered in the Home Office research study "Trends in Crime and their Interpretation" published in 1990. The study found that, once the strong effect of personal consumption growth on car crime and household burglary were taken into account, no separate relationship with unemployment could be identified.

Bodybelts

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) after what period of detention in a bodybelt a prisoner is entitled to a review of the situation;

(2) in which prisons bodybelts are allowed to be used;

(3) for what length of time prisoners are allowed to be detained in a bodybelt.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 14 December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the conditions governing the use of body belts.

Prison Standing Order 3E sets out the general condittions applying to the use of force, special accommodation and mechanical restraints, including body belts, in the management of violent prisoners.

Body belts may be used in any prisons, as an exceptional measure.

The use of the body belt must be monitored regularly and be removed as soon a there is no longer a risk of self injury or violence. An officer must observe the prisoner every 15 minutes. The Medical Officer must medically examine the prisoner as soon as possible after the restraint is applied and certify that there are no clinical contra-indications. The Medical Officer must personally visit the prisoner twice in every 24 hours to review the position. The Governor in charge must either personally see the prisoner before ordering the use of the body belt or immediately after and must see the prisoner at least twice in every 24 hours.

The Standing Order also provides that the Board of Visitors must be notified of any use of a body belt as soon as it is practicable and must approve in writing any continuation of its use for a period beyond 24 hours.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether bodybelts are used in police stations.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Bodybelts are not normally used in police stations.

Deportation

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many children aged under 18 years have accompanied a parent being deported from the United Kingdom in the last year for which figures are available; and what ages those children were;

(2) how many people, accompanied by how many children, were deported from this country in the last year for which figures are available; and what proportion of each of these categories received appropriate immunisations for the country to which they were travelling.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In the 12 months to June 1993, about 2,600 people were removed under deportation powers. The other information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *171*, what arrangements are made for immunisation to be provided for any deportee who requests it; and what steps his Department takes to inform deportees that they and any children accompanying them are entitled to the appropriate immunisations recommended for the country to which they are travelling.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Where the deportee is detained, vaccinations would be provided, if requested, by the qualified medical staff employed at the place of detention. Otherwise, the deportee would be advised to consult his or her general practitioner.

There are no formal arrangements for the Department to advise deportees about immunisation, but any relevant advice given by the agency issuing travel tickets would be passed on.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) in what proportion of deportations in the last year for which figures are available *(a)* a private security firm, *(b)* more than one private security firm, *(c)* the police and *(d)* police and a private security firm were used;

(2) what was the total cost of employing private security firms to participate in deportations from the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* the last year for which figures are available;

(3) in what proportion of deportations in the last year for which figures are available were *(a)* handcuffs, *(b)* luggage tape, *(c)* bodybelts and *(d)* other forms of restraint used; and in each case who authorised the use of such restraints.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not readily available. I will write to the hon. Member.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the *(a)* average, *(b)* highest and *(c)* lowest cost to public funds of a deportation from the United Kingdom in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I will write to the hon. Member with the available information.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department during how many deportations in the last year for which figures are available drugs have been offered to deportees; in what proportion of those cases the drugs were accepted; what were the drugs involved; if they were administered under the guidance of a qualified medical officer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. It is, however, not normal practice for drugs to be offered or administered to deportees.

Baroness Thatcher (Security)

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 8 December, *Official Report*, column 275, what was the cost of police security provided for Baroness Thatcher to sign copies of her memoirs at bookshops within the Metropolitan policing area.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is a long-standing practice not to reveal the costs of security operations.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has received from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis about reorganising the senior management structure of the Metropolitan police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Yes. The Commissioner is, with my support, undertaking a thorough and fundamental review of the structure of the Metropolitan police. This review is also taking into account the decisions which I announced on 28 October about the recommendations of the inquiry into police responsibilities and rewards.

A principal aim of the review is to release and apply the energy of senior staff to meeting operational needs. An early outcome is a proposal, which I have approved, to reduce the number of area commands within the Metroplitan police district from eight to five and to streamline the senior management structure.

This will involve abolishing, in stages, the existing 14 deputy Assistant Commissioner posts and putting each of the five new areas under the command of an Assistant Commissioner. Only two of the existing five central Assistant Commissioner posts will remain, one to deputise for the Commissioner and carry out other functional responsibilities and a second to take overall charge of operational functions organised centrally.

I shall bring forward proposals for necessary adjustments to existing legislation about Assistant Commissioners in the forthcoming Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill.

Fire Authority (Swansea)

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in which proposed combined fire authority Swansea will be included.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In the light of representations, I have received in response to proposals in the White Paper, "Local Government in Wales: A Charter for the Future", of advice received from the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council, and of advice received from Her Majesty's chief inspector of fire services, I have decided that it would be in the best interests of operational efficiency not to split the area of the existing West Glamorgan county fire brigade between different combined fire authorities. I propose, in drawing up combination schemes under the Fire Services Act 1947, to take effect when local government in Wales is reorganised, to include the proposed new unitary authorities of Swansea and of Neath and Port Talbot in the combined fire authority which will cover Mid and West Wales. The Mid and West Wales combined fire authority will include the following unitary authorities:

Cardiganshire (Sir Aberteifi); Carmarthenshire (Sir Gaerfyddin); Pembrokeshire (Sir Benfro); Mid Wales (Canolbarth Cymru); Swansea (Abertawe); and Neath and Port Talbot (Castellnedd a Phort Talbot).

The North Wales combined fire authority will include all those Welsh unitary authorities to the north of that group; and the South Wales combined fire authority will include all those to the south.

Mr. Joseph Elliot

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what conclusions he has reached as a result of his examination of the circumstances surrounding the acquittal of Mr. Joseph Elliot; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: It would not be proper for me to make any statement about the particular circumstances of this case. Nevertheless, my examination provided a useful insight into some of the general issues facing the criminal justice system. In particular, it has helped to confirm my belief in the wide-ranging programme of reform on which the Government have embarked. That programme is designed to ensure that people never have cause to feel so exasperated about crime and the response of the criminal justice system that they feel driven to take the law into their own hands; that young people in particular are deterred and helped to desist from a life style of idleness and petty crime; and that the criminal justice system as a whole works efficiently and effectively, allowing courts full and prompt access to relevant evidence. It is vital that people have confidence in the system and are encouraged to come forward to help it work better.

Specifically on the law on self-defence, I am satisfied that the individual should always be able to defend himself, his family and his property, as long as he only uses force that is both reasonable and necessary. I am not currently persuaded that there is a need to change the law. However, I intend to study the Law Commission's recent report on offences against the person very carefully and will be interested in the public reaction to its recommendations.

ENVIRONMENT

Risk and Policy Analysts Ltd.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of the risk benefit study carried out by Risk and Policy Analysts Ltd; what was the subject of its analysis; and if he will place its report in the Library.

Mr. Yeo: The risk benefit study was commissioned by my Department last year at a cost of £38,000 excluding VAT. The report of the study was published by Risk and Policy Analysts Ltd. under HMSO licence and I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library.

The purpose of the study was to develop a methodology for the application of risk benefit analysis techniques to the control of hazardous substances, and to demonstrate the applicability of that methodology for two particular substances.

Housing Investment Programme

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the criteria used by regional Department of the Environment offices for determining the allocation of the discretionary part of the housing investment programme allocation.

Sir George Young: A list of factors that Ministers will bear in mind in allocating the discretionary portion of housing investment programme—HIP—resources was published in May, as a component of the guidance to local authorities on the 1993 HIP round. I have placed a copy of this document in the Library.

Construction Industry Review

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action his Department is taking to publicise the review of procurement and contracting arrangements in the construction industry by Sir Michael Latham; what plans he has to extend the review; and when his Department expects to produce a response to the Latham review.

Mr. Baldry: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) on 13 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *454*. The construction industry and its clients are already aware of the review of procurement and contracting arrangements by Sir Michael Latham and he has received many representations from them. The terms of reference are broad and there are no plans to extend the review further. My Department will consider how best to respond to Sir Michael Latham's final report after it has been presented in July 1994, and in the light of its contents and after any necessary consultation.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 30 November, *Official Report*, column *494*, if he will set out the criteria his Department will adopt to judge the best practicable environmental option for the long-term handling of decommissioning wastes from nuclear facilities.

Mr. Yeo: Decision about the management of decommissioning wastes from nuclear facilities will be taken in accordance with criteria relevant at the time.

Temporary Accommodation

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest information he has on the number of families currently in temporary accommodation.

Sir George Young: A total of 56,900 households for which local authorities had accepted responsibility to secure permanent accommodation were in temporary accommodation on 30 September 1993, the latest date for which a figure is available.

This is the fourth successive quarter in which the number of households in temporary accommodation has fallen; the current figure is some 8,530—13 per cent.—less than a year earlier.

Empty Dwellings

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many empty dwellings there are in England and Wales.

Sir George Young: Local authorities in England provide estimates of the number of vacant dwellings in their area in their annual housing investment programme —HIP1—returns. On the basis of these data, it is estimated that there were around 850,000 vacant dwellings on 1 April 1993.

For information about Wales, I would refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for a successor to the environmental protection technology scheme; what level of finance he will make available to the body; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: As my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade announced to the House on 7 December, there will be a new environmental technology best practice programme operated jointly by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of the Environment. This programme will build on earlier schemes including the joint DOE/DTI environmental technology innovation scheme, previously the environmental protection technology scheme. The budget for the new programme is £16 million over five years, shared between the Departments.

Rural Development

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the outcome of the Rural Development Commission's consultation on the designation of the rural development areas will be announced.

Mr. Yeo: The Rural Development Commission will be announcing the new rural development areas on 15 December. Details of the new areas and copies of the maps will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Local Government

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has decided to take against Warrington borough council following the notice served on the authority on 10 June under section 13 of the Local Government Act 1988, in respect of ground maintenance work; and what action he has decided to take against Bradford metropolitan city council following the notice served on that authority on 10 September, under section 19A of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, in respect of highway maintenance work.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend has considered carefully the responses which Warrington borough council and Bradford metropolitan city council have made to the notices served on them on 10 June and 10 September respectively, and has today given directions to both authorities. The directions, given to Warrington borough council under section 14 of the Local Government Act 1988 and to Bradford metropolitan city council under section 19B of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, require the authorities to retender the work which has been the subject of the notices and to seek my right hon. Friend's consent should they wish to reassign this work to their direct services organisations.

Coal Extraction

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish revised planning guidelines on coal extraction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: We have today published revised planning guidelines for public consultation for England and Wales. Separate consultations are being carried out in Wales. The guidelines deal with both deep mine and opencast coal and with the disposal of colliery spoil.

As foreshadowed in the announcement by my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State for the Environment, on 25 March 1993, the guidelines aim to strike a balance between the economic importance of this indigenous energy resource and the protection of the environment in a way that is fully compatible with the principles of sustainable development. The draft guidelines set tough environmental tests for the industry. I am confident that, with careful planning and a sensitive approach to local concerns, they can come forward with proposals that contribute to economic growth and provide an environmentally sound foundation for the future. The guidelines are based on three broad principles:

1. It is not the function of the planning system to seek to set national limits on or targets for any particular source or level of energy supply. Nevertheless, low-cost coal is an important indigenous energy resource and it would be against the national interest to prevent its extraction where that can be done in an environmentally acceptable way and consistent with wider environmental objectives, including the principles of sustainable development.
2. It is also relevant to consider whether a particular proposal would itself provide national, regional or local benefits to the community to offset the disturbance occasioned during development and restoration—eg through contributing to United Kingdom employment, the clearance of dereliction or other improvements to the quality of land, the creation of nature reserves or the provision of other benefits.
3. Mineral planning authorities should draw up development plan policies which reflect that approach and must prepare mineral local plans which carry forward those policies and indicate in detail those areas where provision is made for coal extraction and the disposal of colliery spoil, as well as those areas where working or disposal is not likely to be acceptable and where coal resources are to be safeguarded for future working. The preparation of these plans is now an urgent requirement.

Halons

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the United Kingdom will be requesting continued production of halons in 1995 to meet essential users.

Mr. Yeo: The Government do not believe that any production of new halons will be necessary in 1995 to meet essential uses.

We welcome the decision of the fifth meeting of the parties to the Montreal protocol not to allow any continued production of halon for essential uses in 1994. This decision reflects the success of halon banking, both nationally and internationally.

The Government commend the work of the Halon Users National Consortium—HUNC—and would urge all halon users to join HUNC to ensure that the bank continues to be a success.

North Sea Pollution

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the quality status report of the North sea, prepared for the signatory states to the convention on the prevention of pollution to the North sea.

Mr. Yeo: A pre-print version of the quality status report was considered at the North sea conference meeting which

I attended last week. However, there is still some final editing to be done before the document is published in February 1994. Copies will be placed in the Library as soon as the final version is available.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the matters discussed and decisions taken at the ministerial meeting reviewing the convention protecting the North sea against pollution, held in Copenhagen on 7 and 8 December.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 9 December 1993]:* The third North sea conference in 1990 decided that there should be an interim meeting of Ministers to review progress on specific questions considered at that conference. This was the meeting that took place in Copenhagen on 7 and 8 December. Ministers or other representatives from Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the European Commission took part. My noble Friend Earl Howe and I represented the United Kingdom. A number of intergovernmental and international non-governmental organisations were also present.

The first task of the meeting was to review the report on the quality status of the North sea, which is taken to include the English channel, recently completed by the North sea task force. The Ministers congratulated the North sea task force on the successful completion of the report. We agreed to refer the recommendations in the quality status report to appropriate bodies for further consideration, but identified some areas for immediate attention—including the impact of fisheries, further controls on tributyl tin, reduction of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon inputs and a review of the strategy for achieving the goals set by the 1990 conference for inputs of toxic, persistent and bioaccumulative substances.

The second topic was the impact of shipping. We welcomed the achievement through the International Maritime Organisation—IMO—on the initiative of the North sea states, of stricter standards worldwide for oil discharges from shipping, the work under way in the IMO on chemical discharges and the action being taken by the EC Transport and Environment Councils to improve the protection of the seas against maritime pollution. Further action was agreed on shore reception facilities, enforcement and air pollution from ships. On the initiative of the United Kingdom, the Ministers decided on joint efforts to achieve early agreement within the International Maritime Organisation to a convention on liability and compensation for damage caused by accidents involving ships carrying hazardous or noxious cargoes, and to review the question at the 1995 North sea conference in order to find other solutions if progress in the IMO is insufficient.

The third topic was the input of nutrients to the North sea. The 1990 conference had called for a 50 per cent. reduction by 1995 in inputs of nutrients to areas where they were likely, directly or indirectly, to cause pollution. In the case of the United Kingdom, however, only a few estuaries in United Kingdom waters are under investigation as possible problem areas. Inputs from the continent, on the other hand, affect substantial problem areas along much of the continental coast. The meeting noted that the reductions in nitrate inputs to these problem areas by 1995 were, in general, unlikely to be achieved, mainly because of the difficulties of achieving sufficient reduction in agricultural inputs. Ministers therefore agreed on the need for the countries concerned to implement, or improve their implementation, of all the necessary measures. One promising approach was the application of the concept of balanced fertilisation. Agreement was reached on work to define this and related concepts. It proved impossible, however, to reach agreement on the form of a commitment to their application. The United Kingdom and France considered that it was premature to set a fixed date for achieving balanced fertilisation before the concept was defined and it was clear what was involved.

The final topic was the effects of pesticides on the North sea. The meeting concluded that much progress had been made towards the targets for the reduction of pesticide inputs set in 1990, but that for eight substances this progress was insufficient and further efforts were required. On the initiative of the United Kingdom, Ministers confirmed that measures had to address non-agricultural, as well as agricultural, uses of pesticides. The meeting also stressed the need to address all uses of pesticides causing environmental harm and to promote environmentally friendly approaches to agricultural production; steps were agreed to take all this forward.

A copy of the statement of conclusions adopted by the Ministers will be placed in the Library.

Office Space (Housing)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he is taking to encourage local government groups to convert unrentable city centre office space into housing; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* We aim to encourage the reuse of vacant office buildings for housing and to be flexible in the application of planning policies and standards. Our planning policy guidance note 3 and the draft explanatory note on affordable housing recommend that local authorities view such applications sympathetically.

Sulphur Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he is taking to further reduce sulphur dioxide emissions from United Kingdom power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* In December 1990, the Government published the United Kingdom's programme and national plan for reducing emissions of sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen from existing large combustion plants, including power stations. Under that national plan the United Kingdom is committed to reducting sulphur dioxide emissions from existing power stations by 60 per cent. by 2003 compared with 1980 levels. A copy of the plan is available in the Library of the House. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is currently agreeing new authorisations with the generators, in accordance with the requirement of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 for best available technology not entailing excessive costs to be applied to emissions from all power plant.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Magistrates Courts

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what savings have been achieved in the management of magistrates courts since the publication of the magistrates courts report of January 1989.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Spending on the magistrates courts service has increased every year since 1989. Neither the Government nor the service accepted the recommendation of the 1989 scrutiny of the administration of the magistrates courts that they be run as a national agency. However, the Government accepted that reform was needed and published their own proposals in the White Paper "A New Framework for Local Justice" in February 1992. Our objectives are to provide clearer lines of accountability, to secure maximum management co-operation with other parts of the justice system and to guarantee the judicial independence of magistrates and their legal advisers, as well as to yield improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of the service. The level of savings made will largely depend on the decisions taken by local management on the way they implement the changes.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what estimated savings on magistrates courts services in London will result from the decision announced in the White Paper "A New Framework for Local Justice".

Mr. John M. Taylor: The purpose of the proposals in the White Paper, including any reorganisation of the service in London, is to provide clearer lines of accountability, to secure maximum management co-operation with other parts of the justice system and to guarantee the judicial independence of magistrates and their legal advisers, as well as to yield improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of the service. As the efficiency gains which each magistrates courts committee —MCC—achieves by implementing the White Paper reforms will depend largely on decisions taken at local level, it is difficult for the Government to estimate with any accuracy the total savings to be made. However, evidence from those MCCs that have already implemented some of the White Paper's proposals suggest that, within each MCC, the resulting improvements in value for money exceed the transitional costs.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in manufacturing industries in the Greater London area on 1 November 1979 and 1 November 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Regional employment estimates are available only for March, June, September and December of each year. The numbers in manufacturing employment in Greater London were:

Employees in manufacturing: Greater London (unadjusted)

	Number
September 1981	681,000[1]
September 1993	338,000[2]

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[1] Employment estimates are not available for Greater London as a separate standard region prior to September 1981.

[2] Latest information available.

Fireworks

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what tests are conducted to ascertain the safety standards of fireworks which are manufactured abroad and imported into Britain.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: All fireworks that are imported into Britain are required to comply with the tests set out in British Standard 7114 on firework safety. Additionally, fireworks containing certain compositions: for example, sulphur/chlorate admixtures are prohibited under the Explosives Act 1875.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment from which countries pemission to import fireworks to Britain has been refused on the grounds of safety over the last 15 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No country has been banned from supplying fireworks to Britain. Refusals are not aimed at specific countries but at products, or batches of products, that fail to meet the British Standard 7114 standard or equivalent standard. The onus is on the importer to ensure that the requirements are met. The Health and Safety Executive is not automatically informed of rejected products and, therefore, comprehensive figures are not available.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which countries are the major exporters of fireworks to Britain; what proportion of fireworks sold in Britain were manufactured abroad for each year since 1990; if fireworks that have been manufactured abroad have to meet British safety standards; and which countries which export fireworks to Britain have domestic safety standards which do not meet the safety standards for British manufactured fireworks.

Mr. Michal Forsyth: On the first and the second points raised, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 6 December, at column *39*, and also to the letter sent to her on 9 December by my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade and Technology. All fireworks which are imported into Great Britain have to meet the British Standard 7114 or equivalent standard. We do not have detailed information on the domestic safety standards for fireworks manufactured outside Britain.

Business Start-up Scheme

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are presently in employment due to the business start-up scheme; and of these how many places have been taken up since 16 March.

Miss Widdecombe: On 15 August 1993, there were 34,900 participants on the business start-up scheme in Great Britian. Over the period 28 March 1993 to 15 August 1993, 15,600 people started on the scheme.

Offshore Safety

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if all the offshore oil and gas safety cases were received by the deadline of 30 November; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Under the Offshore Installations (Safety Case) Regulations 1992, all existing fixed and mobile offshore installations operating on the United Kingdom continental shelf were required to submit a safety case to the Health and Safety Executive by 30 November. As at 1 December, all the expected 215 safety cases had been received; 214 arrived on or before 30 November; one was delayed in transit from Norway.

The number of installations originally expected to be covered was 221; however, some of the safety cases received cover more than one installation; for example, unmanned installations linked to another central installation.

One mobile installation was not expected to submit a safety case because it was due to leave the United Kingdom continental shelf before 30 November. Its departure has been slightly delayed because of operating requirements but it will be leaving shortly. It is not being asked to submit a safety case.

WALES

Heritage

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to set up within the Welsh Office a separate department dedicated to heritage provision, including both human and natural heritage; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have no plans to do so.

Wind Power

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many wind power stations there are in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are currently five operational wind farms in Wales.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to increase the number of wind power stations in the Principality.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None.

Care Provision

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set up a monitor of continuing care provision across the country.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The need for continuing care provision is established, arranged and monitored through the local strategies for health and health plans prepared by health authorities, the social care plans prepared by local authorities and, through the Welsh strategies for the mentally handicapped and the mentally ill.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue more detailed guidance to health authorities on future standards of continuing care and respite care for people with dementia.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Guidance has been issued to health authorities in the form of the "Protocol for Investment in Health Gain: Mental Health, the Health and Social Gain for Older People" publication and the Welsh strategy for mental illness. I have no proposals to issue further guidance to health authorities at present.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will review and investigate those areas in Wales where no psychogeriatric continuing care beds are available.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The provision of continuing care beds for the elderly mentally ill is a matter for health authorities.

All health authorities in Wales provide continuing care beds for this group with the exception of Pembrokeshire health authority which uses patient beds provided by other agencies within Dyfed.

It is for each health authority to make appropriate provision in line with its own assessment of local need.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the current waiting list for elective surgery at Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest available hospital waiting lists are for 31 March 1993, when the waiting lists for all surgical specialties at Ysbyty Gwynedd were 2,286 for in-patient treatment and 460 for day cases.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the average waiting time for elective surgery at Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor for the year from April 1992 to April 1993.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The median waiting time for patients admitted from the waiting list for surgical specialties in Ysbyty Gwynedd for the period April 1992 to March 1993 was 49 days.

Nurses' Grading

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if all the appeals of nurses in Wales regarding their salary grading have now been determined.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No. There are fewer than 100 cases outstanding at employing authority level; some 1,100 at the Welsh appeals committee level; and 228 cases at the national level. I am optimistic that recent discussions between both sides of the Nursing and Midwifery Staffs Negotiating Council will shortly result in new procedures for clearing all outstanding cases at the Welsh and national levels.

Health Promotion

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to health promotion campaigns in Wales; and how successful they have been.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Each year, I approve the operational plan of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales and the authority reports on progress at its annual reviews conducted by the Department.

In addition, the authority commissions a number of regular surveys to measure changes in people's behaviour. "Plans for Action 3: The Agenda for 1992-94", published in July 1992, showed progress towards meeting the targets set out in the authority's health promotion strategy, based on surveys undertaken in 1990. A further progress report will be published during 1994-95, drawing upon the results of the 1993-94 surveys. The authority is also due to publish an evaluation report of the Heartbeat Wales initiative during 1994.

Oystermouth Square Development Scheme

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give a detailed account of the progress so far of the Oystermouth square development scheme in Mumbles and the next stages of the planning process it needs to go through.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Secretary of State called in for his own determination the application for the Oystermouth square development scheme because it raised planning issues of more than local importance. A public local inquiry was arranged for 30 March 1993, but was postponed to permit the applicant to submit revised plans to take account of the line of a main sewer which would have made the original plans impossible to implement. The revised plans were submitted in June 1993 and were the subject of wide consultation and publicity. The public local inquiry opened on 23 November 1993 and is scheduled to be completed by the end of December. The inspector will then make his report and recommendation to the Secretary of State who will consider them before reaching his decision.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what changes he proposes in the internal structure of the Welsh Development Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The chairman of the Welsh Development Agency announced in October that he is undertaking a comprehensive review of the agency's organisation and management structure.

While the issues of organisation and management are essentially matters for the agency, its senior management structure is subject to approval and the agency will be submitting its proposals shortly.

Because of the chairman's close involvement in this review and its implementation I have temporarily increased his time commitment from two and a half days per week to four days per week.

Housing

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will commission an update of the 1985 Welsh housing survey.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The results of the latest Welsh house condition survey are expected to be published in the spring 1994.

Home Renovation Grants

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will discuss with the Council of the Welsh Districts the consequences of the introduction on 14 January of the new £24,000 ceiling on home renovation grants.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My officials have discussed the new upper limit for mandatory grants with representatives of the Council of Welsh Districts.

Forestry Commission Land

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, for each separate piece of land currently owned or leased by the Forestry Commission in Dyfed, Gwent, Gwynedd and Powys *(a)* its name and *(b)* its area in hectares; and whether he will place a map in the Library which names and identifies each of these pieces of land.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 8 December 1993, at columns *237-38.*

Mr. Alan Trew

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the South Glamorgan health authority in relation to the compensation offer made to Mr. Alan Trew, former unit manager of the Cardiff Royal group of hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend has had no consultations with the South Glamorgan health authority on this matter: this is an individual staffing issue entirely for the authority to resolve.

Welsh Historic Monuments

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to publish the Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments annual report and accounts for 1992-93.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The report has been published today.

Further and Higher Education

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about financial provision for further and higher education in Wales in 1994-95.

Mr. Redwood: I intend to make £144·403 million recurrent and £15·615 million capital grant in aid available to the Further Education Funding Council for Wales in 1994-95. This is an increase of 11·2 per cent. over provision in 1993-94. Grant in aid to the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales will be £199·973 million recurrent and £22·840 million capital. Total recurrent resources for the HE sector in Wales will be 6·7 per cent. higher than in 1993-94 and capital resources 6·1 per cent. higher.

These increases in resources will enable the universities and colleges to provide places for substantially higher number of students than the record levels achieved this year, while maintaining the quality of course provision.

I am placing in the Library of the House copies of letters which are being sent today to the chief executive of the funding councils.

Wales Tourist Board

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what resources he will give to the Wales tourist board for 1994-95.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Additional money is being allocated to the Wales tourist board for 1994-95, which will increase the board's budget by 4 per cent. to £14·204 million.

Health and Safety

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his policy concerning health and safety.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have been asked to reply. I am advised on health and safety policy by the Health and Safety Commission, HSC.

Government policy is to create a legislative framework and supporting safety systems which protect people from workplace risks. Within that system, the primary responsibility for ensuring the safety of workers and public rests with employers and others who create those risks. The function of the HSC and the Health and Safety Executive —the HSE—is to stimulate action and to set, advise on and enforce standards. It is the Government's policy to ensure the greatest possible value for money is achieved in the work of the HSE.

The HSC is also currently undertaking a review of health and safety legislation, designed to simplify, clarify and update it. The Government expect this to result in improved health and safety standards for workers.

HEALTH

Non-urgent Surgery

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to hold records on the names of hospitals and health authorities which have ceased non-urgent surgery; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The organisation of workload and the delivery of contracts are matters for local managers and clinicians. There are no plans to add to the burdens of managers and other staff by requiring additional statistical returns to the centre on this subject.

Influenza Vaccine

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has in future to ensure that there are sufficient supplies of influenza vaccine when demand increases in response to advice on immunisation given by her chief medical officer.

Mr. Sackville: The Department will continue to liaise with the influenza vaccine manufacturers each year, in advance of the issue of the chief medical officer's letter to doctors, to ensure that their production intentions are to total at least the previous year's usage plus an increment for year on year increases in uptake.

The CMO's advice for 1993-94 was the same as for 1992-93. Doses of vaccine distributed in 1992-93 totalled just under 4·7 million. For 1993-94 they have exceeded 5 million despite the fact that a fifth of our expected supply did not become available.

Copies of the letter, PL/CMO(93)13, will be placed in the Library.

NHS Trusts

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the salary of each chief executive of each trust in 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Nicotine Patches

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice she has received from the specialist independent sub-committee chaired by Professor Sir William Asscher on the effectiveness of nicotine patches in helping patients to give up smoking; and if she proposes to accept it.

Dr. Mawhinney: A special committee chaired by Sir William Asscher was asked to advise on whether a decision to remove a particular nicotine patch product from national health service prescription should be reviewed. The committee advised that the product should be available on the NHS at a reduced price. After careful consideration of all the facts, including the advice of the committee, it has been decided that the supply of nicotine patches is not a priority for the use of the limited resources available to the NHS.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recommendations have been made in the publication "Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin", on the availability of nicotine patches on NHS prescription in order to help patients give up smoking.

Dr. Mawhinney: The drug and therapeutics bulletin of 22 November concluded, in an article about nicotine patches, that the use of

> "nicotine patches plus advice and support, should be provided by the NHS."

Copies of the bulletin are available in the Library.

Ambulance Statistics

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what reasons underlie the classification of Doncaster as rural for the purpose of publishing ambulance statistics.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 30 November at columns *461-62*.

Continence Products

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the amount spent on continence products in each year since 1988; and what is the projected spending for 1994, 1995 and 1996.

Mr. Bowis: Expenditure on continence products since 1988 is shown in the table.

Calendar Year	*Net ingredient cost £ million*
1988	14·8
1989	14·0
1990	16·0
1991	20·7
1992	23·2

Projected expenditure forecasts for the years 1993 to 1996 are not available.

Notes:

1. 1988 to 1990 data are based on a 1 in 200 sample and cover prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors only.

2. The data for 1991 and 1992 cover all prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors, dispensing doctors, and prescriptions submitted by prescribing doctors for items personally administered.

NHS Medicines

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the grounds on which she can reject recommendations by independent expert committees, including the Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs and the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances so as to make decisions on the availability of NHS medicines at variance with the expert committees' recommendations.

Dr. Mawhinney: Decisions about whether or not products should be available on national health service prescription are made by Ministers after taking account of expert advice, including any recommendation of the Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs and the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances. The basis on which such decisions are made reflect the particular circumstances of individual products. The grounds for deciding to exclude a product from NHS prescription, whether or not this is in line with a recommendation of a committee, are always explained to the manufacturer who is given an opportunity to make representations before the final decision.

Maintenance Backlog

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by region the maintenance backlog as at 31 March.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

The figures are the estimated costs, as at March 1993, of clearing outstanding repairs and upkeep required to bring the estate up to a satisfactory physical condition, and now includes an estimate of the cost required to meet statutory and safety standards.

The figures are for all trusts and directly managed units within the regional boundaries

Region	*Cost £'000*
Northern	142,129
Yorkshire	125,987
Trent	119,383
East Anglian	83,462
North West Thames	84,049
North East Thames	331,467
South East Thames	264,256
South West Thames	176,176
Wessex	111,461
Oxford	89,925
South Western	123,605
West Midlands	307,229
Mersey	64,310
North Western	144,011

Worcester Health Authority

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to call for a report on the use of Concorde flights by staff of Worcester district health authority.

Mr. Sackville: We have no such plans. This is a matter for Worcester and district health authority and the hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman, Mr. A. J. Prescott, for details.

Cancer Screening

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will instruct health authorities to ensure that their publicity on cancer screening includes a statement that those aged over 65 years are not screened routinely but can request both smear and mammography examinations.

Mr. Sackville: The management of local health promotion strategies is a matter for local discussion and decision.

Drugs Company Incentives

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received about drug companies offering incentives to general practitioners to prescribe their products; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We have received a number of representations following press reports.

The Government deplore any attempt by drugs companies improperly to influence doctors' prescribing practice and are already taking steps to tighten controls on hospitality and other inducements offered by drugs companies. Consultation has just ended on proposed new provisions which would bring breaches of hospitality norms within the scope of the Medicines Act 1968, and render offending companies or their sales representatives liable to criminal prosecution. Regulations to give effect to these proposals will be laid before Parliament shortly.

The pharmaceutical industry in this country has a strict code of practice, probably the strictest in Europe, which lays down very clear guidelines as to what is acceptable behaviour by sales representatives. The Prescription Medicines Code of Practice Authority, which administers the code of practice on behalf of the pharmaceutical industry, is already investigating the allegations which have been made and will report its findings to the Department's Medicines Control Agency. It will also apply appropriate sanctions where allegations are substantiated.

Asthma

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies her Department has carried out of the effect of increasing traffic volumes on levels of asthma among children and adults.

Mr. Sackville: The Department is funding a research project which will examine the health effects, including effects on asthmatics, of the December 1991 air pollution episode in London when the highest recorded peak of nitrogen dioxide occurred.

In addition, the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollution which was established by the chief medical officer last year has set up a sub-group on asthma which will investigate the relationships between air pollution and trends in asthma incidence, and will make recommendations on research relating to asthma and air pollution.

The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council—MRC—which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The MRC is sponsoring some research into factors contributing to the rise of asthma and has set up a working party to examine the aetiology of asthma under the chairmanship of Professor A. J. Newman Taylor. It is considering a range of possible contributory factors to current levels of asthma including air pollution. The Department is represented on the working party and on the MRC committee on toxic hazards in the workplace and the environment, both of which will consider areas of need for further research.

St. Cross Hospital, Rugby

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has so far received about the consultation document issued by the Warwickshire health authority and the hospital of St. Cross in Rugby.

Mr. Sackville: We have received correspondence from a number of people in the west midlands, including my hon. Friend, about this issue.

Oral Contraceptives

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost to the consumer in each EC country of a prescription of oral contraceptives.

Mr. Sackville: There is no charge for contraceptives under the national health service in the United Kingdom. Detailed information about arrangements in other European countries is not available centrally.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of elderly people living in residential care homes in North Yorkshire county council are accommodated in *(a)* private sector homes and *(b)* council-owned homes.

Mr. Bowis: The latest available figures are for 31 March 1992. The percentage of residents aged 65 and over in staffed residential care homes for elderly and younger physically disabled people, in the North Yorkshire local authority were, 59 per cent. in private homes and 28 per cent. in local authority homes. The remaining 13 per cent. of residents are living in homes run by voluntary bodies.

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many units of accommodation are provided by residential care homes owned by North Yorkshire county council; and how many vacancies remain.

Mr. Bowis: The latest figures available are for 31 March 1992. There were 1,797 places in staffed residential care homes for all client groups, of which 267 were not occupied.

Neurosurgery

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information is available to her on whether the secondhand magnetic resonance imaging scanner at the Brook hospital has *(a)* ever been given electrical safety approval and *(b)* been used on a patient; and whether doctors are able to clear the backlog by using another machine.

Mr. Sackville: The installation and use of the MRI scanner at the Brook hospital is a matter for Greenwich Healthcare national health service trust. My hon. Friend may wish to contact Mr. Neville Thompson, chairman of the trust, for details.

Dental Services

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will now publish the proposed oral health strategy and the White Paper on dental services; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Proposals for an oral health strategy for England and for the future remuneration arrangements in the general dental services will be announced in due course.

Newcastle Hospitals

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she proposes to give a decision on the proposals for Newcastle hospitals submitted to her by Newcastle health authority; and whether she proposes to respond in detail to the points put to her in a letter dated 26 November from the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central, (Mr. Cousins).

Mr. Sackville: I agreed to the proposals set out in "The future of health care in Newcastle" on 9 December. On the same day I wrote to the hon. Member informing him of the decision and responding to the points he made in his letter. Copies of the proposals and my letter will be placed in the Library.

Haemochromatosis

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has made of the numbers of British people suffering from haemochromatosis.

Mr. Sackville: Information is not available on which to base an estimate.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of publicly funded research programmes studying the connection between haemochromatosis and diabetes; if she will make a statement about the results from such research; and what is the cost of programmes of research.

Mr. Sackville: The Department is not currently undertaking any such studies into the connection between haemochromatosis and diabetes.

The main agency through which the Government conduct biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. We understand that the MRC is not currently funding any research into the connection between haemochromatosis and diabetes.

Active Termination of Life

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she proposes to take following the inquiries by Mr. Richard Turner of the western European department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office into the practice of non-voluntary active termination of life.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to her by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office today.

Community Care Grant

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the formula used in calculating the distribution of the special transitional community care grant to individual authorities for 1994-95.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) on 2 December, at column *707*. The methodology of the transfer is set out in LASSL(93)19, copies of which are available in the Library.

Health and Personal Social Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the top 10 sales that are categorised as "other" in the health and personal social services statistics for England; and if she will list the income from this category for 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Sackville: The components of the "other" category were not separately identified in the returns made to the Department. No information was available centrally for 1992 and 1993.

Non-NHS Bodies

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each year since 1990 the expenditure on the purchase of health care from non-NHS bodies for *(a)* regions, *(b)* districts and *(c)* trusts.

Mr. Sackville: Expenditure on the purchase of health care from non-national health service bodies for years 1991-92 and 1992-93 is shown in the table. Figures for 1990-91 are not available centrally.

	1991-92 *£000*	*1992-93* *£000*
Regional Health Authorities	32,746	21,421
District Health Authorities	159,818	187,335
NHS Trusts	12,204	44,543

Source: Annual Financial Returns of regional health authorities, district health authorities and NHS Trusts.
Note: Figures for 1992-93 are provisional.

Baby Foods

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each year since 1990 the income from the sale of proprietary baby foods for *(a)* regions, *(b)* districts and *(c)* trusts.

Mr. Sackville: Income from the sale of proprietary baby foods, and so on for 1990-91 is given in the "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics for England", 1992 edition, table 2.9 as £12,657,163 In that year, only district health authorities reported an income from the sale of these goods. The information has not been collected centrally in subsequent years, in accordance with our policy of reducing the administrative burden on health authorities and national health service trusts. Copies of the health and personal social services statistics are available in the Library.

GP Fundholders

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many general practitioner fundholders in Bolton *(a)* are and *(b)* are not overspent in the current financial year;

(2) how many general practitioner fundholders in Bolton have asked that non-urgent admissions are delayed to Bolton or other hospitals; how many patients are involved; and what is the effect of this on their position on the waiting lists.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not collected centrally. Regional health authorities are responsible for managing the general practitioner fundholding scheme in their areas.

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will ensure that no patient will suffer a lack of drugs or treatment because the fundholder is overspent.

Dr. Mawhinney: Regional health authorities manage any general practitioner fundholder overspends from within contingency reserves and patient care is unaffected. However, where a GP fundholder overspends because of inadequate budgetary management, the responsible regional health authority will consider the suitability of the practice to remain in the scheme.

Car Mileage Allowances

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much car mileage allowance was claimed by NHS staff in *(a)* regional health authorities, *(b)* district health authorities, *(c)* trusts and *(d)* the NHS as a whole for 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Management Consultants

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the expenditure on management consultants for each year since 1980 for *(a)* regions, *(b)* districts and *(c)* trusts.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Attorney-General what was the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

The Attorney-General: The total cost to the Department of the Government car service for Ministers for the financial year 1990-91 was approximately £120,000. Two vehicles were involved.

Active Termination of Life

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Attorney-General what consideration is being given to bringing prosecutions in those cases referred to in the statement of 11 November by Mr. Richard Turner of the western European department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in a letter a copy of which has been drawn to his attention, that non-voluntary active termination of life is a practice which occurs in the United Kingdom, although it is illegal; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I understand that the letter by the official in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office referred to by my hon. Friend was misleading and that the FCO does not have any evidence suggesting the commission of offences of unlawful killing.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress he has made in collating and publishing information on the proportion of British aid directly focused on the alleviation of poverty.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My reply to the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) on 29 November, at column *313*, described the Overseas Development Administration's policy information marker system—PIMS—designed to monitor performance against the seven priority objectives announced by my noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development, in her speech at the Royal Institute of International Affairs on 18 October. Data from PIMS, including data on performance against ODA's priority objective of direct poverty reduction, will appear in the ODA section of the "Foreign and Commonwealth Office Departmental Report 1994".

Street Children

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to support the consortium of charities for street children launched by the Prime Minister on 18 November.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have indicated to the consortium our willingness to provide support, subject to appraisal, and have asked them to submit a proposal.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives he has taken under the United Nation's convention on the rights of the child to protect the world's street children; and what estimates he has made of how many such children there are.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom attaches importance to promoting and protecting the rights of the child. We raise human rights abuses against children with the authorities of those countries concerned. The resolutions on street children at the Commission on Human Rights and at the United Nations General Assembly this year stem from a United Kingdom initiative during our presidency of the EU in 1992.

The Overseas Development Administration supports non-governmental organisations in their work with street children in Latin America, India, the Philippines, South Africa and other parts of Africa. We have committed over £225,000 to such projects this year. We are also supporting projects in Albania, Bulgaria and Romania through the charity know-how fund.

Estimates of the global numbers of street children vary according to definition. Some estimates are confined to children actually living on the street while others include those who work on the street while living partly at home. The United Kingdom has not attempted to make an independent estimate.

Grenada

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list details of existing and proposed investments by the Commonwealth Development Corporation in Grenada.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Commonwealth Development Corporation—CDC—has a single investment in Grenada. Since 1991, it has invested £1·938 million in Liberty Club Ltd. The CDC is considering possible involvement in Grenada Electricity Services Ltd.

Overseas Aid

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if it is the practice of his Department to conduct an annual opinion poll on the public's attitude to overseas aid and development; what were the results of this survey in the latest year for which figures are available; and where they can be seen.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is not the practice of the Department to conduct an annual opinion poll on the public's attitude to overseas aid.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a list by country of all projects currently being funded from the British bilateral aid programme, detailing project title, expected duration and main objectives.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Nearly 4,000 projects, many very small, are currently being funded by the Overseas Development Administration from the bilateral aid programme. It would be disproportionately expensive to list for each of them the data sought by the hon. Member.

Aggregated information on the main objectives of projects will be published in the "Foreign and Commonwealth Office Departmental Report 1994".

Some details of the major projects in a range of countries are available in the partners in development booklets published by the ODA. These and a list of projects funded from the know-how fund for eastern and central Europe and the former Soviet Union are in the Libraries of the House.

Development Projects (Confidentiality)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent details of long-term development projects submitted in support and evaluation of successful applications for funds from his Department are treated by his Department as confidential; and what access to this information is provided.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave him on 8 December at columns *269-70*. Proposals, reports and evaluations submitted to the ODA under the joint funding scheme for non-governmental organisations can be made available on request and by agreement between the ODA and the organisation concerned.

Commonwealth Development Corporation

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Commonwealth Development Corporation has been authorised to operate in additional countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Following a request from the corporation, approval has been given for the CDC to operate in Guatemala. In pursuing investment opportunities we expect CDC to give priority to promoting private sector development.

Population Conference

Mr. Coe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library copies of the United Kingdom national report on population for the international conference on population and development, taking place in Cairo in September 1994.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Copies of the United Kingdom national report have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

PRIME MINISTER

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister what was the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

The Prime Minister: The charge to my office for ministerial use of the Government car service during 1990-91 was £117,952. Two vehicles were involved.

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister what arrangements are made to ensure that special advisers to Ministers in his Department Do not have access to the kind of information, and are not involved in the type of business, that would be likely to create suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment.

The Prime Minister: Care is taken to ensure that special advisers do not have access to the kind of information likely to create suspicion of impropriety. They are not involved in evaluating tenders or letting contracts.

Identification Numbers

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the smallest number of separate identification numbers in use by any Government department that a person with a driving licence and a passport can have; and how many persons are employed in the various Departments of state to administer these separate registers, giving the number employed in each case.

The Prime Minister: A person with a driving licence and a passport would have a driver number, a passport number, a national health service number and is likely to have a national insurance number.

Driver numbers are automatically generated by computer when a licence is issued and require no additional staff effort. The Passport Agency employs 32 people at the central records unit at Hayes whose job it is to administer passport records. National insurance numbers are issued in two ways: 70 per cent. are issued centrally by the Department of Social Security in an automated process and the remainder are issued locally. The issuing of a national insurance number and the administration of records are part of the general work of departmental staff. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys employs 180 staff at the national health service central register in Southport whose duties include administration of national health records as well as other responsibilities.

Local Government Review

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister what guidance he has given to the Minister for Local Government and Planning in relation to the announcements anticipating the Government's response to the Local Government Commission's final report on the North Yorkshire review.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the reply I gave the hon. Member on 29 November, *Official Report*, column *325*.

Nursery Places

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister if it is Government policy to provide nursery places for all three and four-year-olds whose parents want it.

The Prime Minister: The Government's policy is to promote choice and diversity of educational and other forms of provision for the under-fives, within the resources available. The scale and pattern of provision locally are matters for individual local authorities and other local providers.

Departmental Refrigerators

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to direct all Departments of State to purchase ozone-friendly fridges when replacing existing stocks of departmental refrigerators.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment emphasised the importance of phasing out the use of ozone-depleting substances at a recent meeting of green Ministers. Information on ozone-friendly fridges was circulated to all departments in July this year. Each Department is responsible for its own environmental strategy and purchasing decisions.

Employment Policy

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what is the Government's policy on trying to ensure that full employment exists in Britain.

The Prime Minister: Economic growth and jobs are generated by businesses and their employees, not by Governments. But Governments do have a responsibility for ensuring that markets work properly and that the regulatory and tax burden on business is kept to an absolute minimum.

The Government also have the essential task of establishing a macroeconomic framework, which provides the stability that businesses need to plan for the future. This means that inflation and public finances need to be kept under control.

These are the policies that the Government believe will create wealth and jobs, not just in the United Kingdom, but in the European Community as a whole.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 14 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Expenditure

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the allocation to individual programmes in Northern Ireland of the public expenditure totals announced on 30 November.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: In his unified Budget Statement on 30 November, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced total public expenditure planning figures for the Northern Ireland programme. I have now decided on the allocations to individual programmes as shown in the table. Copies of a more detailed statement have been placed in the Library. These allocations reflect my assessment of how best to distribute the Northern Ireland public expenditure totals in response to local needs and circumstances.

£ million

	1994-95	*1995-96*	*1996-97*
PROGRAMME			
Northern Ireland Office:			
Law, Order, protective and Miscellaneous Services	—	—	—
Northern Ireland Departments			
Northern Ireland Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Services and Support	—	—	—
Industry, Trade and Employment	—	—	—
Energy	—	—	—
Roads and Transport	—	—	—
Housing	—	—	—
Environmental and Miscellaneous Services	—	—	—
Law, Order and Protective Services (Fire Service)	—	—	—
Education, Arts and Libraries	—	—	—
Health and Personal Social Services	—	—	—
Social Security Administration	—	—	—
Other Public Services	—	—	—
Northern Ireland Block (excluding Social Security Benefits)	5,172	5,360	5,420
Social Security Benefits	2,052	2,200	2,330
Northern Ireland Block	7,224	7,550	7,750
National Agriculture and Fisheries Support	166	190	190
Northern Ireland Programme	7,390	7,440	7,940

1. Figures are presented on the New Control Total basis an explanation of which was given in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement on 12 November 1992. They exclude cyclical Social Security Benefits of £544m, £580m and £610m.

2. Figures are rounded to nearest £1m in 1994-95 and to nearest £10m in 1995-96 and 1996-97.

3. The figures for 1994-95 will form the basis for preparation by Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office of Main Estimates for the coming year. These will be presented to Parliament in due course.

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

Sir John Wheeler: The cost of providing cars for Ministers during the 1990-91 financial year was around £680,000.

For most of the year, only four cars were provided by the Government car service, but this was increased to five when the number of Ministers of State increased.

Not all Ministers had the exclusive use of a car; these costs therefore include private hire cars to supplement the five cars provided by the Government car service. They also include the cost of cars provided on duty by the Royal Ulster Constabulary for Ministers when they were in Northern Ireland.

Pensioners

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people of pensionable age were living in Northern Ireland during 1991, 1992 and 1993; what percentage they represent of the overall population in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The information, taken from the provisional 1991 and 1992 mid-year estimates of population, is as follows:

	Numbers	*Per cent.*
1991	239,600	15
1992	241,600	15

Comparable data for 1993 are not yet available.

Overseas Investment

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will place in the Library a copy of the Ernst and Young report which was commissioned by the Industrial Development Board into the reasons why overseas companies have invested in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: Ernst and Young were not commissioned to produce a report for the Industrial Development Board into the reasons why overseas companies have invested in Northern Ireland. They were used, however, by the IDB to extend the work undertaken for the Invest in Britain Bureau to produce a reference document which could help the IDB sell the Northern Ireland business opportunity in a very competitive environment. I regret that this information is for internal use only and it would not be appropriate to have the document placed in the Library.

Arts Council

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current level of funding for the Arts Council in Northern Ireland; what the projected grants to the Council will be for 1994-96 and 1995-97; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: In the current financial year, funding for the Arts Council of Northern Ireland is £6·379 million. My right hon. and learned Friend has today announced the allocations to programmes for 1994-95 and I will provide further details, including the funding of the Arts Council, shortly.

Rural Planning Policy

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received regarding the recently published review of rural planning policy in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I announced the outcome of the review of planning policy for rural Northern Ireland on 23 September 1993. Since then the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Environment Link have asked for further information on the effect of the strategy.

Marketing and Management

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what funding is available in 1993-94 for *(a)* the export marketing programme and *(b)* the graduate management development programme; and what funds he proposes to make available in 1994-95.

Mr. Atkins: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Training and Employment Agency under its chief executive, Mr. J. S. Crozier. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from J. S. Crozier to Mr. Andrew Hunter, dated 10 December 1993:

You asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland about the funding for the Export Marketing and Graduate Management Development Programmes in the years 1993-94 and 1994-95. As the Training and Employment Agency has responsibility for these programmes, I am writing to you directly in response.

In the year 1993-94, £668,000 has been allocated to the Export Marketing Programme and £1,951,000 to the Graduate Management Programme.

With regard to 1994-95, I am unable at present to provide figures for the proposed funding as the Public Expenditure Survey allocations have not been completed. However, I envisage that sufficient funding will be made available from within the overall allocation to enable the programmes to be operated at least at the current level of activity and in the light of the outcome of the imminent competitive tendering process to which both programmes are subject.

I regret I cannot be more specific at this stage.

Environmental Protection Agency

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to introduce an environmental protection agency to Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: In Northern Ireland, most of the intended functions of the proposed agency in England and Wales already lie within central Government, in the environment service of the Department of the Environment. When final details of the agency are available, I will decide whether any proposals for change in Northern Ireland should be made.

Gaming Licences

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what restrictions currently exist governing the granting of licences to gaming and amusement establishments in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The detailed restrictions are contained in parts III and V of the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 and related regulations made under it. These relate mainly to the status and fitness of the applicant and to the suitability of the premises in which the business is to be conducted.

Rural Hospitals

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many rural hospitals were operational in Northern Ireland in 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Hospitals are not classified into the categories "rural" and "urban".

Housing

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he intends to introduce compulsory competitive tendering to housing executive management in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; what representations he has received about such proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Government are committed to the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering for housing management. They will take some time to consider the exact form of competitive tendering appropriate to Northern Ireland, taking into account the particular local circumstances and background against which the Northern Ireland Housing Executive operates. I have received a number of representations directly and indirectly from elected representatives. It will be at least 1995 before the necessary enabling legislative provisions are in place and the normal consultative process will take place in bringing forward that legislation.

Sinn Fein (Contacts)

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what instructions or advice are or have been given to the Royal Ulster Constabulary, with regard to investigations concerning leading members of IRA or Sinn Fein with whom Her Majesty's Government were in contact, on the arrest or questioning of such persons *(a)* during the period February to November 1993 and *(b)* at present.

Sir John Wheeler: None. Criminal investigations are entirely an operational matter for the Chief Constable.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information his Department received on the breach of the United Nations embargo on arms sales to South Africa by the International Signal and Control company *(a)* from 1975 to 1986 and *(b)* from 1987 onwards; and whether the role of ISC in circumventing the arms embargo was brought to the attention of Her Majesty's Government when ISC was bought by Ferranti.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We understand that the alleged breaches of the United Nations arms embargo did not involve exports from the United Kingdom. The allegations were reported to the Security Council 421 committee which oversees compliance with the United Nations arms embargo against South Africa. Legal proceedings have been taken against ISC officials and others in the United States.

Korean Peninsula

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the European Council of Ministers last discussed the situation on the Korean peninsula; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The European Council has not discussed the situation on the Korean peninsula in the last two years.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on the peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula.

Mr. Goodlad: We have consistently supported efforts to achieve this through direct contact between North and South Korea. We hope that these contacts will soon resume and make progress.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation on the Korean peninsula; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The situation on the Korean peninsula gives cause for concern. Contacts between North and South Korea to follow up their 1991 agreement on reconciliation, non-aggression, exchanges and co-operation seem to have stalled. North Korea has not co-operated with the International Atomic Energy Agency on all the necessary inspections of its nuclear facilities. North Korea's attitude has serious implications for stability in the region. We hope that early progress can be made on both these issues.

GATT

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to make available to hon. Members copies of the renegotiated proposals for the multilateral trade organisations, prior to the deadline for the signing of the GATT Uruguay round on 15 December.

Mr. Goodlad: A copy of the latest draft of the multilateral trade organisation—MTO—agreement has been deposited in the Library of the House of Commons, in response to a question from the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) on 1 December, *Official Report*, column 533. A copy of the final draft of the MTO agreement will be deposited in the House Library as soon as it is available in London.

High Commissions and Embassies

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the staffing levels and staff gradings for each British high commission and embassy in Africa in 1983; and what they are in the current year.

Mr. Goodlad: A comparison of staffing levels and staff gradings at FCO missions in Africa between 1983 and 1993 is given in the tables.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office staffing levels in Africa 1983 to 1993

Country, post and grade	*1983*	*Totals*	*1993*	*Totals*
ALGERIA				
Algiers				
DS 3	1		1	
DS 4	1		2	
DS 5	1		—	
DS 7M	2		3	
DS 9	1		3	
S 1	1		1	
DS 10	2		1	
S 2	2		3	
Locally engaged	24·25	35·25	33·50	47·5
ANGOLA				
Luanda				
DS 3	1		1	
DS 5	1		3	
DS 7M	2		2	
DS 9	1		1	
DS 10	1		2	
S 2	1		2	
Locally engaged	12·50	19·50	12·00	23·0
BOTSWANA				
Garborone				
DS 4	1		1	
DS 5	1		—	
DS 6	—		1	
DS 7M	1		1	
DS 8C	1		—	
DS 9	2		2	
DS 10	1		1	
S 2	1		1	
Locally engaged	20·00	28·00	17·50	24·5
CAMEROON				
Douala				
DS 6	1		—	
DS 7M	—		1	
DS 9	1		—	
DS 10	1		—	
Locally engaged	6·50	9·50	2·50	3·5
Yaounde				
DS 4	1		1	
DS 6	2		1	
DS 7M	1		—	
DS 9	1		1	
DS 10	2		—	
S2	1		1	
Locally engaged	13·50	21·50	20·00	24·0
EGYPT				
Alexandria				
DS 5	1		—	
DS 6	—		1	
DS 9	1		—	
Locally engaged	14·00	16·00	13·50	14·50
Cairo				
DS 2	1		1	
DS 4	2		2	
DS 5	1		5	
DS 6	4		2	
DS 7M	1		1	
DS 7D8	1		2	
CSO	—		1	
HPTO	—		2	
DS 8C	1		—	
DS 8T	—		1	
DS 9	7		8	
DS 9C	1		—	
DS 9T	—		1	
S 1	1		1	
SO	5		4	
DS 10	3		2	
S 2	1		4	
Locally engaged	103·45	132·45	118·50	155·50
ETHIOPIA				
Addis Ababa				
DS 3	1		1	
DS 4	1		—	
DS 5	1		2	
DS 6	—		1	
DS 7M	5		1	
DS 9	—		2	
S 1	1		—	
DS 10	2		1	
S 2	1		2	
Locally engaged	75·50	87·50	74·10	84·10

Country, post and grade	1983	Totals	1993	Totals
Gambia				
Banjul				
DS 4	1		1	
DS 6	1		—	
DS 7M	—		1	
DS 9	2		1	
DS 10	—		1	
S 2	1		1	
Locally engaged	27·00	32·00	35·50	40·50
Ghana				
Accra				
DS 3	1		1	
DS 4	1		1	
DS 5	1		2	
DS 6	—		2	
DS 7M	5		3	
DS 9	1		1	
DS 10	4		—	
S 2	1		3	
Locally engaged	56·00	70·00	90·50	103·50
Ivory Coast				
Abidjan				
DS 4	1		1	
DS 5	1		1	
DS 7M	1		1	
DS 9	2		2	
DS 10	1		1	
S 2	1		1	
Locally engaged	14·00	21·00	13·50	20·50
Kenya				
Nairobi				
DS 2	1		1	
DS 4	1		2	
DS 5	3		3	
DS 6	3		3	
DS 7M	2		4	
DS 7D8	1		3	
DS 8C	1		—	
DS 8T	2		—	
DS 9C	1		—	
DS 9	5		3	
S 1	1		1	
DS 10	1		2	
S 2	2		4	
Locally engaged	77·50	101·50	68·50	94·50
Lesotho				
Maseru				
DS 4	1		1	
DS 6	1		1	
DS 7M	—		1	
DS 9	1		1	
DS 10	1		1	
S 2	1		1	
Locally engaged	18·00	23·00	15·50	21·50
Libya				
Tripoli				
DS 3	1		—	
DS 4	1		—	
DS 5	—		1	
DS 7M	3		—	
DS 8C	1		—	
DS 9	3		1	
DS 10	4		—	
S 2	2		—	
SO	2		—	
Locally engaged	37·00	54·00	13·00	15·00
Madagascar				
Antananarivo				
DS 4	1		1	
DS 6	1		—	
DS 7M	—		1	
Locally engaged	10·50	12·50	13·55	15·55
Malawi				
Lilongwe				
DS 3	1		1	
DS 5	1		1	
DS 6	—		1	
DS 7M	4		2	
DS 8C	1		—	
DS 8T	1		—	
DS 9	—		2	
DS 10	2		3	
S 2	2		1	
SO	1		—	
Locally engaged	26·00	39·00	58·25	69·25
Mauritius				
Port Louis				
DS 4	1		1	
DS 5	—		1	
DS 6	1		—	
DS 7M	1		—	
DS 9	3		3	
DS 10	1		—	
S 2A	—		1	
Locally engaged	23·00	30·00	22·75	28·75
Morocco				
Casablanca				
DS 4	1		1	
DS 7M	1		1	
DS 9	—		2	
Locally engaged	11·00	13·00	14·60	18·60
Rabat				
DS 3	1		1	
DS 5	1		1	
DS 7M	1		2	
DS 9	1		—	
DS 10	2		1	
S 2	2		2	
Locally engaged	21·50	29·50	17·00	24·00
Mozambique				
Maputo				
DS 3	1		1	
DS 5	1		3	
DS 7M	2		1	
DS 7D8	—		1	
DS 9	—		2	
DS 10	2		1	
S 2	1		2	
Locally engaged	20·00	27·00	24·00	35·00
Namibia				
Windhoek				
DS 4	1		1	
DS 6	—		1	
DS 7M	1		1	
DS 9	—		1	
DS 10	—		1	
S 2	—		1	
Locally engaged	0·00	2·00	5·00	11·00
Nigeria				
Abuja				
DS 2	—		0	
DS 4	—		0	
DS 5	—		0	
DS 6	—		2	
DS 7M	—		0	
DS 7D8	—		1	
DS 9	—		0	
S 1	—		0	
DS 10	—		1	
S 2	—		1	
Locally engaged	0·00	0·00	59·00	64·00

Country, post and grade	*1983*	*Totals*	*1993*	*Totals*
Ibadan				
Locally engaged	5·00	5·00	4·00	4·00
Kaduna				
DS 4	1		1	
DS 6	1		1	
DS 7M	1		—	
DS 9	3		1	
DS 10	1		—	
S 2	—		1	
Locally engaged	19·00	26·00	20·00	24·00
Lagos				
DS 2	1		1	
DS 3	1		—	
DS 4	2		3	
DS 5	4		3	
DS 6	2		1	
DS 7M	4		3	
DS 7D8	2		2	
DS 8C	1		—	
DS 8T	1		—	
DS 9C	1		—	
DS 9T	1		—	
DS 9	11		5	
S 1	1		1	
DS 10	3		3	
S 2	3		2	
S 2A	—		1	
Locally engaged	123·10	161·10	194·00	219·00
Senegal				
Dakar				
DS 3	1		—	
DS 4	—		1	
DS 5	1		—	
DS 6	—		1	
DS 7M	1		—	
DS 7D8	1		—	
DS 9	1		2	
DS 10	2		1	
S 2	1		1	
Locally engaged	24·00	32·00	25·75	31·75
Seychelles				
Victoria				
DS 4	1		1	
DS 7M	1		1	
DS 9	1		—	
DS 10	1		—	
S 2	1		1	
Locally engaged	15·50	20·50	14·50	17·50
Sierra Leone				
Freetown				
DS 3	1		—	
DS 4	—		1	
DS 5	1		—	
DS 7M	1		1	
DS 9	2		1	
DS 10	2		0	
S 2	2		1	
Locally engaged	41·00	49·00	27·00	31·00
South Africa				
Cape Town				
DS 5	1		1	
DS 7M	3		3	
DS 9	1		—	
Locally engaged	22·00	27·00	17·00	21·00
Durban				
DS 6	1		1	
DS 9	—		1	
Locally engaged	11·00	12·00	6·60	8·60

Country, post and grade	*1983*	*Totals*	*1993*	*Totals*
Johannesburg				
DS 3	1		—	
DS 4	—		2	
DS 5	2		2	
DS 6	1		—	
DS 7M	4		2	
DS 7D8	—		2	
DS 9	2		2	
S 2	—		3	
Locally engaged	50·25	60·25	49·00	62·00
Pretoria				
DS 2	1		1	
DS 3	1		—	
DS 4	1		2	
DS 5	2		5	
DS 6	1		—	
DS 7M	—		1	
DS 7D8	1		1	
DS 7C	1		—	
DS 7T	1		—	
DS 8T	1		—	
DS 9C	2		—	
DS 9T	1		—	
DS 9	2		3	
S 1	1		1	
DS 10	1		3	
S 2	3		4	
Locally engaged	34·10	54·10	30·00	113·00
Sudan				
Khartoum				
Ds 3	1		1	
DS 4	1		—	
DS 5	—		1	
DS 6	3		—	
DS 7M	1		1	
DS 7D8	1		1	
DS 9	5		2	
SO	—		1	
DS 10	3		1	
S 2	2		1	
Locally engaged	39·50	56·50	39·20	48·20
Swaziland				
Mbabane				
DS 4	1		1	
DS 6	1		1	
DS 9	2		2	
DS 10	1		—	
S 2	1		1	
Locally engaged	17·00	23·00	13·70	18·70
Tanzania				
Dar Es Salaam				
DS 3	1		1	
DS 4	1		—	
DS 5	1		2	
DS 7M	4		3	
DS 7D8	1		1	
DS 9	2		2	
S 1	1		1	
DS 10	2		1	
S 2	1		1	
Locally engaged	40·50	54·50	38·00	50·00
Tunisia				
Tunis				
DS 3	1		1	
DS 5	1		2	
DS 7M	—		2	
DS 9	2		1	
SO	—		1	
DS 10	1		1	
S 2	1		2	
Locally engaged	25·00	31·00	29·65	39·65

Country, post and grade	*1983*	*Totals*	*1993*	*Totals*
Uganda				
Kampala				
DS 3	1		1	
DS 5	1		2	
DS 6	—		2	
DS 7M	2		2	
DS 9	2		2	
DS 10	1		1	
SO	1		—	
S 2	1		2	
Locally engaged	32·00	41·00	51·10	63·10
Zaire				
Kinshasa				
DS 3	1		—	
DS 5	1		1	
DS 7M	2		1	
DS 9	1		—	
DS 10	1		1	
S 2	1		—	
Locally engaged	19·00	26·00	33·00	36·00
Zambia				
Lusaka				
DS 3	1		1	
DS 4	1		1	
DS 5	1		2	
DS 6	2		2	
DS 7M	2		2	
DS 8C	1		—	
DS 9	4		3	
DS 10	2		1	
S 2	2		2	
S 2A	—		1	
Locally engaged	35·00	51·00	38·00	53·00
Zimbabwe				
Harare				
DS 3	1		1	
DS 4	1		2	
DS 5	2		2	
DS 6	2		3	
DS 7M	5		1	
DS 7D8	1		1	
DS 8C	1		—	
DS 9C	1		—	
DS 9	3		4	
S 1	1		1	
DS 10	2		1	
S 2	2		3	
SO	2		—	
Locally engaged	35·50	59·50	34·00	53·00
Missions closed since 1983				
Somalia				
Mogadishu				
DS 4	1			
DS 6	1			
DS 8C	1			
DS 9	2			
S 2	1			
Locally engaged	24·00	30·00		
Malawi				
Blantyre				
DS 9	1			
Locally engaged	7·50	8·50		
Gabon				
Libreville				
DS 4	1			
DS 6	1			
Locally engaged	7·25	9·25		
Congo				
Brazzaville				
DS 6	1			
Locally engaged	1·50	2·50		
Liberia				
Monrovia				
DS 4	1			
DS 6	1			
DS 10	1			
S 2	1			
Locally engaged	19·00	23·00		

Active Termination of Life

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the inquiries made and referred to in the statement of 11 November by Mr. Richard Turner of the western European department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, that non-voluntary active termination of life is a practice which occurs in the United Kingdom, although it is illegal; and if he will identify the incidents of such murder to which the statement refers.

Mr. Goodlad: Having made prior inquiries of the Home Office and Department of Health, an FCO officer referred to non-voluntary active termination of life in his reply of 11 November to a letter from a member of the public. He made clear that this practice is not condoned by Her Majesty's Government.

Deliberate killing will in the absence of a lawful defence amount either to murder or manslaughter and the perpetrator of such an act would be liable to prosecution under the criminal law. Between 1988 and 1992, four offences of homicide relating to deliberate killing of a patient by a member of the health professions were notified to the police. All four of these offences were crimes committed by the nurse, Beverley Allitt. We have no further evidence of any unlawful killing of this sort occurring in this country.

Mr. Richard Turner

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the grade, position, and salary of Mr. Richard Turner of the western European department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; how long he has been in post; and what are his responsibilities.

Mr. Goodlad: Mr. Turner is a Grade DS7M officer in the diplomatic service. The pay scale for DSM7, as for HEOs in the home civil service, is from £16,000 to £20,218 per annum. Mr. Turner has been the desk officer responsible for relations with Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands in the western European department since April 1993.

Iraq

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government are taking to gain the release of prisoners of war and other foreign detainees held in Iraq; if he will list the numbers by nationality of those prisoners and detainees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have attended the two meetings in Geneva held this year between the

International Committee of the Red Cross, the tripartite commission—USA, United Kingdom and France—Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to discuss the detainees. We have also continued to raise the plight of Kuwaiti and other detainees at the United Nations whenever the Security Council reviews sanctions against Iraq. We last did so on 18 November. We will continue to do so until Iraq fulfils all its obligations under Security Council resolutions 686 and 687.

According to the Kuwaiti National Committee for Missing and POW Affairs, there are 627 detainees in Iraq, of whom 592 are Kuwaitis and 35 other nationalities—13 Saudis, five Iranians, four Egyptians, four Syrians, three Indians, three Lebanese, one Bahraini, one Omani and one Filipino.

One German and one Frenchman are also in detention for illegal entry. We hope they will be released soon.

Gibraltar

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will bring forward proposals for citizens of Gibraltar to be able to vote in the 1994 European Parliament elections.

Mr. Goodlad: We do not plan to do so. Annex II of the EC Act on direct elections of 1976 limits the franchise in European parliamentary elections to the United Kingdom.

Unidentified Flying Objects

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the treaty powers which enabled the European Parliament's trade, research and technology committee to study and spend public resources on unidentified flying objects and the possibility of aliens being present in the asteroid belt; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I understand that a member of the energy, research and technology committee has reported to the Committee on research being undertaken in Europe on unidentified flying objects and related phenomena, following a European Parliament resolution on the subject. A proposal for Community research in this field has not been put forward; nor would I expect one to be unless such research were shown to be consistent with treaty objectives.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the proposal by the EC trade, research and technology committee that an organisation on the consideration of unidentified flying objects should be assigned Community status and funding will be subject to a decision of the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Goodlad: The Commission has not made a proposal for the establishment of an unidentified flying objects research observatory. Were it to do so, I can assure my hon. Friend that the Council of Ministers would have to agree rules concerning implementation, funding and duration of the programme, in accordance with the treaty articles concerning research activities.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the EC Commission has the powers on its own initiative to give funding to the Euro-unidentified flying objects observation centre recommended by the European Parliament's trade, research and technology committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: No. Detailed rules concerning implementation, funding and duration of specific Community research programmes must be agreed by the Council of Ministers. The Commission could not fund a Euro unidentified flying objects observation centre in the absence of a Council decision to do so.

European Parliament

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total cost of the European Parliament in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what estimate he has made of the costs borne from United Kingdom public funds on the basis of the net contributions of member states to the European Union.

Mr. Goodlad: Expenditure under the European Parliament's budget for 1992, net of receipts, was 538·241 mecu, approx £419,882,000. Member states contribute to the European Community budget as a whole, not to individual programmes. The net United Kingdom contribution in 1992 was 2,387 mecu.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what procedures are available to determine the limits of the consideration of issues by the European Parliament.

Mr. Goodlad: The issues considered by the European Parliament will generally be determined by its role as set out in the EC treaties and the treaty on European Union. It is for the Parliament itself to regulate its internal procedures.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

St. James's Palace

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what refurbishment, at what cost, has taken place in St. James's palace since April 1992.

Mr. Sproat: The information is as follows: cleaning and repair of brick and stonework—£820,000; refurbishment of six residential apartments, including relocation of changing facilities for the yeoman of the guard—£250,000; a number of small projects including redecoration of some areas of the state apartments, external redecorations, renewal of windows, water cisterns and other minor works—£100,000.

Total £1,170,000.

TV (Wales)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will discuss with the Independent Broadcasting Authority and television operators how to ensure that all parts of Wales can receive all television channels originating from within Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: At present, 98·3 per cent. of the population of Wales can receive television from either a transmitter in Wales or England or both.

Responsibility for coverage of terrestrial television services lies with the broadcasters, who determine their own engineering priorities in the light of available resources, taking account of local factors and availability of frequencies. The Government do not seek to influence their judgments.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary for State of National Heritage which communities within Wales are at present unable to receive a reasonable reception of programmes transmitted by HTV, BBC Wales or S4C.

Mr. Brooke: I understand that, in the following areas, some communities of more than 200 people may not have a reasonable reception of Welsh television services:

Pembroke Dock
Pontyminster
Cwrtnewydd
Penrhyn-coch
Mawddach Valley
Presteigne
Chirk
Llanpumpsaint
Penstrowed
Llanrwst
Beffws Gwerfil Goch
Painscastle
Llanwddyn
New Radnor
Rhydargaeau
Flint Area
Holywell
Ffynnongroew West
Knucklas
Beaumaris
Abersychan
Llangranog
Erwood
Ely (Cardiff)
Llanfachreth
Newcastle Emlyn
Dovey Valley
Llanllugan
Citycwm
Brechfa
Parkmill
Pont-Rhyd-y-Groes
Llyswen
Solva
Abersoch
Bagillt Area
Usk
Upper Cwmbran
Tintern
Crew Green/Criggion
Llandenny
St. David's
Caernarfon
Newport
Trewern
Tonyrefail
Merthyr Tydfil
Knighton
Margam
Manafon
Abergynolwyn
Milford Haven
Capel Curig
Stepaside
Llwyndafydd
Ruabon
Barry
Caergwrle
Mostyn/Glan-y-Don
Llanover
Raglan

In all, there are some 91,000 people who cannot receive Welsh television services, but many of them, about 43,000, can receive English television services.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxation

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people faced marginal tax rates *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding national insurance payments, of (i) over 40 per cent., (ii) over 50 per cent., (iii) over 60 per cent., (iv) over 70 per cent., (v) over 80 per cent., (vi) over 90 per cent. and (vii) over 100 per cent. in every year since 1978-79, in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: Estimated numbers of taxpayers liable to income tax at rates above the basic rate are in the table. Estimates of the numbers with marginal net income deduction rates, taking account of the withdrawal of social security benefits, at or above certain levels were published in figure 19 of "Social Security: The Government's expenditure plans 1993-94 to 1995-96", Cm 2213.

Taxpayers[1] liable at higher rate

(Thousands)

	Tax rate[2]									
	40	*45*	*50*	*55*	*60*	*65*	*70*	*75*	*83*	*Total*
1978-79	235	158	86	84	54	45	32	36	33	763
1979-80	302	168	108	43	53	—	—	—	—	674
1980-81	334	216	129	52	65	—	—	—	—	796
1981-82	445	305	170	75	95	—	—	—	—	1,090
1982-83	435	245	155	65	83	—	—	—	—	983
1983-84	355	245	140	55	65	—	—	—	—	860
1984-85	380	255	145	65	85	—	—	—	—	930
1985-86	380	250	150	70	100	—	—	—	—	950
1986-87	400	300	210	90	120	—	—	—	—	1,120
1987-88	360	320	240	110	160	—	—	—	—	1,190
1988-89	1,350	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,350
1989-90	1,500	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,500
1990-91	1,700	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,700
1991-92	1,620	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,620
[3]1992-93	1,800	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,800
[3]1993-94	1,900	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,900

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[1] Single people and married couples for years up to and including 1989-90, individuals from 1990-91.

[2] Tax rate applicable to earned income. This excludes any liability to the investment income surcharge for years up to 1983-84.

[3] Provisional estimates projected from the 1991-92 Survey of Personal Incomes.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate for 1993-94 the number of basic rate and higher rate taxpayers with earned incomes above the national insurance contributions upper earnings limit, giving figures separately for *(a)* husbands, *(b)* wives, *(c)* single men and *(d)* single women and distinguishing between pensioners and non-pensioners.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest estimates of individuals aged under 65 with earned incomes above the national insurance contributions upper earnings limit for 1993-94 are given in the table. About 20,000 individuals aged 65 or over have earnings above this limit.

(000s)

Individuals	*Basic rate*	*Higher rate*
Single males	260	260
Single females	130	80
Husbands	1,010	920
Wives	100	70
Total	1,500	1,300

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate for *(a)* April 1994 and *(b)* April 1995 the percentage change in after-tax incomes for each decile of the population.

Mr. Dorrell: The change in after-tax incomes will depend on a range of factors that will affect what happens to the gross incomes and tax payments of those in each decile and cannot reliably be estimated.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people with earnings so low that they do not pay income tax will be affected by the increases in indirect taxation announced in November's Budget.

Mr. Dorrell: It is estimated that there are about 3½ million individuals with some earnings who are not paying income tax. It is not possible to determine the proportion of these people who will be affected by the increases in indirect taxation announced in the November Budget.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people will be affected by his decision to reduce *(a)* the married couple's income tax allowance to 15 per cent. in 1994-95 and *(b)* mortgage interest relief to 15 per cent. from April 1995.

Mr. Dorrell: It is estimated that 10·3 million individuals benefiting from the married couple's allowance and related allowances in 1994-95 would be affected by the restriction of these allowances to 15 per cent. in 1995-96. The restriction of these allowances to 20 per cent. in 1994-95 will affect 9·6 million individuals. A total of 10·1 million single people and married couples will be affected by the restrictions of mortgage interest relief to 15 per cent. in 1995-96.

No account has been taken of possible behavioural changes resulting from such restrictions.

Disability Benefit

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what, in the latest year for which information is available, is the total number of people in receipt of disability benefit who pay income tax; and how many pay VAT.

Mr. Dorrell: It is estimated that in 1991-92 there were 200,000 tax-paying recipients of attendance allowance or mobility allowance.

This estimate is based on Department of Social Security estimates of the total numbers in receipt of each benefit and estimates from the 1991 family expenditure survey of the proportions who were taxpayers.

The change from mobility allowance to disability living allowance and disability working allowance in 1992-93 means that information for later years is not yet available. The results of the 1993 family expenditure survey will provide data on these allowances when they are available.

VAT is chargeable on a wide range of consumer expenditure and it seems likely that everybody has to pay some in the course of a year.

Personal Allowances

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much his decision not to uprate the personal allowance in 1994-95 will cost *(a)* 20 per cent. taxpayers and *(b)* basic-rate taxpayers per year; and how much not uprating the personal allowance and the higher-rate band will cost top-rate taxpayers per year.

Mr. Dorrell: The additional tax liability for a person aged under 65 in 1994-95 compared with statutory indexation of the personal allowance and basic rate limit are as follows:

Marginal rate of tax	*Additional tax liability* £
Lower	14
Basic	17·50
Higher	103

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much he estimates will be raised by the Treasury in *(a)* 1994-95, *(b)* 1995-96 and *(c)* 1996-97 from the freezing of personal income tax allowances; and how many more people he estimates will have to pay income tax by December 1994 as a result.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest estimates of the revenue yield in each of the three years, compared with statutory indexation, are as follows:

Revenue yield, £ million

	1994-95	*1995-96*	*1996-97*
Allowances unchanged	430	550	560

In 1994-95, no one will be brought into income tax as a result of the November Budget changes. However, about 180,000 more people will pay tax in 1994-95 compared with statutory indexation of personal allowances.

Forward Catering Services

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to ensure that employment rights under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 are to be honoured by the successful purchaser of Forward Catering Services; if the Astra clause will be included as a condition of sale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The four companies which have been short listed as prospective purchasers of Forward understand that TUPE will apply to this transfer. All have indicated that they would be willing to give an undertaking to staff about their redundancy entitlements, although it was made clear that that would not be a condition of sale.

European Investment Bank

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he *(a)* last attended and *(b)* next expects to attend a meeting of the board of directors of the European investment bank.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am a member of the bank's board of governors, not of the board of directors. Consequently, I have never attended, nor do I expect in the future to attend, any meetings of the board of directors.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current level of the United Kingdom's Government shareholding in the European investment bank; what proportion it constitutes of the total shareholding; what changes in its level there have been in the past *(a)* 10, *(b)* five and *(c)* one year; and what proposals there are to amend it in either direction.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The total subscribed share capital of the European investment bank is currently set at 57,600,000,000 ecus—£43,530,834,341*. Of this, the United Kingdom holds 11,017,450,000 ecus—£8,326,367,896*—or approximately 19·1 per cent. of the total.

The bank's capital was fixed at its present amount on 1 January 1991, when it was doubled from its then level of 28,800 mecu. The previous increase in capital, which was the only other change during the past 10 years, occurred on 1 January 1986. At that time the capital was raised from 14,400 mecu to 28,800 mecu.

There are at present no proposals to either decrease or increase the capital of the bank.

*Figures converted at 30 November 1993 £/ecu conversion rate (£1=1·3232 ecu).

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will now resign from the board of directors of the European investment bank.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Since I am not, nor have I ever been, a member of the bank's board of directors, there can be no question of my resigning from this body. I have no intention of resigning my position on the bank's board of governors.

Share Sales

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 8 December, *Official Report*, column *231*, if he will provide details of fees paid to underwriters associated with the share sales of British Telecom, British Gas and the regional water companies.

Mr. Dorrell: No. Fees paid to underwriters as part of the privatisation programme are treated as commercially confidential. Total fees paid to underwriters are quantified within the relevant National Audit Office reports published by the Comptroller and Auditor General. For the sales requested, with the exception of the BT secondary sales which were not underwritten, the total fees paid to underwriters were:

£million

BT	1984	74·0
British Gas	1986	60·0
Water	1989	33·2

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 8 December, *Official Report*, column *231*, if he will provide details of fees paid to advisers and underwriters associated with the privatisation and share sales of the regional electricity boards, Powergen and National Power.

Mr. Dorrell: No. Fees paid to advisers, underwriters, and so on as part of the privatisation programme are treated as commercially confidential. Total fees paid to advisers are quantified within the relevant National Audit Office reports published by the Comptroller and Auditor General. For the sales requested, the total fees, excluding VAT, paid to advisers and underwriters up to 31 December 1991 were:

£million

	Advisers	*Underwriters*
Regional Electricity Companies 1990	28·8	36·6
Generating Companies 1991	17·2	14·9

Unemployment (Costs)

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimate of the overall cost of unemployment including all expenditure on training and all Government initiatives to reduce unemployment and also including all state support such as housing benefit, mortgage interest relief and all passport benefits paid whilst unemployed or undertaking unemployment reducing training and other programmes.

Mr. Portillo: The overall cost of unemployment is highly sensitive to the factors which cause that unemployment and cannot be estimated on the basis specified in the question.

TRANSPORT

Coastal Safety, Shetlands

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what resources are currently available for port state control inspection in Shetland;

(2) what resources were available in Shetland for ship inspection for port state control up until 22 November;

(3) what extra resources he intends to make available for futher port state control inspections of Klondyker ships *(a)* off Shetland, *(b)* off Ullapool and *(c)* elsewhere; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The inspection resources of the east of Scotland district in which Shetland lies are available as necessary for port state control inspection in Scotland. Resources from other districts are also available as necessary. In addition to the one surveyor permanently based in Shetland, three surveyors are currently carrying out inspections in Shetland.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what response he has given to Shetland Islands council's request for financial support for *(a)* radar surveillance, *(b)* aerial surveillance and *(c)* salvage provision around the coast of Shetland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: I will send the hon. Member a copy of the correspondence.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all short-term measures taken by his department since the sinking of the Braer to improve safety of shipping around the coast of Shetland.

Mr. Norris: Measures, which applied more widely than in the Shetland islands, were implemented quickly and will remain in operation. A voluntary code produced by the United Kingdom Chamber of Shipping after consultation with industry and others set out specific navigational recommendations for the routeing of ships around the United Kingdom coast.

In addition, the Department made specific proposals to the International Maritime Organisation which entered into force on 28 November. The measures, summarised as follows, now apply to vessels of all flags:

- (a) for vessels over 5,000 gross tonnes carrying oil or other hazardous cargoes in bulk:
    - (i) amended "areas to be avoided" to the north south, and west of the Shetland Islands;
    - (ii) new "areas to be avoided" off the Orkney Islands and around Fair Isle;
- (b) "precautionary areas" in the northern and south-eastern approaches to Yell Sound, and in the approaches to Lerwick;
- (c) recommendations on navigation for laden tankers in the Pentland Firth;
- (d) recommendations to report to the coastguard for all laden vessels in the Pentland Firth, and off Fair Isle.

Recommended routes will be introduced for the Fair Isle channel subject to the successful completion in 1994 of further hydrographic surveys at an estimated cost of around £2 million.

Klondyker Ships

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what loopholes in respect of ship safety regulation he has identified in relation to Klondyker ships inside United Kingdom territorial waters, but outside harbour boundaries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: We are considering the lessons to be drawn from recent incidents involving Klondykers. The subject is also relevant to the Donaldson inquiry, which has agreed to consider submissions on the subject, and we shall want to see the report before drawing firm conclusions.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for *(a)* monitoring and *(b)* enforcing, the intermediate recommendations of the marine accident investigation branch inquiry into Klondyker ships within Lerwick harbour in respect of (1) bunker fuel and (2) maintenance of vessels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The inspections being carried out are monitoring bunker levels and general maintenance on each vessel. Evidence is emerging that these efforts have already brought about an improvement in the fleet in this respect. The code of practice now being prepared will specify particular requirements for bunker levels and maintenance.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he intends to submit to the EC concerning improved safety arrangements for Klondyker fleets.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend is taking action under the powers available to him in domestic legislation. We shall involve our colleagues in the European Community when that is appropriate.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by name the Klondyker ships inspected by his Department in 1993 and include date of inspection, together with details of recommendations and in each case, whether the vessel was *(a)* in harbour or *(b)* outside the harbour boundary.

Mr. Norris: Fish factory ships inspected in United Kingdom between 1 January 1993 and 7 December 1993 were as follows:

Name	*Date*	*Location*	*Action*
Stasys Girenas	22 January 1993	In port	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies found
Alderbaran	25 May 1993	In port	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies found
Birsk	1 June 1993	In port	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies found
Chernomorskaya Slava	12 July 1993	In port	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies found
Pomor	29 July 1993	In port	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies and flag state consulted
Chernomorskaya Slava	3 August 1993	In port	Detained during fire on board
Akvamarin	6 August 1993	In port	Detained
Kandalaksha	31 August 1993	In port	Flag state informed of deficiencies following grounding
Kandalaksha	4 October 1993	In port	Detained in drydock [illegible] repair

Name	*Date*	*Location*	*Action*
Kapitan Kononov	16 November 1993	In port	Detained
Mys Frunze	22 November 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies. Flag state informed
Dneprodzerhinsk	23 November 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies. Flag state informed
Petrozavodsk	23 November 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies. Flag state informed
Plutoniy	24 November 1993	In port	Detained
Limoza	24 November 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies. Flag state informed
Vasiliy Filippon	24 November 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies
Serebryansk	24 November 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies. Flag state informed
Pyotr Shafranov	25 November 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies. Flag state informed
Novocheboksarsk	25 November 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies
Dzintarkrasts	25 November 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies. Flag state informed
Aktinia	26 November 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies. Flag state informed
President Pik	30 November 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies. Flag state informed
Navigator	30 November 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies. Flag state informed
Novator	30 November 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies. Flag state informed
Ofelia	1 December 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies. Flag state informed
Kazan	1 December 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies. Flag state informed
Aleksandrit	1 December 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies. Flag state informed
Sevryba	2 December 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies
Rus	2 December 1993	At anchor	None
Korunds	2 December 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies. Flag state informed
Kolomenskoe	3 December 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies
Zakavkazye	6 December 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies. Flag state informed
Aleksey Grachev	7 December 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies. Flag state informed
Geroi Eltgena	7 December 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies. Flag state informed
Gantiadi	7 December 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies. Flag state informed
Pruzani	7 December 1993	At anchor	Master instructed to rectify deficiencies. Flag state informed

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to ensure the continued safety through inspection of the Klondyker fleet.

Mr. Norris: A team of surveyors is currently inspecting the fleet of Klondykers anchored off Lerwick to ensure, in particular, their safety at anchor. Other marine districts will inspect Klondykers as and when they enter ports in their area.

M11 Link Road

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department have indemnified Norwest-Holst Construction Ltd. in respect of *(a)* compensation payments should the M11 link road contract be cancelled or delayed and *(b)* the costs of security on site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: In common with other construction contracts let by my Department, the usual Institution of Civil Engineers conditions of contract apply. These provide that claims may be made for actual loss incurred through delay. This contract also provides for specific and contingency security measures, the cost of which is included in the contract price.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what studies have been carried out by his Department of the impact of the M11 link road in generating additional traffic to neighbouring areas; and if he will publish the results;

(2) what estimate he has made of the likely increase in traffic volume along the A12 Eastern avenue as a result of the building of the M11 link road for each of the next five years.

Mr. Norris: During construction of the A12 Hackney Wick to M11 link road, temporary traffic management measures may mean that traffic will be diverted from present routes, and increase in some areas. There could be extra traffic on A12 due to removal of waste and delivery of materials.

The long-term aim of the link road is to remove traffic from existing roads and so provide the opportunity for traffic-calming measures in neighbouring areas.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for what purpose his Department employs the private security firm of Norwest Holst in connection with the M11 link road.

Mr. Norris: Norwest Holst Ltd. is a civil engineering contractor and as such is the main contractor for contract 4 of the A12 Hackney Wick to M11 link road. Among the contractor's duties are the maintenance of the security of their sites and workings.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what private security firms have been employed by his Department in connection with the M11 link road through Wanstead.

Mr. Norris: Essential Security Services have been employed to safeguard unoccupied properties in the Department's ownership.

Vehicle Inspectorate

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he has received the Price Waterhouse report on the potential privatisation of part of the Vehicle Inspectorate; and when he expects to make an announcement;

(2) what proposals he has for separate legislation to privatise the testing side of the Vehicle Inspectorate.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend received this report only recently and is considering its findings. He will make an announcement on future plans for the Vehicle Inspectorate's testing function, and legislative implications, in due course.

Regional Airports

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the Government's policy towards the expansion of regional airports in the light of the planning applications submitted by Liverpool airport and Manchester airport.

Mr. Norris: The recent runway capacity in the south-east report shows that there are better prospects for growth in traffic at regional airports with a greater range of direct services becoming available than is the case for airports in the south-east. This is good for travellers. We are encouraging local authority-owned regional airports to involve the private sector in their development plans.

The application for Manchester airport was called in by the Secretary of State for the Environment in October and will be for joint decision by him and the Secretary of State for Transport. In view of this quasi-judicial role it would not be appropriate to comment on the proposal. Consideration of Liverpool airport's recent application is a matter in the first instance for the local planning authorities.

Home Working

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list *(a)* by region, *(b)* division and *(c)* office location all home working initiatives operating in his Department and the grades involved.

Mr. Norris: At present, this Department has no staff working wholly from home. From time to time, temporary local arrangements are made to allow individuals who have health or other difficulties to work part of the week from home, but central records of these arrangements are not kept.

Salvage Tugs

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects to introduce legislation to ratify the International Maritime Organisation convention on salvage tugs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: It is the Government's intention that legislation should be introduced which will enable ratification of the international convention on salvage 1989 at the earliest possible opportunity.

Asthma

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies his Department has carried out of the effect of increasing traffic volumes on levels of asthma among children and adults.

Mr. Key: The Department of Health is funding research into the health effects of air pollution, including those relating to asthma.

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements are made to ensure that special advisers to Ministers in his Department do not have access to the kind of information, and are not involved in the type of business, that would be likely to create suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment.

Mr. MacGregor: Special advisers in my Department are appointed following consultation with and approval from the Prime Minister and the Treasury. They have direct access to me and stand outside the departmental hierarchy.

Special advisers in my Department are members of the the civil service and have the same conditions of service and are subject to the same rules of conduct as other civil servants except that they are not subject to the business appointment rules, when they leave the Department. Their terms of appointment include the following:

> "All civil servants owe duties of confidentiality and loyal service to the Crown. These require civil servants to exercise care in the use of official information which they acquire in the course of their official duties and to protect information which is held in confidence."

Their appointment letters also draw attention to the rules governing the use of official information and related activities and those governing participation in outside activities involving the use of official information or experience and the general principles of conduct to which all civil servants are expected to adhere at all times.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the names and job descriptions of each special ministerial adviser employed in his Department showing any particular outputs for which each adviser is responsible.

Mr. MacGregor: I currently employ two special advisers in the Department of Transport.

Mrs. E. F. Laing has been my special political adviser in this Department since 13 April 1992.

Sir Idris Pearce has been employed as a part-time special adviser on property matters concerned with British Railways privatisation since 16 June 1992.

Transport Research Laboratory

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of projects undertaken by the Transport Research Laboratory in Crowthorne were instigated by direct commercial or industrial demand in 1980, 1990 and 1993.

Mr. Key: Percentage of projects undertaken on a commercial basis by the Transport Research Laboratory.

1979-80 No records but probably 0 per cent. as TRL's resources were fully committed to DOT and ODA.

1989-90 5 per cent. of projects—40 projects—producing 2 per cent. of income—£600,000.

1992-93 21 per cent. of projects—150 projects—producing 5 per cent. of income—Key£2 million.

Parking

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action his Department is taking to combat the problem of parking on pavements.

Mr. Key: While there is a general ban on parking heavy goods vehicles on the pavement, parking other kinds of vehicles there is banned only where it is prohibited by a local Act of Parliament, as in London, where it contravenes a traffic order made by the local traffic authority, or if the vehicle is parked in a dangerous or obstructive position. Responses to the consultation document "Curbing an Abuse", which we published in 1987, showed that a complete ban would not be practical. It would create severe difficulties for many local traffic authorities, and the police do not have the resources that would be necessary to enforce it effectively.

I accept that the current situation is not entirely satisfactory, but expect it to improve as local authorities take on responsibility for parking enforcement under the arrangements in the Road Traffic Act 1991.

In addition, we are about to publish guidance detailing the engineering measures available to local traffic authorities to prevent vehicles mounting the pavement. Such measures have the advantage that they are largely self-enforcing.

M1

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will hold discussions with the relevant local authorities and other interested parties in the area covered by the scheme to widen the M1 between junctions 28 and 32.

Mr. Key: These proposals are generally at an early stage. Opportunities will be offered for discussion throughout their progress and there will be other occasions for comment, as usual.

Goods Vehicle Licensing

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the organisations that were invited to submit comments on his consultation paper on the deregulation of goods vehicle operator licensing;

(2) if he will list the names of the individuals and organisations who also responded to his consultation paper on the deregulation of goods vehicle licensing.

Mr. Key: Sixty-three representative organisations were invited to submit comments to the consultation document. I am placing a full list of the organisations in the Library. Fifteen of them responded to the consultation.

In addition I refer the hon. Member to my previous answer of 27 October, *Official Report,* column *542,* which gives the main organisations that replied. It is not our normal practice to publish the names of individuals who have responded to consultation exercises of this sort.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how often utility emergency vehicles exempt from goods vehicle operator licensing have to be used for emergency work to gain an exemption.

Mr. Key: There are no minimum levels of use to qualify for exemption.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the reasons for the difference between vehicles exempted from goods vehicle operator licensing and exempt vehicles as listed in the "Annual Abstract of Statistics 1993", page 191 table 10.5; and how it is possible to accurately count exempt vehicles in table 10.5 but not to supply information on the number of vehicles exempt from goods vehicle operator licensing.

Mr. Key: The table referred to concerns vehicle licensing rather than operator licensing, and the exemptions mentioned are those for vehicles requiring licensing but exempt from the payment of vehicle excise duty, VED. The records kept by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency of licensed vehicles show whether or not they are exempt from VED, so it is possible to count such vehicles. There are no records of vehicles not subject to operator licensing.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now carry out a study into whether vehicles exempt from goods vehicles operator licensing are more or less likely to be involved in accidents than licensed vehicles; and if he will collect accident statistics in such a way that those accidents involving exempt vehicles are easily distinguishable.

Mr. Key: The number of exempt vehicles over 3·5 tonnes is estimated to be relatively small compared to the total vehicle population. I have no indications that they are disproportionately involved in accidents. Collecting data on accident rates as proposed would be expensive and I do not regard it as justified.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the definition of a local authority weights and measures vehicle; and for what reasons such vehicles are exempt from goods vehicle operator licensing.

Mr. Key: For the purposes of goods vehicle operator licensing, it is a vehicle which is being used by a local authority for the purposes of the enactments relating to weights and measures or the sale of food and drugs. We see no need for operator licensing for minor categories of vehicles, unlikely to pose safety or other problems.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to extending goods vehicle operator licensing to electrically propelled vehicles.

Mr. Key: We are currently reviewing the list of exemptions from operator licensing and will consider both whether to add additional categories such as electrically propelled vehicles or to exempt further categories.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if recovery vehicles exempt from goods vehicle operator licensing have to be used solely for recovery work to gain exemption.

Mr. Key: Yes.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if vehicles used to carry materials for road and motorway construction are exempt from goods vehicle operator licensing if used for other work; and if he will consider extending operator licensing regulations to such vehicles.

Mr. Key: The exemption applies to trailers only, in cases where they are not constructed primarily for the carriage of goods but are being used incidentally for that purpose in connection with the construction, maintenance or repair of roads. This exemption would for instance cover trailers incorporating road-building machinery which carry specialised road-building materials in order to perform their functions. We are currently reviewing the list of exemptions.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if ambulances operated by private sector companies are exempt from goods vehicle operator licensing.

Mr. Key: Yes, so long as they are used for ambulance purposes.

City Centre Motor Races

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what statutory requirements and assurances he requires before granting approval for a city town centre formula 2 motor race.

Mr. Key: Section 12 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 prohibits races or trials of speed on public ways. However, the Birmingham City Council Act 1985 allows Birmingham city council to close specified roads on specified dates for motor racing purposes.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what provision has been made in the Government's public spending plans for 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97 for expenditure on the channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Freeman: We have made provision for public expenditure of £40 million in 1994-95, £20 million in 1995-96 and £10 million in 1996-97. Total expenditure on the project in this period will be substantially greater, and will be made up by funding from the private sector following the appointment of the private sector promoter.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what provision has been made in the Government's spending plans for the substantial public sector support for the channel rail link to which he committed the Government in his statement of 22 March.

Mr. Freeman: Substantial public sector support will be provided by making British Rail's European passenger services subsidiary part of the project, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 11 November. Whether any further support is required, and if so its amount and timing, will be determined by the results of the competition to select the private sector promoter.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what portion of the provision for public expenditure on the channel tunnel rail link during 1994-95 to 1996-97 is intended to cover the compensation that the Government will have to pay to owners of properties affected from January 1994 when the route is safeguarded.

Mr. Freeman: The provision required for property purchase will depend upon the route chosen and the terms adopted for property purchase. The Government are giving careful consideration to these issues in the light of Union Railways' 29 October report and the comments received from consultees. We intend to make a statement next month.

Tracker Devices

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to make the fitting of tracker devices to cars mandatory.

Mr. Key: None.

Roads, London

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what public consultation his Department has had during the last 12 months with boroughs in the Greater London area where major road development projects are under discussion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: My Department has included the appropriate London boroughs in the public consultations which have been held in the last 12 months on the following major road development projects:

M25 Junctions 15-16 link road proposals;
Heathrow Terminal 5 Access M25 Spur Road and M4 Junctions 3 to 4b improvements;
A2 Kidbrooke Park Road interchange improvement;
A13/A112 junction improvement;
Blackwall Tunnel 3rd crossing proposal, and
Heathrow Access and Southwest London Quadrant Study (HASQUAD)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the new roads building programme for the Greater London area that has been approved and for which funding has been allocated by his Department.

Mr. Norris: New starts on national road construction for 1994-95 will be announced in the new year.

Trans-European Road

Mr. Walden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he is giving to providing an environmental impact assessement of the trans-European road from Felixstowe to its final destination in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Key: An environmental impact assessment will be undertaken in accordance with the normal procedures for any new road scheme which is proposed within the United Kingdom along this route if it is likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

Marchioness Disaster

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will name the persons who were responsible for the report on the Marchioness disaster together with their official positions, experience and qualifications.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* The report is that of the Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents, Captain P. B. Marriott. Prior to his appointment as chief inspector, Captain Marriott worked in the shipping industry for 33 years and is a fully qualified and experienced master mariner.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what relevant facts he now has in his possession, or have been drawn to his attention, which in his opinion are additional to those set out in the report of the marine accident investigation branch concerning the Marchioness disaster.

Mr. Norris: *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* None.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Pesticides

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total expenditure by the MAFF pesticides safety directorate on registering and monitoring the use of pesticides under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985, and what was the total income from fees charged for all approval submissions and the levy on United Kingdom sales, in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Soames: In the financial year 1992-93, the total expenditure by the MAFF pesticides safety directorate on registering and monitoring the use of pesticides under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 was £6·7 million. In the same year, the total income from fees was £0·5 million and the levy on United Kingdom sales was £6·2 million.

Days-at-Sea Restrictions

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action she intends to take in the light of the decision by the High Court to refer the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations' application for judicial review of the Government's days-at-sea policy to the European Court of Justice.

Mr. Jack: The hon. Member will be aware of the recent High Court judgment in the NFFO's judicial review proceedings. The court, while noting that there is total agreement on the need to prevent overfishing of certain stocks, has concluded that there are various points of Community law which it felt unable to resolve without a reference to the European Court of Justice.

My right hon. Friends and I have considered carefully how to proceed in this situation. We have weighed on the one hand the pressing need for conservation action. On the other hand, we must recognise that the effect of the reference is to cast doubt on the operation of the scheme in the meantime. We have concluded that the most straightforward course is to suspend the implementation of days at sea restrictions pending the European Court's judgment—which we shall seek to have expedited.

Days-at-sea controls are one element of a package of measures designed to conserve the stocks and meet our Community targets, while securing value for money. Other elements are various new licensing rules and a £25 million decommissioning scheme.

Those fishermen whose bids have been accepted under the decommissioning scheme will receive their grants, provided that, in accordance with the scheme, they scrap their vessels and submit the necessary documentation to the Ministry before 1 March 1994.

Beyond that we need to review the way forward and as a first step I shall be speaking to the EC Commissioner about what needs to be done. I shall also speak to the industry. And I shall present further proposals to the House in due course.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Pike: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list all the land owned in Lancashire by the Forestry Commission.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) on 13 December 1993.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment she has made of the effect on the freedom to roam on Forestry Commission land of decisions to be made following the report of the Forestry Review Group.

Mr. Jack: We have asked the forestry review group to ensure that, in carrying out its work, it takes full account of the need to safeguard existing public benefits such as access and recreation. When the group's report is received this aspect of its findings will be looked at very carefully indeed.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list, for each separate piece of land currently owned or leased by the Forestry Commission in Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Gloucestershire *(a)* its name and *(b)* its area in hectares; and if she will place a map in the Library which names and identifies each of these pieces of land.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 9 December 1993]:* The Forestry Commission manages the following areas of land in Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Gloucestershire:

County	*Area (hectares)*
Bedfordshire	798
Berkshire	512
Buckinghamshire	2,075
Gloucestershire	10,376

I have made arrangements for a map showing the location of the individual areas to be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

The more detailed information requested on the individual areas is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list for each separate piece of land currently owned or leased by the Forestry Commission in Hertfordshire, Kent, Surrey and Wiltshire *(a)* its name and *(b)* its area in hectares; and if she will place a map in the Library which names and identifies each of these pieces of land.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 14 December 1993]:* The Forestry Commission manages the following areas of land in Hertfordshire, Kent, Surrey and Wiltshire.

County	*Area (hectares)*
Hertfordshire	567
Kent	3,676
Surrey	1,627
Wiltshire	3,955

I have made arrangements for a map showing the location of the individual areas to be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

The more detailed information requested on the individual areas is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the hon. Member for Sherwood will receive an answer to his questions of 25 November relating to the Forestry Commission.

Mr. Michael Jack: I answered the hon. Member's questions on 13 December.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list, for each separate piece of land currently owned or leased by the Forestry Commission in Cheshire, Cumbria and Lancashire *(a)* its name and *(b)* its area in hectares; and whether she will place a map in the Library which names and identifies each of these pieces of land.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* The Forestry Commission manages the following areas of land in Cheshire, Cumbria and Lancashire:

County	*Area (hectares)*
Cheshire	948
Cumbria	26,508
Lancashire	1,816

I have made arrangements for a map showing the location of the individual areas to be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

The more detailed information requested on the individual areas is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list, for each separate piece of land currently owned or leased by the Forestry Commission in Hereford and Worcester, Oxfordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire *(a)* its name and *(b)* its area in hectares; and if she will place a map in the Library which names and identifies each of these pieces of land.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 9 December 1993]:* The Forestry Commission manages the following areas of land in Hereford and Worcester, Oxfordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire.

County	*Area (hectares)*
Hereford and Worcester	5,072
Oxfordshire	632
Shropshire	4,612
Staffordshire	4,501
Warwickshire	639

I have made arrangements for a map showing the location of the individual areas to be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

The more detailed information requested on the individual areas is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Dioxins, Derbyshire

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information her Department has as to which geographical area the dioxin contamination on the farm closest to the Coalite works in Derbyshire is spreading.

Mr. Soames: The Ministry has undertaken further studies of dioxins in cows' milk from farms in the Bolsover area of Derbyshire. Milk taken from five farms in September was tested, including milk from the farm in question. In all cases the levels of dioxins found were lower than in similar samples taken in 1991 and 1992, indicating that the degree of contamination in the area is continuing to decrease. There is no evidence that the original contamination is spreading.

Mr. Skinner; To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will now publish the research undertaken by her Department which follows on from the third report on dioxins in Derbyshire; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: A summary of the results of the September survey of dioxins in milk from farms in the Bolsover area of Derbyshire was published in the November edition of the MAFF food safety directorate information bulletin. An explanatory note giving full details of the survey was also made available on request. The small amount of research data obtained recently is currently subject to statistical analysis and the results will be published in due course. All other data from our research in the Bolsover area has been published in line with our earlier commitments.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action is being taken by her Department to study and limit the continuing dioxin contamination on the farm closest to the Coalite works in Derbyshire.

Mr. Soames: Dioxins in milk from suckling cows on this farm are falling, but are still in excess of a maximum tolerable concentration of 0·7 ng TEO/kg set by the Ministry and the Department of Health. This milk is not produced for human consumption and there is no direct risk to human health from the milk. The Ministry will continue its surveillance programme on dioxins in milk from this and other farms in the area to monitor the situation. This will ensure that no milk supplied for human comsumption contains unacceptable concentrations of dioxins.

Milk Industry

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make it her policy not to allow Milk Marque to retain responsibility for national milk records, animal health data and livestock improvements.

Mr. Jack: The Milk Marketing Board's reorganisation scheme contains the board's proposals for the transfer of certain of its assets to Milk Marque. My right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Wales have yet to decide whether to approve the reorganisation scheme under the terms of the Agriculture Act 1993.

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will direct the Milk Marketing Board forthwith to cease to use its funds and staff and those of its subsidiaries to recruit members for Milk Marque.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend has no powers so to direct.

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will provide an estimate of the funds and total staff time of both the Milk Marketing Board and its subsidiary organisations which have been employed on touring farms to recruit milk producers as members of its successor, Milk Marque.

Mr. Jack: I have no basis on which to make such an estimate.

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much of milk producers' assets vested in the Milk Marketing Board have so far been expended by the Milk Marketing Board in establishing Milk Marque; and with those permission these funds have been employed.

Mr. Jack: The EC Commission has approved, as a state aid, expenditure by the Milk Marketing Board on the establishment and promotion of Milk Marque totalling about £1·5 million.

Illegal Fishing

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the best estimated number of British fishing vessels that are illegally fishing in United Kingdom waters in contravention of either licensing arrangements under the Sea Fish Licensing Order 1992—SI, 1992 No. 2633—as varied by SI 1993 No. 188 and SI 1993 No. 2291, or registration arrangements under the Merchant Shipping Act 1988.

Mr. Jack: It is impossible to estimate the numbers of vessels that are fishing without licences or while unregistered. Any that come to light will be investigated. The Sea Fish Licensing Order 1992 came into force on 13 November 1992. Since that date, we have taken no prosecutions for fishing without a licence nor for contravention of registration arrangements under the Merchant Shipping Act, but one case is pending.

Cormorants

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications her Department has received in the last 12 months for licences to control cormorant numbers on English fisheries; and how many of these have been approved.

Mr. Soames *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* From 1 December 1992 to 30 November 1993, 49 applications for licences to shoot cormorants were received and 23 licences were granted.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures she is taking to retain the EC moratorium on the use of BST; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make it her policy to secure a seven-year moratorium on the use of bovine somatotropin.

Mr. Soames *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* The United Kingdom has always taken the view that the final Community decision on BST should be based on the scientific criteria of safety, quality and efficacy, taking account also of the need to avoid international trading problems, to encourage Community based research industries and to maintain the competitiveness of the Community's agriculture and food based sector. We are considering very carefully the European Commission's recommendation for a ban on the marketing and use of BST against these criteria, and taking into account the representations we have received both for and against a ban, before coming to a view on the matter.

Bananas

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessments he has made of the effectiveness of the new banana régime in benefiting the banana farmers in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, with particular relevance to the eastern Caribbean; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* The new regime has only been in force for a few months and the Community market is taking time to settle down. We hope for a greater degree of stability once the system enters its first full year in January 1994. I am being kept fully aware of developments in the United Kingdom and Community markets and am meeting representatives of the Caribbean Banana Exporters Association next week.

SCOTLAND

Local Government Finance

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary for Scotland if he will announce the 1994-95 grant-aided expenditure figures for each Scottish local authority.

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will announce the 1994-95 grant-aided expenditure figures for each Scottish local authority.

Mr. Lang: The GAE figure in respect of each local authority for 1994-95 is set out in the table. Each authority's allocation of the GAE total has been determined having regard to the client group methodology which is agreed with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities in the distribution committee of the working party on local government finance. The table excludes figures for urban programmes GAE which is not allocated to individual authorities. The addition of this amount, £63·4 million, brings the GAE total to the previously announced sum of £5,260·1 million.

GAE 1994-95

Regions and Islands	*(£000s)*
Borders	96,686
Central	229,442
Dumfries and Galloway	136,603
Fife	291,319
Grampian	421,408
Highland	206,839
Lothian	599,587
Strathclyde	2,051,153
Tayside	343,594
Orkney	27,678
Shetland	28,823
Western Isles	43,266
Total	4,476,400

GAE 1994-95

Districts	*(£000s)*
Berwick	2,205
Ettrick and Lauderdale	4,020
Roxburgh	4,133
Tweeddale	1,758
Clackmannan	7,287
Falkirk	18,594
Stirling	12,854
Annandale and Eskdale	4,062
Nithsdale	6,765
Stewartry	2,870
Wigtown	3,567
Dunfermline	17,741
Kirkcaldy	20,110
North East Fife	10,182
Aberdeen	29,242
Banff and Buchan	11,813
Gordon	10,795
Kincardine and Deeside	7,138
Moray	11,947
Badenoch and Strathspey	1,561
Caithness	3,144
Inverness	7,559
Lochaber	2,520
Nairn	1,235
Ross and Cromarty	6,319
Skye and Lochalsh	1,688
Sutherland	1,897
East Lothian	12,184
Edinburgh	62,789
Midlothian	10,563
West Lothian	20,488
Argyll and Bute	10,306
Bearsden and Milngavie	5,523
Clydebank	5,549
Clydesdale	8,284
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	8,246
Cumnock and Doon Valley	5,866
Cunninghame	19,028
Dumbarton	10,336
East Kilbride	11,010
Eastwood	7,393
Glasgow	125,469
Hamilton	14,142
Inverclyde	11,910
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	10,510
Kyle and Carrick	15,778
Monklands	14,754
Motherwell	19,586
Renfrew	28,969
Strathkelvin	11,429
Angus	13,032
Dundee	25,747
Perth and Kinross	18,395
Total	720,293
All Scotland Total	5,196,693

Drinking Water

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to publish a report on drinking water quality in Scotland in 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: A report has been published today by the Scottish Office Environment Department which gives an overview of drinking water quality in Scotland in 1992. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library.

The report shows that drinking water quality in 1992 has improved since 1991 as a result of the action taken by authorities to deal with water quality problems. In 1992, 98·4 per cent. of all regulatory determinants met the prescribed standards compared with 98 per cent. in 1991. Reported data also showed that for 45 out of 55 numerical standards, 99·7 per cent. of analytical results complied; this is very similar to the results achieved in 1991.

The failures to meet quality standards fully did not represent a risk to public health.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to answer the questions from the hon. Member for Hamilton relating to Greater Glasgow health board tabled for answer on 2 December.

Mr. Lang: The honourable Member's questions were answered on Wednesday 8 December—*Official Report*, column *285*—and today, 14 December.

Intensive Care Units

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill may expect an answer to her questions for written answer on 1 December relating to intensive care units.

Mr. Stewart: The honourable Member's question was answered on 9 December 1993, column *353*.

Hunterston

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will arrange for documents held in the Scottish Record Office, currently subject to the 30-year rule, on the subject of steelwork and terminal facilities at Hunterston to be made available for early inspection.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 30 November 1993]:* In accordance with the changes to the criteria governing the closure and retention of files announced in the White Paper on Open Government (Cm 2290), the files in question may be made available for inspection subject to prior approval on a file-by-file basis by the Scottish Office. Such access would also be subject to a commitment on the part of inquirer that any material extracted from the files would be cleared by the Department prior to its delivery, publication or broadcast.

Hospital Services, Glasgow

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the arrangement between Greater Glasgow health board and the Bon Secours hospital for the treatment of patients requiring non-urgent cosmetic surgery, with particular reference to determine *(a)* whether this work could have been done within the national health service, *(b)* how much Dr. Peter Summers will be paid, *(c)* how much the additional plastic surgeon in Canniesburn hospital will be paid, *(d)* what was the amount of the successful bid from Bon Secours hospital and what was the amount of the next lowest bid and *(e)* how many patients to be treated at Bon Secours are on Greater Glasgow's health board's waiting list, and how many from other health board areas.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* The answers to points *(a)* and *(e)* are set out later. The other points raised over commercial arrangements between the Greater Glasgow health board and the provider. I have arranged for officials of the Scottish Office Home and Health Department to write to the chairman of Greater Glasgow health board to invite him to look into these issues and to respond direct to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill.

(a) Canniesburn hospital recruited an additional consultant plastic surgeon and would therefore be able to treat an extra 800 patients. However, to deliver the waiting time guarantees to all the long waiters more patients would need to be treated and therefore the board sought to establish whether other providers could meet this need. The pre-tendering stage of the competitive tendering exercise carried out by the Greater Glasgow health board attracted 43 expressions of interest from 25 private sector and 18 national health service would-be providers north and south of the border.

(e) The number of patients for whom treatment has been secured under the contract with the Bon Secours Health System are as follows:

Residents of	*Number of Patients*
Greater Glasgow Health Board	309
Lanarkshire	144
Ayrshire and Arran	33
Argyll and Clyde	60
Forth Valley	19
Dumfries and Galloway	7
TOTAL	572

Mr. Laurence Peterken

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what date his Department was advised on the intention of Greater Glasgow health board to dismiss its general manager.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* Officials of the Scottish Office learned very late on 2 November that it appeared that Greater Glasgow health board had dismissed its general manager. Formal notification was received on 3 November 1993.

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what payment has been offered to Mr. Laurence Peterken in compensation for leaving Greater Glasgow health board prematurely; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* No payment has been made to Mr. Peterken.

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what day Mr. Lawrence Peterken was offered a post with the national health service executive board.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* Mr. Laurence Peterken was offered the post of special projects director on 12 November 1993.

Court Hearings

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of initial hearings in *(a)* the Crown courts and *(b)* in sheriff courts were heard on the scheduled date and at the scheduled time in each year since 1985.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 December 1993]:* Among other performance targets, sheriff court staff are required to submit for the approval of their sheriff principal programmes which are designed to provide that the number of summary criminal trials adjourned due to lack of court time do not exceed 5 per cent. of the total number of trials set down. This target was introduced in 1988; and the percentage of sheriff courts meeting the target in the subsequent years is as follows:

	Per cent
Year to 31 March 1989	91
Year to 31 March 1990	91
Year to 31 March 1991	86
Year to 31 March 1992	86
Year to 31 March 1993	87

Information on performance against this and the other targets for the sheriff courts is published annually following the commitments given in the justice charter for Scotland.

Judges

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration is being given to methods of making the appointment of judges more open and democratic; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 December 1993]:* The procedures adopted for making judicial appointments are kept under constant review. These procedures are designed to identify in respect of each vacancy the best-fitted candidate. They were recently extended, on a trial basis, by inviting applications for two current vacancies on the shrieval bench through an intimation in the *Scots Law Times*.

Angling

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons are employed in angling-related occupations, including those employed in the manufacture and sale of angling equipment, hotels, river keepers, gillies and persons involved in sea angling; how many *(a)* salmon and grilse, *(b)* sea trout, *(c)* brown and rainbow trout, *(d)* coarse fish and *(e)* sea fish were taken by anglers in each of the last three years for which figures are available; and what is his estimate of the latest value of such items to the Scottish economy.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 December 1993]:* The only statistics collected by my Department on these subjects relate to salmon and grilse, and sea trout. The rod and line catches over the last three years are as follows:

	Salmon and Grilse	Sea trout
1990	71,646	27,830
1991	62,450	27,500
1992	82,897	34,315

An independent consultancy report prepared for the Scottish Tourist Board and the Highland and Islands Development Board in 1989 estimated that salmon angling and netting contributed £53 million to the Scottish economy annually and supported 3,800 full-time equivalent jobs.

Direct Service/Labour Organisations

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list, by authority, the surplus achieved since 1988 on trading accounts for *(a)* general highway work, *(b)* construction and maintenance of sewers, *(c)* works of new construction and *(d)* maintenance work delivered by direct service/labour organisations in Scotland;

(2) if he will list, by authority, the surplus achieved since 1988 on trading accounts for *(a)* refuse collection, *(b)* street cleaning, *(c)* building cleaning, *(d)* schools and welfare catering, *(e)* other catering, *(f)* vehicle maintenance, *(g)* grounds maintenance and *(h)* sports and leisure management services delivered by direct service/labour organisations in Scotland;

(3) if he will list by authority and service area, as defined by the Local Government Act 1988, the surpluses achieved by local authority direct service/labour organisations in Scotland;

(4) if he will list by authority and service area, as defined by the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980, the surpluses achieved by local authority direct service/labour organisations in Scotland since 1988.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* The information requested for financial years before 1990-91 could be made available only at disproportionate cost. The information set out in table 1 to 3 show for the years 1990-91 and 1991-92 the surpluses/deficits reported for each activity to which compulsory competitive tendering relates in terms of both the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 and the Local Government Act 1988. For 1992-93 the figures provided reflect the reports for that year which have been received and processed.

Surpluses on DLO/DSO activity in 1990-91

Local authority	New construction >£50,000	New construction <£50,000	Building maintenance	General highways work	General water and sewerage work	Refuse collection[1]	Building cleaning	Other cleaning[1]	School and welfare catering	Other catering	Ground maintenance	Vehicle maintenance	Leisure services management
Aberdeen DC	—	—	906,479	—	—	144,863	12,571	—	—	3,877	745,816	3,211	—
Angus DC	—	—	—	—	—	61,269	—	41,696	—	—	172,187	33,578	—
Annandale and Eskdale DC	—	—	—	—	—	33,704	—	10,247	—	—	5,996	—	—
Argyll and Bute DC	—	—	-81,000	—	—	4,000	—	24,000	—	—	6,000	6,000	—
Badenoch and Strathspey DC	—	—	—	—	—	21,805	—	—	—	—	23,888	—	—
Banff and Buchan DC	—	—	40,570	—	—	10,730	—	—	—	—	35,016	10,985	—
Bearsden and Milngavie DC	—	—	8,501	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	16,184	—	—
Berwickshire DC	—	—	—	—	—	10,050	—	42,652	—	—	42,652	—	—
Borders RC	—	—	—	616,000	—	—	81,000	—	7,000	—	—	15,000	—
Caithness DC	—	—	20,611	—	—	79,041	—	—	—	—	—	—	90,836
Central RC	-32,574	—	95,238	224,923	-3,332	—	—	—	150,830	-17,156	—	12,741	—
Clackmannan DC	—	—	97,000	—	—	1,000	4,000	1,000	—	—	12,000	—	11,000
Clydebank DC	—	—	95,718	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Clydesdale DC	—	—	-37,533	—	—	—	—	13,585	—	—	116,549	—	—
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth DC	—	—	36,686	—	—	50,656	—	—	—	—	14,020	-38,693	—
Cumnock and Doon Valley DC	—	—	40,059	—	—	38,418	—	18,473	—	—	3,656	—	—
Cunninghame DC	—	—	49,000	—	—	17,850	402	13,248	—	—	3,870	—	—
Dumbarton DC	—	—	327,855	—	—	75,098	-7,299	—	—	—	34,442	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway RC	—	—	-50,075	-408,606	—	—	—	—	47,000	—	23,000	48,000	—
Dundee DC	12,116	108,901	206,961	—	—	—	3,660	—	—	—	366,147	—	—
Dunfermline DC	—	—	—	—	—	214,631	—	—	—	—	413,662	100,438	—
East Kilbride DC	—	—	—	—	—	73,749	—	84,529	—	—	20,661	—	—
East Lothian DC	—	—	89,923	—	—	—	-3	96,813	—	—	33,574	—	—
Eastwood DC	—	—	—	—	—	18,413	84,563	64,265	—	—	14,058	—	—

Local authority	*New construction >£50,000*	*New construction <£50,000*	*Building maintenance*	*General highways work*	*General water and sewerage work*	*Refuse collection*[1]	*Building cleaning*	*Other cleaning*[1]	*School and welfare catering*	*Other catering*	*Ground maintenance*	*Vehicle maintenance*	*Leisure services management*
Edinburgh DC	—	—	138,026	—	—	—	43,810	165,799	—	9,154	106,959	161,490	—
Ettrick and Lauderdale DC	—	—	97,813	—	—	—	—	21,447	—	—	51,600	—	—
Falkirk DC	—	—	85,000	—	—	25,000	3,000	9,000	—	—	84,000	10,000	—
Fife RC	9,000	9,000	398,000	1,286,000	37,000	—	56,000	—	630,000	—	—	24,000	—
Glasgow DC	—	159,277	7,134,357	—	—	256,168	11,320	105,664	—	—	169,741	—	—
Gordon DC	—	—	—	—	—	11,000	—	23,000	—	—	55,000	—	—
Grampian RC	—	—	—	955,000	57,000	—	—	—	—	158,000	18,000	8,000	—
Hamilton DC	—	—	−770,649	—	—	—	260	—	—	—	13,618	—	—
Highland RC	—	—	—	1,132,738	—	—	88,106	—	364,081	—	−84,375	—	—
Inverclyde DC	—	—	242,712	—	—	32,533	—	38,233	—	—	3,311	−7,521	—
Inverness DC	—	—	78,221	—	—	134,725	—	73,045	—	—	−10,494	−1,740	—
Kilmarnock and Loudon DC	—	—	191,542	—	—	52,323	3,442	25,735	—	135	31,270	—	—
Kincardine and Deeside DC	—	—	—	—	—	−2,484	—	—	—	—	76,172	—	—
Kirkcaldy DC	—	—	−234,472	—	—	25,511	947	12,757	—	—	94,728	58,367	—
Kyle and Carrick DC	—	—	151,699	—	—	12,803	—	—	—	—	20,879	17,848	—
Lochaber DC	—	—	33,210	—	—	25,664	—	25,664	—	—	2,759	—	—
Lothian RC	—	—	36,932	473,113	196,077	—	76,048	—	50,013	6,203	—	36,346	—
Midlothian DC	—	—	108,000	—	—	133,000	—	—	—	—	159,000	—	—
Monklands DC	—	—	57,600	—	—	27,798	19,025	—	—	—	5,631	5,238	—
Moray DC	—	—	405,564	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	−122,476	—	—
Motherwell DC	—	—	52,128	—	—	—	—	313,937	—	2,809	56,787	39,537	—
Nairn DC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nithsdale DC	—	—	97,976	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	2	—	—
North East Fife DC	—	—	30,000	—	—	16,000	—	—	—	—	72,000	—	—
Orkney IC	—	10,000	−47,000	331,000	51,000	3,000	165,000	—	81,000	—	—	—	—
Perth and Kinross DC	—	—	112,175	—	—	—	29,696	—	—	—	48,878	0	—
Renfrew DC	—	—	1,157,272	—	—	57,987	—	44,510	—	—	86,718	21,106	—
Ross and Cromarty DC	—	—	57,000	—	—	21,000	—	—	—	—	19,000	—	—
Roxburgh DC	—	—	21,000	—	—	11,642	—	2,067	—	—	16,059	—	—
Shetland IC	—	—	53,000	180,000	—	—	−13,000	—	44,000	—	—	19,000	—
Skye and Lochalsh DC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Stewartry DC	—	—	—	—	—	41,536	—	—	—	—	37,226	—	—
Stirling DC	—	—	70,700	—	—	25,000	—	9,600	—	—	−7,005	2,300	—
Strathclyde RC	109,518	7,530	544,269	534,861	35,350	—	84,983	—	725,277	122,617	27,640	182,590	—
Strathkelvin DC	—	—	205,692	—	—	32,824	—	32,824	—	—	−58,708	—	—
Sutherland DC	—	—	—	—	—	20,281	—	—	—	—	19,533	—	—
Tayside RC	—	—	5,000	652,000	—	—	110,000	—	473,000	—	—	14,000	—
Tweeddale DC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Western Isles IC	—	—	801,354	116,619	—	37,697	—	—	—	6,367	35,144	22,475	—
West Lothian DC	—	—	159,867	—	—	13,886	—	13,886	—	—	20,829	2,190	—
Wigtown DC	—	—	99,473	—	—	—	—	21,415	—	—	37,598	—	—
Cumbernauld NT	—	—	48,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	13,000	—	—
East Kilbride NT	—	—	−385,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Glenrothes NT	—	—	115,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	105,000	—	—
Irvine NT	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	27,192	—	—
Livingston NT	—	—	109,053	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5,000	—	—

[1] The accounts for refuse collection and other cleaning may have been combined by some authorities. The absence of an entry, therefore, does not necessarily indicate that the DSO has not carried out the activity in question.

Surpluses on DLO/DSO activity in 1991-92

Local authority	*New construction >£50,000*	*New construction <£50,000*	*Building maintenance*	*General highways work*	*General water and sewerage work*	*Refuse collection*[1]	*Building cleaning*	*Other cleaning*[1]	*School and welfare catering*	*Other catering*	*Ground maintenance*	*Vehicle maintenance*	*Leisure services management*
Aberdeen DC	—	—	1,240,282	—	—	101,713	5,671	—	—	9,191	472,132	80,453	—
Angus DC	—	—	—	—	—	89,219	10,672	37,640	—	—	109,475	11,859	14,377
Annandale and Eskdale DC	—	—	—	—	—	28,699	—	−24,223	—	—	86,580	—	11,195
Argyll and Bute DC	—	—	0	—	—	52,000	—	10,000	—	—	22,000	17,000	4,000
Badenoch and Strathspey DC	—	—	—	—	—	17,089	—	—	—	—	7,574	—	—
Banff and Buchan DC	—	—	30,734	—	—	53,714	2,863	—	—	—	62,133	18,877	—
Bearsden and Milngavie DC	—	—	−17,095	—	—	−66,295	—	−66,295	—	—	−65,097	—	—
Berwickshire DC	—	—	—	—	—	48,897	—	42,686	—	—	42,686	—	403
Borders RC	—	—	—	649,000	—	—	72,000	—	24,000	—	—	42,000	—
Caithness DC	—	—	28,479	—	—	119,835	—	—	—	—	—	—	116,623
Central RC	6,586	1,759	230,783	209,555	32,766	—	—	—	230,645	11,272	—	60,947	—
Clackmannan DC	—	—	76,000	—	—	65,000	—	—	—	—	33,000	−2,000	—
Clydebank DC	—	—	115,192	—	—	36,907	—	—	—	—	140,922	—	50,182
Clydesdale DC	—	—	−9,742	—	—	6,727	−12,633	9,012	—	—	48,621	—	33,289
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth DC	—	—	43,191	—	—	4,811	—	—	—	—	37,480	930	21,602
Cumnock and Doon Valley DC	—	—	35,329	—	—	112,724	—	33,636	—	—	5,961	—	1,790
Cunninghame DC	—	—	217,000	—	—	16,828	15,868	26,455	—	—	55,954	20,016	9,808
Dumbarton DC	—	—	−119,072	—	—	96,117	−66,438	7,377	—	—	93,801	—	32,798
Dumfries and Galloway RC	—	—	−102,137	261,756	—	—	—	—	108,000	—	66,000	69,000	—
Dundee DC	2,922	17,314	666,002	—	—	146,472	2,583	25,572	—	—	144,046	—	58,785
Dunfermline DC	75,219	38,453	192,741	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
East Kilbride DC	—	—	—	—	—	125,871	—	100,161	—	—	32,372	—	20,000
East Lothian DC	—	—	44,963	—	—	161,680	4,916	—	—	—	115,216	—	47,085
Eastwood DC	—	—	—	—	—	28,045	81,042	49,921	—	—	6,074	—	12,812
Edinburgh DC	—	—	−708,635	—	—	45,693	66,747	48,329	—	23	56,041	69,707	43,426
Ettrick and Lauderdale DC	—	—	124,107	—	—	—	—	60,560	—	—	46,115	—	64,794
Falkirk DC	—	—	150,000	—	—	66,000	5,000	114,000	—	—	28,000	9,000	3,000
Fife RC	5,000	6,000	372,000	279,000	—	—	33,000	—	517,000	—	—	101,000	—
Glasgow DC	—	9,789	9,021,124	—	—	1,061,873	53,000	466,561	—	71,402	1,851,214	96,497	257,620
Gordon DC	—	—	—	—	—	17,000	—	23,000	—	—	47,000	—	—
Grampian RC	—	—	—	431,000	21,000	—	—	43,000	130,000	12,000	99,000	191,000	—
Hamilton DC	—	—	244,114	—	—	179,149	392	—	—	—	110,187	—	128,153
Highland RC	—	—	—	1,227,229	—	—	159,011	—	289,000	—	—	301,341	—
Inverclyde DC	—	—	208,530	—	—	44,196	—	40,074	—	—	58,563	34,949	21,371
Inverness DC	—	—	270,135	—	—	219,186	—	49,426	—	—	143,900	35,362	31,815
Kilmarnock and Loudon DC	—	—	166,413	—	—	104,776	966	54,970	—	4,337	15,344	44,102	9,019
Kincardine and Deeside DC	—	—	—	—	—	−13,113	—	—	—	—	1,781	—	7,367
Kirkcaldy DC	—	—	−563,702	—	—	65,767	799	23,693	—	—	397,708	98,926	—
Kyle and Carrick DC	—	—	163,032	—	—	23,338	—	—	—	—	65,640	19,826	—
Lochaber DC	—	—	87,262	—	—	21,433	—	21,433	—	—	12,716	—	11,745
Lothian RC	—	—	2,699	504,004	242,555	—	—	—	417,701	6,329	—	59,310	—
Midlothian DC	—	—	26,000	—	—	—	—	73,000	—	—	246,000	55,000	3,000
Monklands DC	—	—	64,023	—	—	31,248	7,855	8,826	—	—	90,129	61,845	6,745
Moray DC	—	—	290,338	—	—	37,885	—	27,558	—	—	33,923	42,823	—
Motherwell DC	—	—	233,701	—	—	—	1,207	500,293	—	7,224	91,514	91,670	0
Nairn DC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nithsdale DC	—	—	−21,364	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	2	—	1
North East Fife DC	—	—	−176,000	—	—	−34,000	—	38,000	—	—	49,000	—	—
Orkney IC	—	−16,000	219,000	99,000	−30,000	−6,000	101,000	—	—	70,000	—	14,000	—
Perth and Kinross DC	—	—	30,207	—	—	17,473	23,767	128,524	—	—	—	30,750	41,927
Renfrew DC	—	—	1,155,000	—	—	332,000	—	45,000	−18,000	—	105,000	51,000	66,000
Ross and Cromarty DC	—	—	65,000	—	—	14,000	—	—	—	—	60,000	—	10,673
Roxburgh DC	—	—	13,000	—	—	11,693	—	4,931	—	—	76,400	2,153	—
Shetland IC	—	—	87,000	573,000	—	3,000	22,000	—	69,000	—	1,000	55,000	—

Local authority	New construction >£50,000	New construction <£50,000	Building maintenance	General highways work	General water and sewerage work	Refuse collection[1]	Building cleaning	Other cleaning[1]	School and welfare catering	Other catering	Ground maintenance	Vehicle maintenance	Leisure services management
Skye and Lochalsh DC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Stewartry DC	—	—	—	—	—	46,614	46,614	46,614	—	—	35,984	—	—
Stirling DC	—	—	105,200	—	—	79,900	4,400	16,500	—	—	-245,779	-670	2,703
Strathclyde RC	3,786	11,626	1,306,797	493,058	59,180	—	811,218	—	470,820	21,601	395,144	124,699	—
Strathkelvin DC	—	—	118,602	—	—	114,356	—	—	—	—	37,670	—	58,727
Sutherland DC	—	—	—	—	—	11,536	—	—	—	—	12,218	—	244
Tayside RC	—	—	143,000	649,000	—	—	12,000	—	170,000	—	—	134,000	—
Tweeddale DC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Western Isles IC	—	—	260,443	215,408	—	120,433	39,037	120,433	—	—	38,259	84,673	—
West Lothian DC	—	—	104,129	—	—	59,606	—	59,606	—	—	160,790	1,909,000	28,302
Wigtown DC	—	—	228,159	—	—	—	—	36,530	—	—	71,321	—	42,333
Cumbernauld NT	—	—	49,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	21,000	—	—
East Kilbride NT	—	—	85,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Glenrothes NT	—	—	25,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	105,000	—	—
Irvine NT	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	36,754	—	—
Livingston NT	—	—	60,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	51,000	—	—

[1] The accounts for refuse collection and other cleaning may have been combined by some authorities. The absence of an entry, therefore, does not necessarily indicate that the DSO has not carried out the activity in question.

Surpluses on DLO/DSO activity in 1992-93

Local authority	New construction >£50,000	New construction <£50,000	Building maintenance	General highways work	General water and sewerage work	Refuse collection[1]	Building cleaning	Other cleaning[1]	School and welfare catering	Other catering	Ground maintenance	Vehicle maintenance	Leisure services management
Aberdeen DC	—	—	276,110	—	—	—	8,882	—	—	17,446	591,314	86,550	443,877
Angus DC	—	—	—	—	—	127,622	17,266	81,572	—	—	194,384	18,111	16,139
Annandale and Eskdale DC	—	—	—	—	—	93,432	—	20,734	—	—	120,687	—	29,294
Argyll and Bute DC	—	—	57,391	—	—	2,000	—	25,000	—	—	95,331	11,318	3,000
Badenoch and Strathspey DC	—	—	—	—	—	23,746	—	—	—	—	28,981	—	—
Banff and Buchan DC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bearsden and Milngavie DC	—	—	28,915	—	—	—	—	52,378	—	—	98,020	—	5,749
Berwickshire DC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Borders RC	—	—	—	169,000	—	—	-172,000	—	-51,000	—	—	78,000	—
Caithness DC	—	—	37,606	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	52,580	—	13,729
Central RC	1,378	3,667	49,703	224,586	24,535	—	556,453	—	163,181	6,292	—	51,680	—
Clackmannan DC	—	—	23,000	—	—	40,000	—	—	—	—	96,000	16,000	—
Clydebank DC	—	—	219,498	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	132,473	—	42,045
Clydesdale DC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth DC	—	—	57,918	—	—	33,969	—	—	—	—	5,198	15,154	7,787
Cumnock and Doon Valley DC	—	—	55,143	—	—	40,420	—	18,755	—	—	16,753	—	2,973
Cunninghame DC	—	—	366,000	—	—	26,092	19,254	18,829	—	—	106,047	3,780	71,252
Dumbarton DC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway RC	—	—	7,619	109,780	—	—	—	406,000	157,000	—	20,000	59,000	—
Dundee DC	4,667	15,206	430,356	—	—	317,932	2,924	143,412	—	—	250,551	—	72,000
Dunfermline DC	—	—	—	—	—	—	21,000	—	—	—	98,428	7,926,000	0
East Kilbride DC	—	—	—	—	—	56,939	—	50,313	—	—	51,648	12,627	401,280
East Lothian DC	—	—	67,271	—	—	97,577	10,158	—	—	—	60,093	—	134,658
Eastwood DC	—	—	—	—	—	23,272	1,142	24,720	—	—	24,881	—	27,187
Edinburgh DC	—	—	-448,750	—	—	79,111	63,097	86,771	—	-34,966	199,140	100,524	35,170
Ettrick and Lauderdale DC	—	—	19,104	—	—	—	—	67,822	—	—	54,235	—	[illegible]748
Falkirk DC	—	—	325,000	—	—	77,000	4,000	134,000	—	—	305,000	6,000	65,000
Fife RC	10,000	-358,000	311,000	1,000	5,000	—	522,000	—	205,000	2,000	—	19,000	—
Glasgow DC	—	—	9,274,493	—	—	914,896	90,994	265,576	—	148,629	1,116,950	129,212	195,021
Gordon DC	—	—	—	—	—	10,000	—	102,000	—	—	57,000	—	—
Grampian RC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hamilton DC	—	—	—	—	—	231,782	—	—	—	—	135,682	—	246,906
Highland RC	—	—	—	2,128,575	—	—	295,722	—	465,010	—	391,917	—	—
Inverclyde DC	—	—	304,594	—	—	186,367	—	131,010	—	—	3,504	66,154	77,138
Inverness DC	—	—	94,194	—	—	122,433	—	81,067	—	—	66,633	39,393	77,582
Kilmarnock and Loudon DC	—	—	247,000	—	—	125,000	2,000	63,000	—	6,000	58,000	32,000	11,000
Kincardine and Deeside DC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Kirkcaldy DC	—	—	68,224	—	—	96,192	15,048	59,105	—	—	229,085	142,143	156,093
Kyle and Carrick DC	—	—	60,454	—	—	—	30,408	—	—	—	38,993	12,963	159,246
Lochaber DC	—	—	64,113	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6,533	—	12,394
Lothian RC	—	—	174,313	451,113	161,662	—	166,945	—	47,344	12,125	—	69,701	-290,516
Midlothian DC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Monklands DC	—	—	51,000	—	—	67,717	23,028	135,366	—	—	157,920	27,410	—
Moray DC	—	—	95,100	—	—	22,025	—	54,647	—	—	61,418	31,030	—
Motherwell DC	—	—	200,159	—	—	—	6,937	516,884	—	21,208	134,065	55,824	219,195
Nairn DC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nithsdale DC	—	—	45,222	—	—	700	—	200	—	—	2,550	—	530,287
North East Fife DC	—	—	50,000	—	—	45,000	—	203,000	—	—	93,000	—	54,000
Orkney IC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Perth and Kinross DC	—	—	67,703	—	—	21,106	26,349	105,626	—	—	—	53,207	147,714
Renfrew DC	—	—	748,622	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ross and Cromarty DC	—	—	96,000	—	—	34,000	—	—	—	—	-42,000	—	28,776
Roxburgh DC	—	—	10,000	—	—	11,980	—	3,831	—	—	76,574	4,545	30,180
Shetland IC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sky and Lochalsh DC	—	—	-45,022	—	—	3,771	4,705	17,145	—	—	-11,208	—	-12,007
Stewarty DC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Stirling DC	—	—	92,500	—	—	71,200	1,300	9,600	—	—	84,800	8,900	4,700
Strathclyde RC	174,602	7,734	787,281	339,025	60,302	—	237,407	—	237,808	11,243	41,818	84,377	—
Strathkelvin DC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sutherland DC	—	—	—	—	—	16,223	—	—	—	—	43,554	—	7,238
Tayside RC	—	—	36,000	1,497,000	—	—	6,000	—	363,000	—	—	102,000	—
Tweedale DC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Western Isles IC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
West Lothian DC	—	—	—	—	—	99,547	—	—	—	—	205,915	4,135	122,874
Wigtown DC	—	—	118,208	—	—	—	—	23,908	—	—	141,701	—	156,222
Cumbernauld NT	—	—	144,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	77,000	—	—
East Kilbride NT	—	—	125,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Glenrothes NT	—	—	77,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	133,000	—	—
Irvine NT	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	43,036	—	—
Livingston NT	—	—	89,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	38,000	—	—

[1] The accounts for refuse collection and other cleaning may have been combined by some authorities. The absence of an entry, therefore, does not necessarily indicate that the DSO has not carried out the activity in question.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the representations received from Ayrshire following the publication of his proposal to split the county into two parts in his reorganisation of local government under those who *(a)* support his proposal, *(b)* support an all Ayrshire authority and *(c)* support another option.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* Since publication of the White Paper "Shaping the Future—The

New Councils", a total of 43 representations about the restructuring proposals for Ayrshire have been received. One has supported the White Paper proposal; 18 a single Ayrshire authority; 12 other options; and 12 have expressed concern over the proposal without stating a preference.

Forestry

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions have been held during the past four months between the Secretary to the interdepartmental review group on the Forestry Commission and representatives of wood processing companies; what has been the context of these discussions; and what indications have been given to those companies about future contracts.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 13 December 1993:]* Members of the Forestry Review Group have, from time to time, met representatives of a variety of organisations which have interests of relevance to its work. In many cases, these discussions have been held on a confidential basis at the request of the organisations.

NHS Trusts

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to collect information on the political affiliation of appointees to national health service trusts.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* No. Such information has no relevance to the contribution of appointees to the work of NHS trusts, although I did invite the leaders of all the Scottish parliamentary parties in July 1992 to submit nominations for trust membership.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether rules allow for an enterprise allowance to be granted to an applicant who also takes up a loan guarantee scheme loan.

Mr. McLoughlin: No national restrictions exist to prevent applicants from receiving assistance under both schemes.

Tributyl Trioxide

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the quantity and value of imports, exports and re-exports of tributyl trioxide into, and from, the United Kingdom in the year of the risk benefit study.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information requested is not available as TBTO is not separately identified in the classification of overseas trade statistics.

Innovation Unit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he intends to maintain a post of chief adviser on science and technology; and to which official he intends the innovation unit to report.

Mr. Heseltine: I will make an announcement in due course.

Communications Technologies

Sir Donald Thompson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what research the Government have conducted on self-trunking technologies in radio communications with a view to requiring less burdensome individual regulations.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government recognise the value of self-trunking technology in radiocommunications particularly as this could reduce the need for individual frequency assignments. A number of existing standards —such as CT2—cordless telephones—DECT—digital European cordless telecommunications—and DSRR—digital short range radio—are based on self-trunking principles.

There are technical problems associated with the use of self-trunking for longer range services. The Radiocommunications Agency has undertaken studies on the application of self-trunking for private mobile radio services and further work is being commissioned as part of the agency's programme of research to promote efficient use of the radio spectrum.

Sir Donald Thompson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the progress which has been made towards eliminating the need for licences in the case of low-power radio devices.

Mr. McLoughlin: Much progress has been made in eliminating the need for licensing these devices. The statutory instrument "The Wireless Telegraphy (Short Range Devices) (Exemption) Regulations 1993"—SI No. 1993/1591—consolidated previous such regulations and lists the 16 major categories of devices which are licence exempt. Other licensed services are continually reviewed as candidates for exemption.

Bankruptcies

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many bankruptcies were registered by the Insolvency Service for each year since 1986 for *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* each standard region; and if he will express these figures as a proportion of the total numbers of enterprises in each case.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Details of the number of company and personal insolvencies are compiled for England and Wales as a whole, and for Northern Ireland and Scotland. This information is given in the table. However, it should be noted that a minority of personal bankruptcies do not relate to the failure of enterprises. No regional breakdown of insolvencies in England and Wales is available.

Estimates of the number of enterprises are made by DTI for the United Kingdom as a whole. None was made in 1987, and 1992 figures are not yet available. The table gives these data and expresses the number of insolvencies as a proportion of the number of enterprises. No breakdown of the number of enterprises below United Kingdom level is available.

Insolvencies of Enterprises in the United Kingdom

	United Kingdom enterprises (000s)	*England and Wales*		*Scotland*		*Northern Ireland*		*Total United Kingdom Insolvencies*	*Per cent. Insolvencies*
		(1)	*(2)*	*(1)*	*(3)*	*(1)*	*(2)*		
1986	2,481	14,405	7,093	511	437	132	193	22,771	0·92
1987	n/a	11,439	6,994	456	808	165	135	19,997	n/a
1988	2,806	9,427	7,717	396	1,401	116	162	19,219	0·68
1989	2,888	10,456	8,138	428	2.301	144	238	21,705	0·75
1990	2,834	15,051	12,058	470	4,350	128	286	32,343	1·14
1991	2,696	21,827	22,632	616	7,665	181	366	53,287	1·98
1992	n/a	24,425	32,106	670	10,845	173	404	68,623	n/a

(1) Company compulsory liquidations and creditors' voluntary liquidations.

(2) Individual bankruptcy orders. Note that a minority of personal bankruptcies do not relate to insolvencies of enterprises.

(3) Sequestrations (equivalent in Scottish law to bankruptcy orders).

Additionality

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received during 1993 in support of adherence to the principle of additionality in allocating European Community funding.

Mr. Sainsbury: I and my ministerial colleagues have received a number of such representations. In all cases, we have been able to give the assurance that the United Kingdom adheres to the principle of additionality.

RAF Chivenor

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what additional support he intends to allocate to North Devon for economic development in the light of the Government's proposal to run RAF Chivenor down to a care and maintenance programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: Both Barnstaple and Ilfracombe travel-to-work area—TTWA—in which RAF Chivenor is located and the Bideford TTWA were designated as intermediate areas in August 1993. Since 1 August 1993, the Department of Trade and Industry has received six formal requests for regional selective assistance from applicants in north Devon which has already resulted in four offers of assitance. In addition, my officials are talking to several other companies about possible projects. The Government have also proposed to the EC that north Devon should be included in the objective 5(b) programme for Cornwall and Devon.

North Devon will benefit from its share of the £736,779 which was recently allocated to Devon and Cornwall under the Konver programme; indeed, one of the projects which has been approved relates specifically to a "one-stop shop" to help people dependent on RAF Chivenor to find alternative employment.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when Her Majesty's Government provided Euratom with *(a)* system performance demonstration documents and *(b)* commissioning worksheets for the THORP plant, as part of the establishing of safeguards plans by Euratom.

Mr. Eggar: Documents on safeguards implementation are supplied in confidence by British Nuclear Fuels plc to the parties concerned.

Euratom

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information Her Majesty's Government provided to the European Commission, pursuant to article 78(2) of the Euratom treaty.

Mr. Eggar: None. It is for the operators of facilities using source or special fissile materials to provide information to the European Commission in accordance with article 78 of the Euratom treaty.

Granby Street Post Office, Liverpool

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will meet the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside and members of the Granby Street Post Office Campaign Group before the Christmas adjournment to discuss the closure of the local post office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The decision to close Granby Street sub-post office is an operational matter for Post Office Counters Ltd. and follows the decision of the sub-postmaster to resign. It would not, therefore, be appropriate for my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to discuss the matter with the hon. Member and the Granby Street Campaign Group.

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how the criteria of *(a)* social responsibility and *(b)* profitability have been applied to the closure of the Granby street post office, in Liverpool.

Mr. McLoughlin: A major factor in the planned closure of the Granby Street sub-post office in Liverpool is the wish of the proprietor of the privately owned business to resign, following repeated robberies in recent years, and the absence of suitable applicants to take over this office. The Post Office has therefore decided to relocate the nearby Lodge lane premises to larger premises some 600 yards from the existing Granby street site. This will accommodate the volume of business transacted at the two sub-post offices.

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has had about the proposed closure of the Granby street post office, Liverpool 8, from the Liverpool city council, the Post Office Users Advisory Committee, local councillors and clergymen; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: In addition to representations from the hon. Member, my right hon. Friend the President of the

Board of Trade has received representations from the Liverpool Riverside constituency Labour party, Granby Labour party, Liverpool money advice support unit, Emmanuel holiness church, Princess Park health centre, Princes Park housing co-operative and the Granby Street post Office Campaign.

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the representations which have been sent to the Post Office opposing the proposed closure of Granby street post office, Toxteth, Liverpool 8.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Post Office informs me that it has received representations about the proposed closure of Granby Street sub-post office in Liverpool from the following representatives, bodies and organisations:

Granby Street Campaign Group
Emmanuel Holiness Church
Granby Labour Party
Robert Parry MP
Cllr. J. Rossington St. Michael's and Dingle Ward
Adullam Homes Housing Corporation
University of Liverpool
Princes Park Health Centre
Methodist Church: Liverpool South Central
Cllr. G. Ben-Tovim
English Churches Housing Group
Liverpool Riverside Constituency Labour Party
Liverpool Money Advice Support Unit
Ponsonby Neighbourhood Centre
Liverpool Federation of Council Tenants and Residents Associations
Educational Opportunities Initiative in Liverpool 8
Age Concern Liverpool
Granby Liberal Democrats
Princes Park Housing Co-operative Ltd.
Cllr. P. Clein
Father N. Postlethwaite
Trafford Activities Group

In addition, letters have been received from 46 members of the public.

Post Office (Closures)

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what appeal machinery is open against the closure of a post office.

Mr. McLoughlin: Post office closures are an operational matter for Post Office Counters Ltd.

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what criteria are used for the closure of post offices in inner city areas.

Mr. McLoughlin: The criteria used by Post Office Counters Ltd in considering the closure of post offices on the resignation of a subpostmaster or subpostmistress in urban areas are the proximity of other post offices; the difficulty customers would face in reaching another office; the amount and type of business done; the ability of nearby offices to absorb additional work and the likely future development of the area.

Offshore Operators

Mr. Salmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he will take to ensure that offshore operating companies are required to have insurance cover to indemnify them against the costs of fines associated with health and safety prosecutions when applying for operating licences; if he will ensure that such requirements are built into licence conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Collieries

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of the number of collieries operated by *(a)* British Coal and *(b)* others immediately prior to the restructuring date specified in the Coal Industry Bill.

Mr. Eggar: The operation of collieries is a matter for British Coal Corporation and independent coal producers.

Civil Nuclear Plants

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken to combat terrorist threats to civil nuclear plants.

Mr. Eggar: Strict physical protection measures which follow international recommendations are in force and these are kept under regular review to ensure their continuing effectiveness. It is Government policy not to disclose the detail of the measures which are taken.

Electricity Imports

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library copies of all correspondence and written agreements which he and his Department have had with Electricité de France or with the French Government about the import of electricity.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* The Government are not a party to the agreements governing trade in electricity between Britain and France, which are summarised in the coal review White Paper, Cm 2235, from paragraph 7.95. Since the publication of the White paper the Government have had further discussions with the French authorities on the non-leviable status of electricity imports from France, the transparency of the French energy market, and access for British generators to export electricity to and through France.

Patent Office

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the future of the Patent Office.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 9 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *348*.

Small Firms

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about his Department's assistance to small firms to achieve BS5750 standards.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* BS5750 is a voluntary standard and the decision to seek certification is a matter for individual companies. However, help for small firms to achieve BS5750 is available through my Department's enterprise initiative consultancy scheme under which DTI will pay up to half the cost of specialist help lasting up to 15 days. Also, the relevance of the standard and its relationship to total quality management and company competitiveness is highlighted in the "Managing in the 90s" programme; an awareness programme promoting an integrated approach to best management practice.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total annual amount of public funds that is used to underwrite small firms finance loans through the banks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* The net cost of the scheme for the period April 1982 to March 1993 was £185·5 million, shown below by financial year. No figures are available for the period June 1981 to March 1982.

	£m
1982-83	10·8
1983-84	27·2
1984-85	32·9
1985-86	27·1
1986-87	11·3
1987-88	3·6
1988-89	3·8
1989-90	5.6
1990-91	16·5
1991-92	27.5
1992-93	19·2

National Measurement System

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what his Department's expenditure was on the national measurement system in *(a)* 1991-92 and *(b)* 1992-93; what is the comparable forecast expenditure for the succeeding three years; and what is the comparable planned increased expenditure from 1991-92.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* My Department spent £41·2 million on the national measurement system in 1991-92, and £42·2 million in 1992-93. We expect an outturn of £42 million for 1993-94. The budgets for the following two years have not yet been finalised.

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations have been received from industry calling for the national physical laboratory and the national measurement system to be retained and adequately funded; and what account will be taken of those views.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* The CBI and the instrumentation and control trade association, GAMBICA, have made clear their support for my Department's objective of providing a well-founded measurement infrastructure as an underpinning factor in UK competitiveness and the importance they attach to its continuation. A number of companies have made similar points to my Department. These views will be fully taken into account as we develop our policy in the area. My Department also engages consultants to canvas a wide range of opinion in industry on the appropriate areas of work under the national measurement system when the various programmes funded by the Department come up for renewal.

EDUCATION

Hasmonean Preparatory School

12. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to determine the application by Hasmonean prep school to become voluntary aided.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend expects to announce a decision shortly.

Educational Performance, London

13. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what initiatives he plans to take to improve educational performance in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: Parents and pupils in London, as elsewhere, are benefiting from the Government's policies on the national curriculum, local management, and self-governing status for schools. The new four-yearly independent inspection cycle will enable us to monitor standards and take effective action where individual schools are proving inadequate.

Truancy

15. **Mr. Pope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to reduce the level of truancy in schools.

Mr. Patten: Parents are responsible in law for securing their children's regular attendance at school and local education authorities are responsible for ensuring that they do so. The Department is supporting the work of LEAs and schools in this area under the reducing truancy programme of the grants for education support and training scheme. In 1993-94, projects are being funded in 71 LEAs to a value of £9·6 million.

24. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about his Department's policy on truancy.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend expects local education authorities and schools to make maximising attendance one of their key tasks. To help them, the Department is currently supporting projects to a value of some £9·6 million in 71 English local education authorities under the reducing truancy component of the grants for education support and training scheme 1993-94.

Mr. Merchant: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for each local education authority *(a)* the school population, *(b)* the number of prosecutions for truancy in the latest available year and *(c)* the average truancy rate for schools, excluding independent schools, in each area.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested on the school population and average rate of unauthorised absence for each LEA is published in the "National Unauthorised Absence Tables 1992-93", copies of which are available in the Library.

Information on the number of prosecutions for truancy is not collected centrally.

Student Loans

16. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what discussions he has had with the Student Loans Company regarding the ability of former students to repay their loans.

Mr. Boswell: I and my officials have frequent discussions with the Student Loans Company about a wide range of issues, including matters relating to the repayment of loans.

Nursery Education

14. **Ms Janet Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will meet the Association of County Councils to discuss the provision of nursery education.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has not received any recent request from the Association of County Councils for a meeting to discuss nursery education. Department for Education officials are periodically in touch with the association on educational matters.

17. **Mr. Mudie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the provision of nursery education.

21. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to extend the provision of nursery education.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Members to the reply that I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm).

Sixth Forms

18. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to encourage more schools to develop the use of sixth forms.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend intends shortly to publish a framework of criteria to guide his future decisions on proposals for new sixth forms. The extension of choice and diversity will have a central place in this framework as well as need, effectiveness and cost.

School Uniforms

19. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to make uniforms compulsory in schools.

Mr. Patten: The Government believe that school uniforms can help foster a sense of responsibility and encourage high standards and good behaviour, but it is for individual governing bodies to decide whether to require the wearing of uniforms by their pupils. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State has no plans to make uniforms compulsory in maintained schools.

Student Unions

20. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received about Government proposals to remove automatic funding for student unions and student welfare services.

25. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what recent representations he has had about his proposals regarding student unions.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend has received about 3,000 representations since he announced the Government's proposals for student union reform on 1 July. Our proposals provide for core students union services, including welfare, to be available to all students and supported with public funds, where universities and colleges choose to provide those services in that way.

Grant-maintained Schools

22. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many grant-maintained schools there are in Hampshire; how many have voted against grant-maintained status; and how many further applications there are.

Mr. Robin Squire: There are currently 25 self-governing schools in Hampshire and a further five which have been approved for self-governing status and will join the sector in January. One school has an application in the pipeline having voted yes. Six schools have returned a no vote in parental ballots to date, but one of these re-balloted and is self-governing. One school is due to hold a ballot before Christmas.

Special Educational Needs

23. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the staffing implications for schools and local education authorities in implementing the draft code of practice for special educational needs.

Mr. Forth: The draft code of practice, which reflects expert advice and seeks to codify existing good practice, is presently subject to extensive consultation. My right hon. Friend and I will consider all representations received during the consultation process before laying a revised version of the code before Parliament.

Teacher Training Agency

26. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received concerning his proposals for the financing of educational research through the Teacher Training Agency.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have received some 60 representations on this issue from a wide range of bodies. Our proposals will be given full parliamentary scrutiny during the passage of the Education Bill which last week was given a Second Reading in another place.

Parental Choice

27. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on parental choice of school.

Mr. Robin Squire: All parents have the right, in accordance with the principles of the parents charter, to express a preference for a choice of school. In an estimated 90 per cent. of cases that preference is met. The Government's policies aim to extend choice and diversity throughout the education system.

Departmental Staff

28. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his policy towards recruitment and retention of senior staff in his Department.

Mr. Boswell: Most senior appointments in the Department are filled by internal moves and promotions or by staff transferring from other Departments. The Department for Education's personnel policies aim to retain and develop staff to do the work which is required in a Department of this size.

The Government's response to the recommendations of the recent efficiency unit report on career management and succession planning, due in the spring, will have a bearing on future arrangements.

Higher Education

29. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to introduce a corporate levy as a means of funding expansion in higher education.

Mr. Boswell: The Government have no plans to do so. As announced in his statement at the time of the unified Budget on 30 November, my right hon. Friend has decided that the current level of participation in higher education, which is close to the target for the end of the decade, can be funded through an adjustment in the sharing of the overall cost of student maintenance between taxpayer and students.

Technology Grants

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on what criteria Stratford school was judged in its successful bid for a technology grant; what other schools in Newham made a bid; and which were successful.

Mr. Robin Squire: Bids for awards under the technology schools initiative, including the one from Stratford school, were judged on behalf of the Department by a team of professional technologists using the same national criteria. In the two years in which TSI awards were made, Newham local education authority put forward three bids on behalf of its schools. The bid from Sarah Bonnell school was successful.

School Day

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the length of the school day in each European Union state; and what evidence he has about the link between the length of the school day and standards as achieved by students in each EU country.

Mr. Robin Squire: Comparable information on the length of the school day in other countries is not held centrally. Some relevant information can be found in the National Foundation for Educational Research's 1992 report "Learning Mathematics and Science: The Second International Assessment of Educational Progress in England", a copy of which is in the Library. Further information will be available in a forthcoming Eurydice publication, "Organisation of School Time in Member States of the European Community", which is expected to be published by the end of the year.

Initial work carried out in my Department indicates on average a small but statistically significant positive correlation between the length of the taught week—as opposed to the length of the school day or week—and educational performance as measured by public examinations and national tests.

Details of relevant research carried out in other EU member states are not held centrally.

Corporal Punishment

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to review the position of corporal punishment in local authority schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: None.

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from parents requesting the reintroduction of corporal punishment into local authority schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend receives occasional representations from parents and others on the subject of corporal punishment, both for and against its reintroduction in maintained schools.

Greater London Schools

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the schools he has visited in the Greater London area since his appointment as Secretary of State.

Mr. Patten: Since April 1992, I have visited eleven schools in the Greater London area. These are the Archbishop Tennison Secondary School, Croydon; Bishop Thomas Grant Secondary School, Streatham, Lambeth; Chingford Hall Primary School, Waltham Forest; Compton Secondary School, Finchley, Barnet; Greenvale Primary School, Croydon; The Hague Primary School, Tower Hamlets; Hasmonean School, Barnet; Islamia Primary School, Brent; Marymount International Secondary School, Kingston; Mulberry School for Girls, Tower Hamlets, and Wimbledon College, Merton.

Further Education Funding Council

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total budget for the Further Education Funding Council for 1992-93 and for 1993-94; and what is the planned budget for 1994-95.

Mr. Boswell: The figures requested for grant to the Further Education Funding Council are as follows:

	1992-93	*1993-94*	*£ million* *1994-95 (planned)*
Recurrent	24·5	2,549·2	2,679·5
Capital	—	151·8	157·0
TOTAL	24·5	2,701·0	2,836·5

The funding made available in 1992-93, prior to the establishment of the new further education sector on 1 April 1993, provided transitional funds to help institutions prepare for independence and to meet the costs of establishing the council.

Sex Education (Primary Schools)

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what academic studies he has consulted on the effects on children of sex education in primary schools; and if these studies showed the effects on children of this age to have been beneficial or detrimental and over what period.

Mr. Robin Squire: Research findings in this area show that the majority of parents support the provision of some form of sex education in primary school, but the evidence for its effects is inconclusive. We believe that in this sensitive area the decision whether, and from what age, to offer sex education in maintained primary schools is best left to the discretion of the governing body of each school and that parents should have the right to withdraw their children from sex education if they so wish.

Higher Education Funding Council

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total budget for the Higher Education Funding Council for 1992-93 and 1993-94; and what is the planned budget for 1994-95.

Mr. Boswell: The Higher Education Funding Council for England assumed responsibility for funding universities and colleges in England from 1 April 1993. The planned capital and recurrent grant for the council announced in the Budget is £2,789 million for 1993-94 and £3,418 million for 1994-95. The latter includes compensation for the reduction in publicly funded tuition fees in 1994-95.

School Inspection

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when the revision of the OFSTED framework for school inspection will be complete; what the policy for inspection of religious education will be; what the proposals are for the inspection of sex education within the framework; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: Inspections of schools under the Education (Schools) Act 1992, are required to report on the quality of education and standards achieved, and that in curricular and other matters, schools meet legal requirements.

The detailed content of the framework for inspection is a matter for Professor Sutherland.

I have asked Professor Sutherland to write to my hon. Friend.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total budget for grant-maintained schools for *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94; and what is the planned budget for 1994-95.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is set out in the table.

	1992-93 (outturn) £ *million*	*1993-94 (estimated outturn)* £ *million*	*1994-95 (projected outturn)* £ *million*
Total Spending on GM Schools[1]	485	1,150	2,000

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[1] Figures include annual maintenance grant, which is recovered from local authorities, special purpose grants and capital grants.

[2] Actual spending will depend on the number and size of grant maintained schools.

Exam Results

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to publish schools' GCSE and A-level results by chronological age rather than by school year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The 1993 school and college performance tables show the examination results of students at schools and further education sector colleges by age group only. My right hon. Friend will give further consideration in due course to this and other issues relating to the future publication of comparative tables, and will be consulting interested parties.

Schools Visits, Bolton

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Education who issued the invitations to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools to visit Bolton schools on 2 December; who was informed of the visit; and if he will set out the protocol for informing the local authority of future ministerial visits to Bolton.

Mr. Forth: I visited a number of schools in Bolton at the invitation of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham). The programme for my visit was organised by my hon. Friend's office and I was very happy to follow it. The authority was informed of my forthcoming visit by a headteacher of one of the schools involved. If visits are arranged by my office, it is normal practice to involve the local education authority from the start.

Tuition Fees

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what plans he has to make students responsible for meeting any or all of the costs of tuition fees; what is the time scale for these plans; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what estimates his Department has made of the debt students are likely to incur during each year of their academic studies if they are required to take out additional loans to pay tuition fees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: The Government's plans for higher education were set out in the Budget. Public funding will be over £4·6 billion next year. The costs of higher education will in future be shared more fairly between graduates and the taxpayer by accelerating the shift in the balance of student maintenance support from grant to loan. The Government will continue to reimburse tuition fees through the mandatory awards system up to specified maximum levels. We have no plans to make students contribute to tuition fees.

Voluntary-aided Schools (Transport)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will take steps to prevent local education authorities from withdrawing financial assistance towards transport from children in voluntary-aided schools on purely denominational grounds.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Government attach importance to the preservation of the opportunity to choose a school in accordance with religious convictions. Since 1 October, local education authorities have been obliged to have regard, in considering whether or not to provide a child with free school transport, to—among other things—the parent's wishes for him to attend a school of the denomination to which the parent adheres.

Fitzherbert School, Brighton

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what legal and other expenses were incurred in acquiring and disposing of the site of the former Fitzherbert school, Brighton.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department has reimbursed the CTC Trust some £91,300 for expenses connected with acquiring and disposing of this site.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many representations he has received on the operation of the Child Support Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Between April 1993 and November 1993 the Department of Social Security headquarters and the Child Support Agency headquarters received in the region of 6,400 written representations covering a range of views about child support policy and Child Support Agency operations.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will instruct the Child Support Agency to take into account, when deciding maintenance payments, the costs of an absent parent's contact with their child; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The assessment formula used by the Child Support Agency allows for essential expenses. To make allowances for specific items of expenditure would be to give these costs precedence over a child's basic maintenance. Most absent parents will retain between 70 per cent. and 85 per cent. of their net income after paying maintenance.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give a breakdown of the representations received regarding the operation of the Child Support Agency on the basis of *(a)* sex of the applicant and *(b)* region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt *[pursuant to his reply, 30 November, col. 429]:* The information given was incorrect. The Department received in the region of 6,400 written representations about child support, and not 3,000 as previously stated.

Taxation

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate for 1993-94 of the numbers of *(a)* men and *(b)* women with earnings below (i) the tax threshold and (ii) the national insurance contribution thresholds, in (y) Great Britain and (z) Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table:

(thousands)

	Great Britain	*Northern Ireland*
(i) Men	900	30
Women	2,600	70
(ii) Men	900	30
Women	2,300	60

Note: Figures for Great Britain are rounded to the nearest hundred thousand.

Young People

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many 16 and 17-year-olds received housing benefit in *(a)* Dundee and *(b)* Scotland in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: It is estimated that about 1,000 16 and 17-year-olds received housing benefit in Scotland in 1990, 1991 and 1992. Figures for Scotland prior to 1990 and for Dundee are not available.

Source: Housing Benefit Management Information System annual 1 per cent. sample survey.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the amounts of income support to which *(a)* 16 and 17-year-olds with an automatic right to benefit, *(b)* 18 to 24-year-olds and *(c)* people aged 25 years or over, were entitled in each of the past five years.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table.

Income Support Rate

	For 16 to 17-year-olds living at home £	*For single 18 to 24 year-olds and 16 to 17-year olds living independently* £	*For people 25 years and over and 18 to 24-year-old lone parents* £
April 1989	20·80	27·40	34·90
April 1990	21·90	28·80	36·70
April 1991	23·65	31·15	39·65
October 1991	23·90	31·40	39·65
April 1992	25·55	33·60	42·45
April 1993	26·45	34·80	44·00

Notes: The higher rate of IS for 16 to 17-year-olds is available only if claimants are living independently out of necessity or if they are disabled. This rate became available to 16 to 17-year-olds on 10 July 1989.

Industrial Injuries

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for industrial injuries disablement benefit as a result of vibration white finger have been rejected in each of the last five years because the process by which the claimant contracted the condition is not covered by the prescribed list of occupation diseases.

Mr. Scott: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects the report of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council currently studying hand-arm vibration syndrome.

Mr. Scott: I understand that the council has not yet completed its study and does not expect to do so for some time.

Lone Parents

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will consider introducing non-means-tested benefits for lone parents who are not covered by insurance contributions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: One parent benefits is a non-means-tested and non-contributory supplement to child benefit which is already available to all lone parents. It is currently received by nearly 1 million families.

Contributory Benefits

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will consider increasing contributory benefits for people aged over 80 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: We have no plans to increase contributory benefits for this group of pensioners over and above the proposed general increase in state retirement pension announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in his statement to the House on 1 December.

Pensions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will consider restoring the links between pensions and average earnings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: We have no such plans.

Social Fund

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons are now employed by the independent review service of the social fund; and what is the annual cost to public funds of the services provided by that body.

Mr. Scott: I am informed by the social fund commissioner that there are currently 162 staff employed by the independent review service. The estimated running cost expenditure for 1993-94 is £3,960,000. Available information on previous years' running costs is published in the social fund commissioner's annual reports.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cases or appeals have been referred back to local offices by the independent review service in the most recent annual period for which figures are available; and how many of these referrals have resulted in a change in the decision of local social fund officers.

Mr. Scott: I am informed by the social fund commissioner that in 1993-94—April to November—2,370 cases were referred back to the Benefits Agency for redetermination. Information on the number of such referrals that resulted in a change in the original social fund officer's decision is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Family Credit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what proportion of lone parents with a child aged under 11 years and in receipt of family credit are receiving the maximum amount of family credit;

(2) what proportion of lone parents with a child aged under 11 years receiving less than the maximum amount for family credit are receiving between the maximum amount and £28 less than the maximum amount.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the tables.

	All cases	*Number on maximum FC*	*Percentage receiving maximum FC*
Family Credit lone parents with child aged under 11	134,760	42,380	3[illegible]45

	All cases	*Number receiving between maximum FC and £28 less than maximum FC*	*Percentage receiving between maximum FC and £28 less than maximum FC*
Family Credit lone parents with child aged under 11	134,760	55,260	41·01

Note: Information as at 30 April 1993. Based on 5 per cent. sample of awards.

Nude Models

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his policy on the suggestion to benefit recipients that they should seek work as nude models; whether this policy applies to women only; how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have received such advice from benefits office staff; and what information on vacancies for such work is held centrally.

Mr. Scott: The administration of benefit is a matter for Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Gentleman with such information as is available.

Letter from Tony Laurence to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 13 December 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is the responsibility of Mr. Michael Bichard to answer questions about relevant operational matters. However, as Mr. Bichard is away on annual leave at the moment, I am replying on his behalf to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security, about the suggestion to benefit recipients that they should seek work as nude models.

A person in receipt of an incapacity benefit may be considered capable of suitable work following a medical examination. Such decisions are made by Adjudication Officers (AO), who are independent adjudicating authorities.

If the AO decides that a person is capable of work, then, as a result of a long standing Commissioner's decision, the AO is required to specify the type of work that person is considered capable of doing.

Although a job description of "Artists model", which included that of nude modelling, was contained in a previous publication used by AOs as a source of job example, that source was superseded in February 1993 by the Standard Occupational Classification. This publication, which is in the Library, does not include a description of the variety of work possibly undertaken by an "Artists model".

The specific information asked for is, therefore, not available in the format requested.

I hope my reply has been helpful.

DEFENCE

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to raise the matter of the safeguarding of surplus military plutonium at the NATO defence ministers meeting in Brussels on 9 and 10 December.

Mr. Aitken: A range of issues was discussed at the Defence Planning Committee and Nuclear Planning Group meetings on 8 and 9 December. A copy of the communiqué issued after the meetings has been placed in the Library of the House.

Artillery Systems

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *605*, on 14 Calibre Artillery systems, if the SPLLS were delivered to the British Army of the Rhine via the United Kingdom.

Mr. Aitken: No.

Aircraft Accidents

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what categories of damage are included in aircraft accident rates per 10,000 flying hours listed in "UK Defence Statistics 1993", table 3.8; and if the recalculation of the numbers of accidents referred to in footnote 1 to table 3.8 applies to Royal Navy and Army aircraft as well as those of the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Hanley: The categories of damage included in aircraft accident routes per 10,000 flying hours noted in UK Defence Statistics 1993, table 3.8, are categories 4 and 5. No recalculation was necessary for Royal Navy or Army aircraft.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what form the data on aircraft accidents and accident rates forming the basis of table 3·8 of the publication "United Kingdom Defence Statistics 1993" were supplied by the service safety organisations to his Department's statistical services; and what are the differences in format since the 1992 edition of the document.

Mr. Hanley: Data on serious aircraft accidents are passed to the Defence Analytical Services Agency by signal immediately after the event. Written confirmation of the contents of tables 3·8 and 3·9 is sought from the service flight safety organisations before publication of "Defence Statistics". Flying hours, by aircraft type, are provided by the services.

There are no differences in the formats of table 3·8 and 3·9 since the 1992 edition.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why aircraft accident rate information for the years 1975 and 1980, in table 3·8 of "United Kingdom Defence Statistics 1993", is only available for some aircraft types; what records exist within his Department on the number of flying hours and the number of major accidents for each aircraft type for the years 1975 and 1980; and what plans he has to include additional information in the 1994 edition of "United Kingdom Defence Statistics".

Mr. Hanley: There are no plans to include additional information in table 3·8 of the 1994 edition of the United Kingdom Defence Statistics.

The accident rate information for 1980 in table 3·8 of United Kingdom Defence Statistics 1993 is complete. The numbers of accidents in 1975 in each service are published in the first part of table 3·8. The flying hours for individual aircraft types flown by the Royal Navy and Army are not readily available.

Upavon Army Base

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the designated role and purpose of the new Army base at Upavon, Wiltshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The headquarters organisation of the Army's inspector general doctrine and training has collocated in Upavon from eight separate locations in the United Kingdom. The primary role and purpose of the organisation is to formulate a coherent military doctrine; to ensure the translation of that doctrine into training policy and the implementation of individual training and training support to meet it.

Flying Hours

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the average number of flying hours flown per aircrew per year in RAF front-line strike/attack/reconnaissance units in each year since 1987.

Mr. Hanley: The information is as follows:

Year	*Strike/Attack*	*Reconnaissance*
1987	434	228
1988	469	245
1989	457	241
1990	463	251
1991	398	218
1992	447	235
[1]1993	375	199

[1] to end of Oct 93

Nimrod

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the Nimrod aircraft was first certified to carry nuclear weapons; and whether this certification applied to the United Kingdom as well as United States weapons.

Mr. Hanley: The Nimrod aircraft was certified for carriage of American nuclear depth charges from its entry into service in 1969. It has never been certified to carry British nuclear weapons.

Combat-ready Aircrew

Mr. Llywd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if instructor aircrew in the Harrier, Jaguar, Tornado and Hawk reserve squadrons are required to maintain combat-ready status.

Mr. Hanley: Yes.

Housing

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *173*, (1) on what consideration he bases his policy of not revealing the future expenditure plans of MoD budget holders at the level of detail requested;

(2) whether he has considered changing his policy regarding the release of detailed information on the future expenditure plans of MoD budget holders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The 10-year costing of the defence programme, known as the long-term costing, upon which details of future expenditure plans are based, is designed for internal planning purposes only. Approval to commit expenditure is subject to separate procedures and endorsement by Ministers as appropriate. To avoid giving a misleading impression as to the firmness of our plans, therefore, we would not normally provide such details. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to change this policy.

Defence Costs Study

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official report*, column *176*, if he will list each of the aspects of support that he will be looking at as part of the defence costs study; and if he will provide detailed information on their current functions and costs.

Mr. Aitken: At this stage, I have nothing to add to my previous answer.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *176*, how long the defence costs study will take; and if he will publish a declassified copy of their work once it has been completed.

Mr. Aitken: No overall timetable has been set, since the time needed to look at different areas of defence support will vary considerably. Work is, however, being taken forward as quickly as possible. We will decide how best to make public the results of the study as soon as we have had the opportunity to consider them.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *176*, what are *(a)* the current headquarters costs, *(b)* the current manpower costs and *(c)* current procurement practice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Details of defence expenditure are given in the publication "UK Defence Statistics: 1993 Edition". Table 1.3 gives planned expenditure for 1993-94 in each of the management areas. The total figure for MOD headquarters and centrally managed expenditure is £1,886·3 million. Table 1.2 shows that anticipated expenditure on service and civilian personnel this year is £9,716 million. The fullest and most recent description of current procurement practice is in "Britain's Defence Procurement", a booklet published by my Department in July 1993. I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *176*, how many staff will be employed on a full-time basis on the defence costs study.

Mr. Aitken: A secretariat with eight full-time members has been established to co-ordinate work on the study. The work itself will be carried out by a number of small study teams, each looking at different areas of support business. Some staff will work full-time on the study as members of these teams.

Married Quarters

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money he has spent over the last two years on upgrading the physical condition of married quarters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Atomic Weapons Establishment, Cardiff

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received and what consultations he has had in relation to the setting up of a local liaison committee for the atomic weapons establishment, Cardiff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I have received one representation from the director of environmental services, Cardiff city council, concerning the setting up of a local liaison committee for AWE Cardiff. I am pleased to announce that following an exploratory meeting with local authority representatives the inaugural meeting of the local liaison committee for AWE Cardiff is scheduled for 24 January 1994.

Nuclear Warhead Convoy (Breakdown)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the breakdown on the M25 of the nuclear warhead convoy vehicle on 9 December.

Mr. Hanley: A military convoy stopped on the M25 on 9 December to allow the inspection of a suspected mechanical defect on one vehicle. As a precautionary safety measure, the civil police cordoned off the inner lane of the motorway.

Following the inspection, the tractor unit of one of the vehicles was changed and the convoy continued its journey and arrived safely at its destination. It is a long-standing policy neither to confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons at any particular place or time.

Spent Polaris Warheads

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what guidelines he has agreed for the transportation by road, rail and shipping for spent Polaris nuclear warheads from Faslane to the atomic weapons establishment, Burghfield and for warheads of parts thereof to AWE Aldermaston and Cardiff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Nuclear warheads, and their components, can be transported by road, sea or air. Appropriate safety and security procedures are applied to all such movements.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many shipments have taken place from Faslane to atomic weapons establishments at Burghfield, Aldermaston and Cardiff of spent Polaris nuclear warheads for decommissioning, decontamination and disposal; what proposals he has for future programmes of this kind; and if he will make a statement on his proposals for amendments to the relevant nuclear site licences.

Mr. Aitken: It is not our policy to discuss movements of nuclear warheads. The question of licensing under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 does not arise: under the AWE Act 1991, AWE sites are not subject to such licensing.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what Customs and Excise controls are exercised on the entry of aircraft or warships.

Sir John Cope: I have been asked to reply.

Crew and any passengers on military aircraft and naval vessels declare goods as required and pay any charges due. Declarations are also provided of any cargo and stores. Customs and Excise perform selective anti-smuggling checks in conjunction with the relevant naval or military body.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 15 December 1993

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what the cost of advertising by his Department has been for each year since 1979 and for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Expenditure on advertising prior to 1987-88 could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Expenditure on advertising for each year from 1987-88 is as follows:

	£
1987-88	4,978
1988-89	3,888
1989-90	5,483
1990-91	5,174
1991-92	22,698
1992-93	15,962

Expenditure for each of the past 12 months is as follows:

	£
1992	
November	328
December	375
1993	
January	—
February	—
March	14,901
April	352
May	—
June	1,439
July	2,617
August	302
September	1,056
October	989

Magistrates

Mr. James Hill: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to ensure independence of justices' clerks when advising magistrates, other than in individual cases.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor and I are entirely committed to protecting the independence of justices' clerks when advising magistrates. The legislation which with Parliament's approval will implement the White Paper, "A New Framework for Local Justice", will establish a framework within which the respective roles and responsibilities of justices' clerks and their magistrates courts committees can be clarified. The legislation will also make clear that justices' clerks are not liable to direction in respect of the legal advice given to magistrates in court.

Mr. James Hill: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will now publish the text of the proposed statutory provisions regarding the judicial independence of magistrates and the independence of legal advice given to magistrates by their clerks in individual cases.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Bill which will implement the White Paper, "A New Framework for Local Justice", is expected to be introduced to the House before the Christmas recess, after which the full text will be published in accordance with the usual procedure.

Efficiency Commission

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what assessment he has made of the implications of the recommendations of the Efficiency Commission on the cost of legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Efficiency Commission has, since it was set up in 1986, made a number of recommendations designed to improve the operation of the criminal legal aid system. It is not possible to produce a precise figure for the implications which those recommendations which have been accepted have had on the cost of legal aid. It is, however, likely that the resulting savings have been small relative to total expenditure on criminal legal aid.

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the current time scale for the work of the Efficiency Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There is currently no timetable assigned to the work of the Standing Commission on Efficiency.

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department which proposals of the Efficiency Commission have been implemented since its establishment.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Standing Commission on Efficiency is made up of senior representatives from the Bar, the Law Society, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Lord Chancellor's Department. It has provided a forum for the formulation and discussion of ways of enhancing communication between the legal profession and the courts and thereby improving the disposal of criminal business. The commission has considered a large number of papers on a wide range of topics with the common aim of speeding up or streamlining both pre-trial processes and in-court procedures. In 1990 each of the members of the Efficiency Commission published a "Guide to Good Practice", which drew together the discussions of the group and provided reference documents in which each agency set out how it would discharge its responsibility to provide an efficient and effective service. The best practices set out there inform the practical operation of a wide range of services carried out by practitioners and courts. The commission has also been instrumental in devising a form for the provision of information by defence solicitors to assist courts when making listing decisions. A research project into the causes of delay in criminal proceedings was commissioned earlier this year. The findings of that research were submitted to the Royal Commission on criminal justice, and consideration and implementation of any of its recommendations will take place in the context of the discussion of the wide-reaching proposals of the Royal Commission.

Costs

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what complaints he has received about delays in the taxing and payment of *(a)* expedited costs and *(b)* other costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In relation to costs in civil proceedings in the High Court and the county courts, I have received no more than 20 written complaints about delays in taxation over the last 12 months. Payment of costs in civil proceedings is a matter for the parties. The courts provide a range of procedures which can be used to enforce an order for costs, but it is for the parties to decide whether they want to use them.

With regard to the delays in the taxing and payment of costs in criminal proceedings, the information is not recorded under this particular definition. The best available information shows that I have received nine complaints from Members of Parliament and 12 complaints from members of the public this year.

No central record is kept of the number of complaints which may be received by the courts direct.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to improve the efficiency of the administration of justice in respect of the prompt taxing and payment of costs awarded by *(a)* the High Court and *(b)* other courts.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Delays in respect of civil taxations have been reduced generally over the last eighteen months. The situation is being kept under review and remedial steps will be taken, if necessary. On the question of payment of costs in civil proceedings, I refer the hon. Member to my answer to an earlier, related question.

In respect of improving efficiency in the payment of costs in criminal proceedings, targets are in place for the payment of those costs which are being met nationally. Some problems have been experienced by the south-eastern circuit taxing teams and additional resources have been provided to assist them in meeting the targets set. Additionally, my officials are currently looking at how the standard fee system in the Crown court may be extended.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to award Rainbow the management of the national lottery.

Mr. Sproat: None. The licence to run the national lottery will be awarded by the director general after a competitive process.

BBC Northern Ireland

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many redundancies have been effected in all grades in BBC Northern Ireland in each year from 1 April 1983 to 31 March 1993.

Mr. Brooke: I understand from the BBC that the information is not readily available before 1991. The total number of redundancies in BBC Northern Ireland in each of the last three years is as follows:

	Number
1991	105
1992	4
1993	37

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many people were employed in BBC Northern Ireland in all grades in each year from 1 April 1983 to 31 March 1993.

Mr. Brooke: [illegible] understand from the BBC that the information is not readily available before 1987. The total number of people employed in BBC Northern Ireland in each of the last seven years, in December, is as follows:

	Numbers
1987	701
1988	675
1989	697
1990	671
1991	566
1992	570
1993	533

Radio Stations

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list radio stations which are wholly or mainly aimed at serving ethnic minority listeners.

Mr. Brooke: The following radio stations are wholly or mainly aimed at serving ethnic minority listeners:

Choice FM (South London)
Harmony Radio (Coventry)
London Greek Radio (North London)
Spectrum Radio (Londonwide)
Sunrise East Midlands (Leicester)
Sunrise FM (Bradford)
Sunrise Radio (West London[1])
WNK Radio (North London)

[1] Londonwide from 1 January 1994).

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many radio stations serve each of the cities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Sheffield.

Mr. Brooke: The table lists the number of services which are specifically designed to serve the whole of each named city.

	BBC		Independent	
	National	Local/Regional	National	Local/Regional
Glasgow	5	1	2	[1]3
Edinburgh	5	1	2	[1]3
Aberdeen	5	1	2	[1]2
Dundee	5	1	2	[1]2
Birmingham	5	1	2	[1]3
Manchester	5	1	2	[1]5
Liverpool	5	1	2	[1]3
Sheffield	5	1	2	2

[1] Includes services which are licensed but not yet on air.

In addition, there are services which can be heard in part of each city or received from neighbouring areas.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage which major British cities have a radio station licensed to serve the entire metropolitan area.

Mr. Brooke: Every major British city has at least one licensed local radio service.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his policy on the provision of small community radio stations.

Mr. Brooke: Under the Broadcasting Act 1990, the Radio Authority licenses independent radio stations, including stations to serve small communities. It is for the authority to decide how to carry out its responsibilities.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Research and Development

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the distribution of funds between countries and projects in the fourth framework programme for research and development of the European Union.

Mr. Waldegrave: The fourth framework programme has not yet been adopted. Statistical information on the distribution of funds will not be available until individual programmes within the overall framework have been implemented and operational for some time.

Acts of Parliament

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster for how long published copies of individaul Acts of Parliament are available; and whether he will consider more extensive publication as an initiative under the citizens charter.

Mr. Davis: HMSO aims as a minimum to keep all Acts of Parliament in print for at least three years. Thereafter individual acts are normally reprinted, provided there is sufficient demand. Where an Act goes out of print, HMSO can supply photocopies. In addition, HMSO can supply copies of any unrepealed Act in the version appearing in "Statutes in Force."

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Works of Art

Mr. Cormack: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed (Mr. Beith), representing the House of Commons Commission, what changes have been made to the membership of the Advisory Committee on Works of Art.

Mr. Beith: I understand that Madam Speaker has appointed to the Advisory Committee on Works of Art the right hon. Member for Horsham (Sir Peter Hordern) in place of the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon).

Overnight Sleeping Accommodation

Mr. Steen: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), representing the House of Commons Commission, what is his policy on the provision of overnight sleeping accommodation for staff; what is the annual cost of providing overnight sleeping accommodation for staff; and what alternatives have been considered for *(a)* uses of the allocated sleeping accommodation and *(b)* arranging overnight staff accommodation in local hotels.

Mr. Beith: Overnight sleeping accommodation is provided for essential staff of the House who are required to be on duty at late hours. The only costs arising directly from this provision are those for laundry, which at present cannot readily be separately identified. There is no plan to alter existing arrangements.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Attorney-General if he will outline the procedures governing the use of public interest immunity certificates.

The Attorney-General: Public interest immunity is a rule of evidence developed by the courts which is designed to prevent documents being disclosed in criminal or civil litigation if harm would result to the operation of the public service. It applies equally to all parties to litigation, irrespective of whether production would help or hinder their case. A claim for public interest immunity cannot be waived and in the case of the Crown is usually made by way of ministerial certificate. Such a certificate is not conclusive. Each claim is considered by the court which may, and in a criminal case must, inspect the documents. The court considers first whether the claim is in principle a valid one and, if so, must then go on to consider whether the interests of justice in the particular case require that the public interest in maintaining confidentiality be overridden. The decision whether or not to override the public interest in maintaining confidentiality is for the court to make; it is not for the party claiming immunity.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

World Food Programme

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the budget of the world food programme in 1993.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The overall turnover of the world food programme in 1993 will be some US$2 billion. This includes both the programme support and administration budget, project spending, contributions in cash to trust funds and contributions in kind, which will provide some 4·5 million tonnes of food commodities.

Somalia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what policy initiatives he is urging upon the Secretary-General of the United Nations to promote the long-term recovery of Somalia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: All donors had a full opportunity to express their views on the rehabilitation of Somalia at the humanitarian conference organised by the United Nations in Addis Ababa from 29 November to 1 December. We now await the report from the Secretary-General called for in Security Council resolution 886 of 18 November.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what is the value of the ODA and EC aid and development programme in Somalia, excluding the area of the former British Somalia, in the current financial year;

(2) what is the ODA and EC aid and development programme in the former British Somalia—Somaliland—in the current financial year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Britain's bilateral development programme to Somalia was terminated in 1991, since when there has been residual expenditure only. In November 1993, the EC approved a rehabilitation programme for the whole of Somalia worth about £29 million. The UK share will be £4·7 million.

Both Britain and the EC have provided substantial amounts of humanitarian assistance to Somalia this year. Since January 1993, Britain has committed more than £9·5 million in bilateral humanitarian assistance to Somalia, of which more than £1 million has so far been allocated to activities in the north-west. The EC has provided £9·2 million in emergency assistance to Somalia, of which the UK share is £1·5 million. EC expenditure by region is not available.

EC Development Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) of 6 December, *Official Report,* column 76, what were the voting figures recorded in the meeting of the European Community's Development Council held on 2 December.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The resolutions of the Development Council on 2 December were adopted by consensus, as is the normal practice.

PRIME MINISTER

Former Members

Mr. Meale: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list by ministerial department how many former hon. Members have been appointed to salaried positions in Government bodies since 1979, giving details in each case.

The Prime Minister: This information is not held centrally.

European Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the outcome of the European Council of 10 and 11 December indicating the voting record of each member of state on each item and where no formal votes were taken.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement I made following the European Council on 13 December. The task of the European Council, as set out in the treaty on European union, is to provide the union with the necessary impetus for its development and to define general political guidelines. It does not vote; its decisions are taken by consensus. Legislative decisions under the treaties are taken by the Council of Ministers.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister what the cost of advertising by his office has been for each year since 1979 and for each of the last 12 months.

The Prime Minister: None.

Honours Review

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Prime Minister what is the outcome of the review of honours numbers which he announced in his statement on honours of 4 March, *Official Report*, columns *453-63*.

The Prime Minister: The review has been completed, and the outcome has been graciously approved by the Queen. The review considered the number of honours required for my list, the diplomatic service and overseas list and the defence services list, at each half-year for six years, 1994 to 1999 inclusive. As a result of the review, the number of awards available for the recognition of all forms of voluntary service will be increased by about 100 in my list, and by 20 in the diplomatic service and overseas list. The increase will be broadly matched by a reduction in the number of awards to state servants, largely reflecting the reductions in the size of the civil service and of the armed forces.

Ex-Ministers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister, if he will list those who have resigned, retired or been dismissed from ministerial office in the past 10 years and the severance pay in (i) cash and (ii) current prices paid to each one.

The Prime Minister *[pursuant to his answer of 7 December 1993, columns 142-43]:* Severance payment shown as having been authorised with effect from 5 May 1992 for the Chairman of Committees, House of Lords and the Principal Deputy Chairman of Committees, House of Lords were not made since both the individuals concerned were disqualified, on grounds of age, under the terms of the Ministerial and Other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will establish a hotline for hon. Members to contact the Child Support Agency on behalf of constituents on similar lines to the hotline for the disability living allowance.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Dr. Tony Wright, dated 14 December 1993:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking for a hotline to be established to enable Members of Parliament to contact the Child Support Agency on behalf of their constituents.

I am pleased to be able to tell you that I have put arrangements in place, and have written to all Members individually on this and other matters relating to their correspondence with the Agency.

I hope you will find this reply helpful.

Young People

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many 16 and 17-year-olds received severe hardship payments in *(a)* Dundee and *(b)* Scotland in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Tony Laurance to Mr. John McAllion, dated 4 December 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is the responsibility of Mr. Michael Bichard to answer questions about relevant operational matters. However, as Mr. Bichard is away on annual leave at the moment, I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security. This was about the number of 16 and 17-year-olds who have received Severe Hardship Payments in *(a)* Dundee and *(b)* Scotland in each of the past five years.

Regrettably, the information required is not available in the format requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. This is because the statistics kept cover the number of applications, rather than the number of individuals who have claimed. Some customers may have made more than one application.

However, I have provided figures from the earliest date available, 1990, in the attached appendix relating to successful applications for Severe Hardship Payments. I should point out that the statistics relate to Benefits Agency Districts and are not routinely collected to show the number of claims specific to a town. The statistics given for Dundee relate to the Benefits Agency's Dundee East and West offices for the period January 1990 unitl March 1991. From the inception of the Benefits Agency in April 1991, the figures quoted are for the Tayside District Office, which also includes the Arbroath and Perth Branch Offices.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Successful Servere Hardship Claims

	Numbers
Dundee	
1990	75
1991	421
1992	1,168
[1]1993	1,631
Scotland	
1990	10,787
1991	10,983
1992	18,360
[1]1993	20,587

[1]The figures for 1993 show the position up until the end of October.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many 16 and 17-year-olds had an automatic right to income support in *(a)* Dundee and *(b)* Scotland in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Tony Laurance to Mr. John McAllion, dated 14 December 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is the responsibility of Mr. Michael Bichard to answer questions about relevant operational matters. However, as Mr. Bichard is away on annual leave at the moment, I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security. This was about the number of 16 and 17-year-olds who had an automatic right to Income Support in *(a)* Dundee and *(b)* Scotland in each of the past five years.

The information requested relating to Dundee is not routinely collected and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

However, the table below gives data from the Annual Statistical Inquiry for the total number of 16 and 17-year-olds in Scotland on Income Support. This includes those who are automatically entitled to Income Support and those paid under the special hardship rules. To obtain separate figures would incur disproportionate cost. The figures quoted show the number of customers at the end of May 1992, the last year for which figures are available, and have been rounded to the nearest thousand.

16 and 17-year-olds in receipt of Income Support in Scotland

	Numbers
May 1988	16,000
May 1989	2,000
May 1990	3,000
May 1991	2,000
May 1992	4,000

The figures for the Annual Statistical Inquiry are based on a 1 per cent. sample of Income Support cases at the time of inquiry.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Industrial Injuries

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for industrial injuries disablement benefit his Department dealt with last year; and what proportion of those claims were successful.

Mr. Scott: The number of claims to industrial injuries disablement benefit received during the 1992 calendar year was about 70,000. The result of these claims is not readily available, but we would normally expect about one quarter to be successful.

Contributions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what consideration he is giving to employees being offered the option of better benefits in return for higher contributions; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will consider combining an improved contributory system for those in employment with a participation income for *(a)* unpaid carers and *(b)* people active in voluntary work; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will consider abolishing the contributory principle and replace contributory benefits with non-means tested, non-contributory benefits paid out of taxation, to cover unemployment, sickness, maternity and retirement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: I have no plans to do so.

Domestic Fuel (VAT)

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people on low incomes and below pension age he estimates will be worse off as a result of his announcement in the Budget to retain the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel and power; and what plans he has to compensate them beyond the automatic increases of benefits in line with inflation.

Mr. Burt: The effect of the introduction of VAT on domestic fuel is uncertain since it is difficult to estimate trends in fuel prices and the effect of VAT on consumers expenditure. We have announced details of extra help for people receiving social security benefits. The help above normal uprating will be worth £1·5 billion over three years and more than 15 million people will gain from these measures.

Social Fund

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has recently considered the operation of the social fund review process.

Mr. Scott: I am pleased to announce that I will be making improvements to the social fund review process from April 1994. These changes will improve the speed and efficiency with which social fund review requests are handled within Benefits Agency district offices.

Improvements will be achieved through the appointment of specially trained social fund review officers. These expert officers will be responsible for ensuring that social fund review requests are considered as speedily and effectively as possible in district offices. In addition there will be some changes designed to streamline procedures.

Applicants will, of course, retain the right of an independent review by a social fund inspector.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing in 1992-93 prices, the gross public spending for each year since 1990-91 and the projected expenditure for each year to 1995-96 for each executive non-departmental public body sponsored by his Department, as listed in "Public Bodies 1992".

Mr. Hague: The executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department of Social Security, as listed in "Public Bodies 1992," is the Occupational Pensions Board. The gross public spending figures at 1992-93 prices are in the table.

Gross public spending[1]

millions

	£
1990-91	2·451
1991-92	2·337
1992-93	2·695
1993-94	2·664
1994-95	2·538
1995-96	2·542

[1] Figures in millions, using GDP deflator.

Note: All figures exclude the costs of the Occupational Pensions Advisory Service (OPAS) which were included in the entry for the OPB in Public Bodies in 1992. OPAS is not an executive non-departmental public body.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards to each of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Hague: The appointment of the president, regional chairman and other full-time chairmen of the independent tribunal service is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor. Otherwise, appointments of chairs and members of the boards of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by this Department are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Inland Revenue

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of morale within the Inland Revenue; what redundancies have been made and for what reasons; what is the current backlog in dealing with tax cases and the corresponding figure for the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: There has been no general survey of morale recently. Two surveys by the industrial society carried out in 1992 found evidence of low morale in a number of parts of the Inland Revenue.

In 1992-93 there were 355 voluntary early retirements. In 1993-94 to the end of October there have been 191 voluntary early retirements, and four compulsory redundancies.

Key indicators of work state in the Inland Revenue are as follows:

Per cent.

	November 1993	*1992-93*	*1991-92*	*1990-91*
Post dealt with in 28 days	>99·0	>98·0	[1]—	[1]—
Employee cases				
cleared within two years of the end of the relevant tax year				
large/complex cases	95·3	96·9	90·0	80·2
other cases	98·8	99·6	99·0	98·0
Assessments on the self-employed made to meet the due date	[2]97·5	97·5	97·5	98·3

[1] New target in 1992-93.

[2] The programme ends in December. It is currently on course to meet the 97·5 per cent. target.

Taxation

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest estimates of *(a)* original, *(b)* gross, *(c)* disposable and *(d)* post-tax income, by decile, in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nelson: The latest figures on the basis requested are for 1991 and were published in the May 1993 edition of *Economic Trends.* Estimates for 1993 will be published in due course when the 1993 Family Expenditure Survey is completed and processed.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated *(a)* mean and *(b)* median, (i) original, (ii) gross, (iii) disposable and (iv) post-tax income in 1993-94 in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nelson: The latest estimates of original, gross, disposable, and post-tax income, by decile group, are for 1991 and were published in the May 1993 edition of *Economic Trends.* Estimates for 1992 will be published in the January 1994 edition of *Economic Trends.*

The estimates are derived from the Family Expenditure Survey.

Construction Industry

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people he estimates will be made unemployed in the construction industry following his decision to reduce the annual allocation to the Housing Corporation by more than £300 million; how many planned building projects he estimates will be cancelled; and what plans he has to compensate the construction industry.

Mr. Portillo: The construction industry's main requirements are for continuing low interest rates and increasing economic confidence. My right hon. and learned Friend's Budget offers decisive action to reduce public sector borrowing. My right hon. and learned Friend has also announced several important new potential projects under the private finance initiative which can provide a boost for construction employment.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much he estimates the revenue from the uniform business rate will fall in real terms, following the announcement in November's Budget to maintain the 33 per cent. main rate and 25 per cent. lower rate of corporation tax.

Mr. Dorrell: There is no connection between the revenue from the uniform businesss rate and the rates set for corporation tax. Forecasts of cash revenues from the uniform business rate in 1993-94 and 1994-95 are set out in table 6.5 of the 1994-95 Financial Statement and Budget Report.

C. J. How

Mr. Luff: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on behalf of investors in C. J. How; and if he will make a statement on their prospects for compensation.

Mr. Nelson: A number of representations have been received on behalf of investors. C. J. How was never authorised to conduct investment business under the Financial Services Act and investors are not therefore eligible for compensation under the investors compensation scheme. I understand that in certain cases where holdings in unit trusts beneficially owned by investors were improperly redeemed by C. J. How, the unit trust firms have made ex gratia payments to individual clients of C. J. How.

Public Sector Pay

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much he estimates public sector pay will fall in real terms over the next three years; and how many public sector jobs he estimates will be lost.

Mr. Dorrell: In the climate of low inflation, it is necessary to change the expectation of pay increases which come automatically every year, regardless of performance. Pay rises have to be earned. This principle has increasingly been adopted in the private sector, and the public sector has to follow suit. We are confident that all areas of the public sector can make the efficiency savings necessary to fund pay settlements.

The Government do not directly control manpower numbers in substantial parts of the public sector and so cannot give projections. But as in the private sector, in controlling pay costs, the Government cannot rule out job losses. The way to safeguard jobs is to keep wages at affordable levels.

Income Support

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much he estimates the public sector borrowing requirement will fall in 1996-97 as a direct result of his decision to limit the availability of means-tested income support benefit for the unemployed to only six months; and how many people he estimates will be affected.

Mr. Portillo: No such decision has been taken.

Chief Secretary (Visits)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many visits abroad the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Portillo *[pursuant to his answer, 7 December 1993, c. 133]:* I also visited Madrid from 24 to 27 September, where I delivered a speech to the British Hispanic Foundation about growth, competitiveness, unemployment, and United Kingdom attitudes to the EC. The cost to the taxpayer of this visit was £480.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Roads

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion of EC structural funds have been used in 1993-94 for capital investment programmes to upgrade roads in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The proportion of EC structural funds to be used in 1993-94 to upgrade roads in Northern Ireland is 1·4 per cent.

Residential Homes:

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many patients have been admitted to each residential home in the area administered by the Armagh and Dungannon unit of management since 1 April.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is set out in the following tables for the period 1 April to 30 September 1993, the latest date for which figures are available. The figures do not include those people who have made their own arrangements to enter homes and pay for their care.

Persons admitted to residential/nursing home care: by home April—September 1993

Private nursing home	*Permanent resident*	*Temporary resident*
Sandown, Dungannon		2
Castledillon	1	1
Castle Manor	1	
Chestnut Lodge	1	1
Copperfields		2
Greenpark	10	1
Hockley Lodge	1	2
Hockley Mews	1	
Manor Court	3	6
The Meadows	1	
Nightingale	2	5
Sanville		1
Bawn Cottage	4	6
Gillbrook		2
The Haven	8	8
Harold McAuley		1
TOTAL	33	38

Private Residential Care Home	*Permanent Resident*	*Temporary Resident*
Corkhill Lodge	1	3
Drumorgan Lodge	—	—
Fairlawns	—	1
Glenview	—	4
Hebron House	—	—
Monique	—	1
Roughan House	—	1
St. McCartan's	2	1
Sunnymeade	2	1
Seaforte	—	2
Christian Disabled Fellowship	—	1
Total	5	15

Statutory Residential Home	*Permanent Resident*	*Temporary Resident*
Lisanally	—	(emergency) 1
Roxborough House	2	10
Total	2	11

Apprentices

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many apprentices entered training in colleges of further education in Northern Ireland in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991, *(c)* 1992 and *(d)* 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Training and Employment Agency under its chief executive, Mr. J. S. Crozier. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. J. Crozier to Mr Roger Stott, dated 14 May:

You asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many apprentices entered training in Colleges of Further Education in Northern Ireland in each of the years from 1990 to 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Training and Employment Agency, which is responsible for the training and employment functions of Government in Northern Ireland, I have been asked to reply.

We have interpreted the word "apprentices" in your question to mean young people attracting skill level funding towards national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 3 in the youth training programme (YTP) who attend further education Colleges (FECs). The table shows the number of YTP trainees attracting skill level funding who were pursuing NVQ level 3 courses together with the total number of YTP trainees in further education colleges for the years 1990-91 to 1993-94 (to 31 October 1993).

YTP trainees pursuing NVQ Level 3 courses and total YTP trainees in FECs

Year end at 31 March	*Trainees at NVQ Level 3*	*Total number of YTP trainees in FECs*
1990-91	1,009	4,626
1991-92	1,088	4,685
1992-93	1,208	4,579
1993-94[1]	1,174	4,028

[1] At 31 October 1993.

I hope this is helpful.

Agricultural Wages Board

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will place in the Library the responses to the consultation on the future of the agricultural wages board in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 3 December]:* I have no plans to do so but copies will be available in the Library of the Department of Agriculture in Belfast.

Press and Publicity Officers

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many press and publicity officers are currently employed in his Department; and how many were employed in *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* 1979.

Sir John Wheeler: Data on staff employed as press and publicity officers in 1985 and 1979 is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The number of people currently employed in the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Civil Service as press and publicity officers is 37.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Neighbourhood Watch

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what regulations he envisages will govern the activities of neighbourhood watch patrols; and if he will make it his policy that no pressure should be put on neighbourhood watch groups to institute patrols.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to compensate members of the public for injury and wrongful arrest by members of his proposed extended neighbourhood watch scheme;

(2) what plans he has to ensure that convicted criminals are screened out of his proposed extended neighbourhood watch scheme;

(3) what plans he has to require members of his proposed extended neighbourhood watch scheme to wear numbered armbands or other means of personal identification.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In England and Wales there are over 115,000 neighbourhood watch schemes covering more than 5 million households. These are voluntary organisations run by local residents with the support of the police, and whose activities are geared to dealing with local crime prevention issues. Arrangements for membership is entirely a matter for individual schemes and internal arrangements including dress code and any screening of members is a local decision in consultation with the local police.

With the sanction of the local police, a number of schemes have chosen to undertake patrolling in their neighbourhood. In recognition of local initiatives and support of this growing trend, my right hon. and learned Friend announced at the neighbourhood watch conference on 4 December that a code of practice would be drawn up in consultation with the Association of Chief Police Officers. There will be no requirement for neighbourhood watch schemes to patrol. The matters which could be covered in the code of practice will include the need for the agreement of the local police before schemes undertake patrols, information on what scheme members should do on seeing something suspicious, and the need to stay completely within the law.

Local Elections

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the percentage of electors voting in local government elections for each county council, metropolitan borough council and London borough council since 1974.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is contained in a number of different publications which are available in the Library. The main ones are:

1974-79	Office of Population Censuses and Surveys "Electoral Statistics" series
1980-87	Publications by Parliamentary Research Services, Chichester, Sussex
1988 onwards	Publications by the Local Government Chronicle Elections Centre, University of Plymouth (formerly Plymouth Polytechnic) in the Local Elections Handbook series
1990	London Borough elections data published by the London Research Centre, 81 Black Prince Road, London SE1 7SZ ("London Borough Council Elections, 3 May 1990").

Chestnut Tree, Wanstead

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of policing the demonstration protesting against the felling of a 250-year-old chestnut tree at George Green, Wanstead, on 7 December.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) on 14 December at column *531*.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when, and in what manner, the warnings to leave were issued to protesters dwelling in the 250-year-old chestnut tree at George Green, Wanstead, before it was felled.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the warnings were not given by his officers but by the under-sheriff of Greater London.

Gunshot Wounds

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fatalities arose from gunshot wounds recorded in the years 1990, 1991 and 1992 in the United Kingdom; and what analysis has been made in his Department of how many such incidents involved assailants suffering from the ingestion of drugs.

Mr. Maclean: The available information, for England and Wales, which relates to offences currently recorded as homicide where the method of killing was recorded as shooting were as follows:

	Numbers
1990	58
1991	50
1992	52

No information is available centrally as to whether the assailants were suffering from the ingestion of drugs.

Figures for Scotland are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and figures for Northern Ireland are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Non-departmental Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table showing, in 1992-93 prices, the gross public spending for each year since 1990-91, and the projected expenditure for each year to 1995-96 for each executive non-departmental public body sponsored by his Department, as listed in "Public Bodies 1992."

Mr. Howard: Payments made, or planned to be made, from the Home Office Vote to the executive etc. bodies listed in "Public Bodies 1992"—adjusted to 1992-93 prices—are set out in the table:

Home Office funding to Executive, etc. bodies for 1990-91 to 1995-96 expressed in 1992-93 prices

(£'000)

Name of body	*1990-91 Outturn*	*1991-92 Outturn*	*1992-93 Outturn*	*1993-94 Forecast outturn*	*1994-95 Plans*	*1995-96 Plans*
Alcohol Education and Research Council			Not funded by Home Office			
Commission for Racial Equality	14,919	14,615	14,996	14,577	14,444	14,537
Community Development Foundation	1,010	995	1,014	1,000	Not decided yet	
Fire Service Examinations Board			Not funded by Home Office			
Fire Service Research and Training Trust			Not funded by Home Office			
Gaming Board for Great Britain	2,686	2,839	2,957	2,830	2,829	2,833
Horserace Betting Levy Board			Not funded by Home Office			
Horserace Totalisator Board			Not funded by Home Office			
Office of the Data Protection Registrar	3,481	3,554	3,744	3,321	3,588	3,560
Police Complaints Authority	3,603	3,569	3,653	3,665	3,533	3,563
Police Promotion Examinations Board	728	1,267	1,792	1,292	1,071	1,056
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board[1]	131,724	164,190	174,271	171,776	200,806	205,437

[1] Tribunal with executive functions. Figures are gross and include contributions from the Scottish Office Home and Health Department.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards to each of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Howard: For the following executive non-departmental bodies the Home Secretary is responsible for appointing both the chairman and the board members. These are:

Alcohol Education and Research Council
Commission for Racial Equality
Community Development Foundation
Gaming Board
Horserace Totalisator Board
Fire Services Research and Training Trust

For the remaining executive non-departmental bodies, the position is as follows:

Office of the Data Protection Registrar

The registrar is a Crown appointment.

There are no members.

Police Complaints Authority

The chairman is a Crown appointment.

Board members are appointed by the Home Secretary.

Police Promotions Examinations Board

The chairman is appointed by the Home Secretary.

Members are nominated by the local authority and staff associations represented on the board.

Fire Services Examination Board

The chairman is appointed by the Home Secretary.

Four members are appointed by the Home Secretary.

The remaining members are appointed by the local authority and staff associations represented on the board.

Horserace Betting Levy Board

The chairman is appointed by the Home Secretary.

Two independent members are appointed by the Home Secretary.

The remainder of the board comprises representatives of the racing and betting industries: three British Horseracing Board appointees, the chairman of the Horserace Totalisator Board and the chairman of the Bookmakers Committee.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the cost of advertising by his Department has been for each year since 1979 and for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Howard: Figures for advertising expenditure since 1979 are as follows:

	£
1979-80	2,904,671
1980-81	1,649,605
1981-82	1,834,476
1982-83	1,957,304
1983-84	2,760,681
1984-85	3,262,700
1985-86	3,306,391
1986-87	5,000,000
1987-88	4,700,000
1988-89	5,400,000
1989-90	5,500,000
1990-91	5,728,000
1991-92	7,275,940
1992-93	7,344,635

It is not possible to provide an accurate month by month breakdown of advertising expenditure for each of the last 12 months because campaigns are not booked monthly. Total expenditure for the financial year to date is £4,321,048.

Home Affairs Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North of 7 December, *Official Report*, columns *167-68*, what was the voting record of each member state on all items agreed and adopted at the meeting of the European Community's Home Affairs Council held on 29 to 30 November; and if he will make it his practice automatically to record in future answers all such votes, including where no formal votes have been taken.

Mr. Charles Wardle: All the items agreed by the Interior and Justice Council fell under title VI of the Maastricht treaty and were adopted by unanimity. In future the Government will inform Parliament of all votes published by the Council; for title VI matters, publication of votes requires unanimous agreement. This was not sought by the Presidency on this occasion. If the Interior and Justice Council were to adopt Community legislation under the treaty of Rome, its votes would be published automatically unless a majority of the Council was opposed.

Embarkation Checks

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to alter the embarkation checks on passengers leaving the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: From 1 February passports will not normally be checked on departure from ferry ports and small airports for EC destinations. At the main airport terminals and on departure elsewhere for destinations outside the EC, the passports of non-EC nationals will continue to be examined; EC nationals will, as now, be expected to present their documents, but the closer examination of a 10 per cent. sample will cease.

These changes should freqe staff resources for work which contributes more directly to the effectiveness of the immigration control. The immigration officer's power to examine the passport of any departing passenger will however remain, and it will still be possible to mount *ad hoc* checks where, for example, there is reason to believe that someone of interest to the police in connection with serious crime is likely to leave the country by a particular route. Police powers under the Prevention of Terrorism legislation are unaffected.

Criminal Cases Review Authority

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress is being made towards establishing the proposed criminal cases review authority recommended by the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice.

Mr. Howard: The Government have decided to establish a Criminal Cases Review Authority to review alleged miscarriages of justice. We have put in hand the detailed preparatory work which will be necessary before any new arrangements can be put in place. We shall be issuing a consultation paper early next year which will set out the issues, put forward our proposals for dealing with them and identify any practical problems which still need to be settled. I am sure that the paper will be of interest to many people and I look forward to receiving their views on what it has to say.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish the White Paper setting out more detailed proposals for changing the criminal injuries compensation scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I have today published the White Paper. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

The Secretary of State for Scotland and I are jointly responsible for the criminal injuries compensation scheme and for the new arrangements.

The main features of those arrangements are that compensation will no longer be assessed on a basis comparable to common law damages. Instead, payment will be made from a tariff (or scale) of awards for injuries of comparable severity. All eligible applicants with a similar injury will be treated in the same way. This will make the new scheme more straightforward and simpler to administer. It should also be easier for claimants to understand, and they should now have a much better idea when they apply what award they might expect to receive.

The tariff levels have been set by reference to awards made in the recent past by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. The lower limit will remain unchanged at £1,000, and there will be 25 tariff levels ranging from that threshold to £¼ million for the most serious category of injury. The basic rules of eligibility will remain broadly the same as under the present scheme.

The tariff scheme will be run by a non-departmental public body, the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA). There will also be a new independent appeals panel to which those dissatisfied with the authority's decision will be able to appeal.

Our compensation scheme is one of the most generous schemes in the world, and will remain so when the tariff scheme is introduced. We believe the new tariff scheme should enable us to provide a better service to the blameless victims of violent crime.

Immigration

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will review the workings of the immigration section of his Department to ensure that no racial prejudice is demonstrated against Thai citizens seeking to enter the United Kingdom as legal spouses of a British citizens;

(2) if he will review the workings of his entry visa system to ensure that United Kingdom citizens who have married a spouse in Thailand are allowed to bring that spouse back to reside in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A Thai citizen who wishes to enter the United Kingdom as the spouse of a British citizen must meet the requirements of the immigration rules in the same way as any other foreign national seeking entry on this basis. I see no need for reviews of the kind that the hon. Member has in mind, but if he has a particular case in mind which has caused concern I shall be glad to enquire into it. Under the immigration rules, officials are required to carry out their duties without regard to race, colour or religion.

Stolen Vehicles

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what figures he has on the use of stolen motor vehicles in the course of other criminal offences in the latest available year.

Mr. Maclean: The information is not collected centrally.

M11 Link Road

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Metropolitan Commissioner on the cost of policing so far incurred in relation to demonstrations against the M11 link road in Wanstead.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) on 14 December at col. *531* concerning the cost of policing the demonstration on 7 December. Information on the total cost of police operations in connection with the M11 link road is not available.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Metropolitan Commissioner as to the reasons for the procedures adopted by police officers in relation to demonstrations against the M11 link road in Wanstead; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner of the Police of the Metropolis that his officers were assisting the under sheriff of Greater London to execute an order of the High Court for possession of the land.

Firearms

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the recommendations of the firearms consultative committee that have been implemented nationally, from each of its annual reports.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Implementation of a considerable number of the Firearms Consultative Committee's (FCC) recommendations will require primary legislation to amend the Firearms Acts. I am unable to say when parliamentary time might be available for legislation on firearms matters. Other recommendations which have already been implemented by means of subordinate legislation or through administrative action are listed. Work is in hand towards the implementation of a number of other recommendations of the committee.

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

Approved Rifle and Pistol Clubs

The changes to the revised criteria for club approval which the committee recommended were incorporated in the final list of revised approval criteria and have been in place since January 1990.

Countersignatures

I understand from the committee's recommendations that no class of person should be automatically excluded from being accepted as a countersignatory to a firearm or shot gun certificate application; that flexibility should be applied in interpretation of the definition of a countersignatory; and that any inconsistency should be reported to chief officers of police have been promulgated to forces by the Association of Chief Police Officers.

Visitor's Permit Scheme

I understand that police forces are following the committee's recommendations that British visitor's permits should in general be issued for the full twelve months allowed in law and that applications should be supplied in English.

SECOND ANNUAL REPORT

European Commission Proposal for a Council Directive on the Acquisition and Possession of Weapons

The regulations which transposed the directive's provisions into our domestic legislation (Firearms Acts (Amendment) Regulations 1992—SI 1992 No. 2823) retained the British visitor's permit scheme and also made the issue of European firearms passes a police responsibility.

Control of Explosives Regulations

A number of the committee's recommendations were given effect in the final version of the regulations (SI 1991 No. 1531) which it had seen in draft. To minimise bureaucracy the regulations provided for explosives certificates to be issued coterminously with an existing firearm or shot gun certificate. Limits on the quantitites of explosives which can be kept for private use were also increased.

THIRD ANNUAL REPORT

Definition of antique weapons and Collecting of firearms

Revised guidance to police on which weapons should be considered as antiques was issued in November 1992.

Provision was made in the Firearms Acts (Amendment) Regulations 1992 allowing the continued private possession by collectors of certain items which are prohibited from general public possession by virtue of the EC Weapons Directive.

Carrier of Prohibited Weapons

The Home Office issued an addendum to its guidance to carriers of prohibited weapons covering the carriage of weapons to and from the gun barrel proof houses.

Leaflet on the Security of Firearms and Shot Guns

The Home Office published a leaflet on firearm and shot gun security in October 1992.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will advise police forces to stop the practice of stamping envelopes containing correspondence to firearms and shotgun holders information to the effect that if the envelope is found it should be returned to the firearms unit of the force concerned.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The administration of the firearms licensing system is the responsibility of individual chief officers of police. We have no plans to issue guidance to the police on this subject but the matter has been brought to the attention of the Association of Chief Police Officers for any action which it considers necessary.

Tracker Security Devices

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) which police forces have equipment that enables them to recover stolen vehicles that are fitted with Tracker security devices;

(2) what his Department is doing to encourage the fitting of Tracker devices to help locate stolen vehicles;

(3) what assessment he has made of the use of Tracker devices in the recovery of stolen cars *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in other countries.

Mr. Charles Wardle: All mainland United Kingdom police forces are equipped to pick up signals from Tracker devices.

While concealed tracking devices can provide a valuable weapon in the fight against vehicle crime, it is not appropriate for the Home Office to endorse or promote individual tracking systems.

The Home Office has made no assessment of the operational value of tracking devices. It has, however, carried out a technical assessment of the available equipment on behalf of the police.

Police Establishment

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the *(a)* authorised establishment, *(b)* actual strength and *(c)* number of vacancies for the police services establishment of the Metropolitan police in each month of 1993;

(2) what was the authorised establishment of police service officers in England and Wales, in each constabulary including the Metropolitan police, on 1 January;

(3) if he will list the constabularies in England and Wales which are under strength; and if he will set out in each case the numbers under strength and the percentage under strength in each establishment *(a)* at 1 January 1993 and *(b)* for the latest month available.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Police Authorities (Budget)

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total budget for the police authorities in England and Wales for *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94; and what is the planned budget for 1994-95.

Mr Charles Wardle: The latest estimates by police authorities indicate total expenditure as £5,797 million in 1992-93 and £6,114 million in 1993-94. No figure for 1994-95 is yet available.

Election Leaflets

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *627*, if he will examine the feasibility of bringing forward amendments to the Representation of the People Acts to outlaw the production of fraudulent election leaflets purporting to come from a rival political party.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no immediate plans to do so. The issue may arise in discussions with the political parties next year and I shall consider any representations which might then be made on this issue.

Domestic Violence

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received calling for a review of the Homicide Act 1957 and the criminal justice system with regard to reforming the definition of provocation to include prolonged domestic violence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We have received many letters on this subject from parliamentary colleagues and from members of the public.

The Government's position is set out in our response to the recent Report of the Home Affairs Select Committee on Domestic Violence (Cm 2269), a copy of which is in the Library of the House. The Government do not accept that the case has been made for a change in the law. In our view, the present law on provocation reflects a proper balance between a reluctance on the one hand to exonerate pre-meditated revenge killing and a desire on the other to leave a judgment on the facts of the individual case to the jury. Nevertheless, the law in this area is kept under careful review.

Deportation

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women who were initially granted entry permits in order to join their husbands have been deported from Britain in each of the last five years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to her on 1 December at column *627*.

Director General of Prison Service

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current salary paid to Mr. Derek Lewis, the director general of the prison service.

Mr. Howard: Mr. Lewis's salary is £125,000 a year. He is also eligible for a performance bonus of up to 35 per cent. of basic salary.

Prisoner Escape

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the circumstances which allowed the escape of a high-security prisoner, from his escort in or in the vicinity of the Bell public house, Pokesdown, Bournemouth on Friday 3 December.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. D. Lewis to Mr. David Atkinson, dated 15 December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the circumstances which allowed the escape of a high security prisoner, from his escort in the vicinity of the Bell public house, Pokesdown, Bournemouth on Friday 3 December.

Richard James Tyres was granted temporary release from HMP Albany under Rule 6 of the Prison Rules. This provides for prisoners to be released outside the custody or control of a prison officer for any special purpose which will assist them in their transition from prison life to freedom.

Mr. Tyres was not a high security prisoner; he had been recategorised to category C (low risk) in October 1993 as a result of his behaviour and progress in prison and in consequence was considered a suitable risk for temporary release. He was accompanied, but not escorted, by his personal case officer who had been working closely with Mr. Tyres and the Probation Service to develop realistic resettlement plans for his eventual release.

The purpose of this release was to attend an interview in Bournemouth with the community drug team. Following the Community Care Act it is now necessary to have a needs assessment completed before the local authority will agree to recommend the funding of a place in a residential drug unit on release.

Following the interview there was an interval before the afternoon ferry booking. Both the officer and inmate went into a pub where the officer drank orange juice and the prisoner brown ale. No specific instructions had been given about this. Had the prisoner been released, as normal, without an officer accompanying him, it would have been a matter over which we would have had no control.

On leaving the public house Mr. Tyres ran off. The officer immediately alerted the police who had been informed, in advance, of Mr. Tyres presence in the area.

Although Mr. Tyres had been sentenced to five years imprisonment in May 1992, he was eligible for release on licence in August 1993, taking into account time spent on remand. His first application was not successful and he was due to be reviewed again in May 1994. If he were to have any realistic chance of success in this review it would be essential for him to demonstrate satisfactory release plans were in place.

Mr. Tyres was recaptured by the police on 9 December. The governor is conducting a full inquiry into the incident to establish whether there were any weaknesses in the procedures which led to the decision to release Mr. Tyres.

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

Mr. Howard: In 1990-91, the Home Secretary's three cars cost £75,700, including £2,700 for maintenance. The current costs given in my reply to the hon. Member's earlier question on 3 December at column *783* included a provision of £25,000 for maintenance which is unlikey to be fully taken up.

Other Home Office Ministers used four cars supplied by the Government car service. In addition, cars were supplied for the transportation of ministerial despatch boxes. The total cost of these cars in 1990-91 was £191,000. The increased cost since then is attributed to price increases (18 per cent.), an increase in VAT (2·5 per cent.) and an increase in usage of the service (8·5 per cent.).

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hong Kong

17. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of talks on future of democracy in Hong Kong.

Mr. Goodlad: We have sought agreement with China on the electoral arrangements for 1994 and 1995 in Hong Kong. But after seventeen Rounds of talks, the pressures of the legislative timetable have obliged the Governor to introduce draft legislation today into the Legislative Council covering the more urgent issues. Our aim was to gain a little more time to continue talks with China on the remaining electoral issues. We remain ready for further talks. Co-operation between Britain and China is the best way of securing a smooth transition for Hong Kong in 1997.

27. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the Governor of Hong Kong's proposals to advance democracy in the Crown Colony.

28. **Mr. Garnier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in the talks between the United Kingdom and China with regard to the future of Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We have sought agreement with China on the electoral arrangements for 1994 and 1995 in Hong Kong. But after seventeen Rounds of talks, the pressures of the legislative timetable have obliged the Governor to introduce draft legislation today into the Legislative Council covering the more urgent issues. Our aim was to gain a little more time to continue talks with China on the remaining electoral issues. We remain ready for further talks. Co-operaton between Britain and China is the best way of securing a smooth transition for Hong Kong in 1997.

Angola

18. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what sanctions he will now propose in the UN Security Council against UNITA of Angola.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It would not be sensible to propose additional sanctions against UNITA at a time when the organisation is holding direct talks with the Government.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest situation in Angola; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennnox-Boyd: Fighting in Angola has diminished since UNITA announced a unilateral ceasefire on 20 September, but sporadic fighting continues in some parts of the country. The United Nations Secretary General's special representative, Mr. Beye, has been chairing talks in Lusaka between the Government of Angola and UNITA. The Secretary General is due to report on the outcome to the Security Council on 15 December. We understand that progress has been made in the negotiations, but there are still many issues to be resolved.

32. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current Government policy towards Angola.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have been active in the Security Council, bilaterally with the Angolan Government and UNITA.

Libya

20. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in negotations with Libya over the trial of the two Libyan nationals suspected of involvement in the Lockerbie bombing.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Libyan Government are aware of the demands of the United Nations Security Council, and in particular that it must ensure the appearance of those charged with the Lockerbie bombing for trial in the appropriate United Kingdom or United States court and satisfy the French judicial authorities over the bombing of flight UTA 772.

European Community Enlargement

21. **Mr. Streeter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made towards the enlargement of the European Community.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Good progress has been made during the Belgian Presidency in the negotiations with the four EFTA applicants for Community membership, Norway, Sweden, Austria and Finland. But some difficult issues remain to be settled, notably agriculture and regional policy. Decisive progress is needed in the next few months if the target of entry of these four applicants into the Community by 1 January 1995 is to be met.

Far East (Exports)

22. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts his Department is making to promote British exports to the far east; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: All FCO posts in the far east have export promotion as a top priority. They seek out export opportunities, advise British companies on the business to be won in their markets, lobby on their behalf for major contracts and against discrimination, organise visits by ministers and trade missions with the specific object of winning business amongst other tasks. I am happy to say that our exports to China are 90 per cent. up this year, to the Philipines 59 per cent., to Thailand 43 per cent., to South Korea 25 per cent., to Malaysia 51 per cent., to Hong Kong 33 per cent., to Singapore 25 per cent. and to Taiwan 20 per cent.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

23. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress on talks to bring the GATT round to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs gave earlier to the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan).

Election Observers

24. **Sir Michael Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the likely demand for parliamentary support in observing elections in newly emerging democracies in 1994.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We hope that there will be several elections in emerging democracies in 1994 to which missions of international observers will be invited. The most notable is the election in South Africa, but there will be elections in Ukraine, Moldova and Kazakhstan, and possibly in Mozambique, Malawi, Belarus and the Occupied Territories. The numbers of observers required will depend on how each observer mission is organised. The United Kingdom hopes to send observers as appropriate either bilaterally or through missions organised by the United Nations, Commonwealth or European Union.

Bosnia

25. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he intends to take, through the United Nations, to secure the reopening of Tusla airport in central Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is urgently considering options for re-opening Tuzla airport. Much depends upon the cooperation of the warring parties to ensure the security of relief flights. Progress has been made in talks between UNPROFOR and the local Bosnian authorities, but agreement has yet to be reached with the Bosnian Serb army, whose artillery is within range of the airport.

35. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has held with his European Community counterparts on efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: At their meeting with the parties in Geneva on 29 November, European Union Foreign Ministers stressed the importance of a peace settlement if a humanitarian disaster is to be avoided. The subsequent peace talks made some progress in clarifying positions. The European Council on 10-11 December agreed to urge the parties to continue negotiating, and to maintain pressure on the Serbs to make further territorial concessions on the scale demanded by the Bosnian Government.

Kashmir

26. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had recently with the Indian Government regarding human rights violations in Kashmir.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have repeatedly impressed on the Indian Government our concerns about human rights abuses in Kashmir.

Zimbabwe

29. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to visit Zimbabwe to discuss bilateral relations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans at present to visit Zimbabwe.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to President Mugabe about the continued imprisonment in Zimbabwe of Michael Smith, Kevin Woods, Barry Bawden, Philip Conjwayo and Charles Beahan and seek a reprieve of their death sentences on humanitarian grounds.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: On 10 December, the Zimbabwe Supreme Court commuted the death sentences on Woods, Conjwayo and Smith—a British citizen—to life imprisonment. They had been found guilty of murder. We have no plans to make representations on their behalf, or on behalf of Bawden and Beahan—also a British citizen—who were imprisoned for attempting to rescue the others.

Councils of Ministers

30. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has made, following the decisions of the European Councils in Edinburgh 1992 and Brussels 1993, to increase the transparency and accountability of decision-making, including the recording of votes of each member state, at

meetings of European Community Councils of Ministers at which his Department is represented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Foreign Affairs Council on 6 December agreed that votes on legislative decisions would be published automatically unless a majority of the Council opposed this. This is a more automatic procedure than that agreed on 4 October, and fully consistent with the conclusions of the Edinburgh European Council last December. Voting details are now published by the Council secretariat after Council meetings. We shall ensure that this information is provided to Parliament.

Transcaucasus States

31. **Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends to meet leaders of the Transcaucasus states of the former Soviet Union; and if he will make a statement about developments in that region.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, has no current plans to meet leaders of the Transcaucasus although I hope there will be opportunities for meetings in the near future.

We attach great importance to encouraging peace and stability in the Transcaucasus and fully support the efforts currently being made to resolve disputes by negotiation. We welcome the start of talks between the Abkhaz and the Georgians under United Nations auspices. We also support the CSCE's continuing efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as well as its contribution to resolution of the political problems in South Ossetia.

South Africa

33. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what help Her Majesty's Government intend to give in the coming year to South Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We will continue to give South Africa as much moral and practical support as we can. This includes a growing aid programme, which last year totalled over £11·5 million, with a similar sum as our share of EC aid.

34. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with other representatives of the Security Council of the United Nations concerning the upcoming general election in South Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are in close contact with Security Council partners, the Secretary-General, the Secretariat and the United Nations observer mission already in South Africa (UNOMSA)—as we are with our European Union and Commonwealth partners—about international assistance in support of the election process in South Africa.

India

36. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Indian Government regarding the incidence of abortion of female foetuses and infanticide of new-born females.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: India acceded to the convention on the rights of the child in December 1992 and is bound by its provisions. The Indian Government also attended the world conference on human rights this year, when the conference called upon states to repeal laws and remove practices which discriminate against and cause harm to the girl child. We are encouraging all states, including India, to implement these measures.

Northern Ireland

37. **Dr. Hendron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the involvement of the United States Administration in the peace process in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hurd: President Clinton has several times expressed his firm support for the efforts of the British and Irish Governments to promote talks on the future of Northern Ireland. I much welcome this.

Yugoslavia

38. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's latest policy towards the conflict in former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We continue to support the co-chairmen of the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia in their efforts to secure peaceful settlements in Bosnia and Croatia. The European Union Foreign Ministers' meeting with the parties on 29 November has helped to restart negotiations on Bosnia. The European Union is meanwhile committed through the winter to continue and enhance its efforts to provide humanitarian aid. The United Kingdom remains one of the largest donors, having given over £152 million.

Russia

39. **Mr. Thomason:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's view on the progress of reform in Russia and the impact on United Kingdom policy.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The largest democratic consultation in the history of Russia took place on 12 December, involving multi-party elections and a referendum on a new constitution. It demonstrates how far democratic reform has progressed in post-Soviet Russia. We welcome the adoption by the Russian people of a constitution which provides for democracy and human rights. This process will further strengthen our bilateral relations.

Serbia

40. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he recently had about sanctions in Serbia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Sanctions were discussed by European Union Foreign Ministers during their meeting with the parties in Geneva on 29 November, and by European Union Heads of Government at the European Council on 10–11 December.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he intends to take to assist moves towards democracy in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We will continue, with our European partners, to encourage democracy and democratic values in sub-Saharan Africa in political contacts, through our aid programme and, where possible, in providing support for elections.

Cuba

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the reason for Her Majesty's Government's abstention on the vote at the United Nations calling for the lifting by the United States of America of its financial and trade blockade on Cuba.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: With the majority of European Union member states, we abstained because we believe the United States embargo against Cuba is primarily a bilateral matter for those two governments.

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when was the last time that a British Foreign Office Minister visited Sudan; and when he plans to visit Khartoum to stimulate a peace initiative.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The then Foreign Secretary visited Sudan in September 1988. We continue to look closely at all possible ways of helping bring about an end to the civil war in Sudan, and have welcomed the peace initiative of the Kenyan, Ugandan, Ethiopian and Eritrean Presidents. There are no firm plans for a visit to Sudan by a Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister at present, but we do not rule out this option.

Korean Peninsula

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest decision of the Security Council of the United Nations concerning the situation on the Korean peninsula; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 11 May the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution, SCR 825, calling on North Korea to reconsider its stated intention to withdraw from the Nuclear non-proliferation treaty and to honour all its obligations under that treaty, including complying with its safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency. The Council also decided to remain seized of the matter and to consider further action as necessary.

United Nations Members

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the member states of the United Nations with populations of fewer than 2·8 million, with their current population and gross national product per head in each case for the latest available year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is as follows:

Country	*Population '000 (1991)*	*GNP per capita US$ (1991)*
Andorra	50	n/a
Antigua and Barbuda	80	4,770
Bahamas	256	11,720
Bahrain	518	6,910
Barbados	258	6,630
Belize	193	2,050
Bhutan	1,467	180
Botswana	1,289	2,590
Brunei	264	n/a
Cape Verde	383	750
Comoros	492	500
Congo	2,351	1,120
Cyprus	708	8,640
Djibouti	441	n/a
Dominica	72	2,440
Equatorial Guinea	426	330
Estonia	1,591	3,830
Fiji	751	1,830
Gabon	1,168	3,780
Gambia	901	360
Grenada	91	2,180
Guinea-Bissau	999	190
Guyana	802	290
Iceland	258	22,580
Jamaica	2,440	1,380
Kuwait	2,212	n/a
Latvia	2,693	3,410
Lesotho	1,816	580
Liberia	2,639	n/a
Liechtenstein	28	n/a
Luxembourg	378	31,080
Maldives	221	460
Marshall Islands	48	n/a
Malta	356	6,850
Mauritania	2,023	510
Mauritius	1,083	2,420
Micronesia	102	n/a
Monaco	28	n/a
Mongolia	2,184	n/a
Namibia	1,834	1,120
Oman	1,618	n/a
Panama	2,460	2,180
Qatar	452	n/a
Saint Kitts and Nevis	39	3,960
Saint Lucia	152	2,500
Saint Vincent	108	1,730
San Marino	20	n/a
Sao Tomé and Principe	120	350
Seychelles	69	5,110
Solomon Islands	326	560
Suriname	457	3,610
Swaziland	825	1,060
Trinidad and Tobago	1,249	3,620
United Arab Emirates	1,630	n/a
Vanuatu	156	1,120
Western Samoa	168	930
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	1·9 million	[1]—
Slovenia	1·8 million	[1]—

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[1]— No data for 1991, but the per capita GNP of the former Yugoslavia in 1990 US$ 2,940.

Somalia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what visits have been made by Foreign Office staff to Somalia in the current year; where they went; and what were the lessons from their visits.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Foreign Office staff from London, the British embassy in Addis Ababa and the British High Commission in Nairobi have made a total of 15 visits to

Somalia this year. They visited Mogadishu, Kismayo, Baidoa, Hargeisa, Belet Huen, Berbera and Bossasso. The visits were made in order to assess the humanitarian and political situation on the ground.

Seeds (Intellectual Property Rights)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made on behalf of the Government, within European Union discussions about the general agreement on tariffs and trade, concerning the potential impact on farmers in Commonwealth countries of proposals made within the GATT negotiations for the enforcement of intellectual property rights over varieties of seeds.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No specific representations have been necessary. The trade-related intellectual property agreement (TRIPs) in the GATT Uruguay round is a good one. It aims to establish minimum property rights for new products, including new varieties of plants. It is compatible with, and complementary to, the international convention for the protection of new varieties of plants (UPOV convention).

Departmental Offices (Heating Bills)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list, by location, the annual heating fuel bills for each of his Department's offices for the last four years, and for this year to date.

Mr. Goodlad: The information is as follows:

Statistics are available only from 1 April 1990 (1 April 1991 for Hanslope Park) when the FCO assume responsibility for the payment of utility charges from the Property Services Agency

	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
FCO London				
Old Public Offices, Whitehall	8,899·31	6,471·83	7,341·94	[4]887·35
Old Admiralty Building	2,887·82	4,916·52	4,136·92	[4]1,169·17
2/3/4 Matthew Parker street	15,127·87	17,218·43	15,677·95	[5]3,988·42
Cromwell house, Millbank	7,865·21	7,049·86	5,391·35	[4]1,997·38
Clive house, Petty France	5,148·88	5,495·93	3,545·11	[5]1,576·53
20 Victoria street	[1]—	8,770·37	11,425·95	[5]3,858·84
8 Cleveland Row	n/a	n/a	808·41	[6]198·40
1 Carlton Gardens	2,929·87	7,960·15	7,105·69	[6]1,720·70
Buckinghamshire				
Hanslope Park complex	n/a	73,262·37	[2]116,438·04	[4]31,332·58
ODA				
London				
94 Victoria street	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
East Kilbride				
Abercrombie house	14,515·00	18,979·00	18,863·00	[4]7,899·00

[1] Not occupied by FCO in 1990-91.

[2] Includes accounts for part of 1991-92 paid in following year and not readily identifiable.

[3] Cost of utilities included in common service charges and not readily identifiable.

[4] November.

[5] October.

[6] September.

WALES

Sheep Quota Scheme

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions officers from the agricultural section of his Department have met Mr. or Mrs. G. E. Lockett of Ty Loch, Betws Garnon, Caernarfon, to discuss the difficulties facing them because of the rules of the new sheep quota scheme; and if he will find a method to alleviate their difficulties.

Mr. Redwood: One meeting and six telephone calls have taken place. Mr. and Mrs. Lockett should by now have received a letter from the divisional office explaining that, as first-time claimants in 1992, they are eligible to apply for quota from "the pool".

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales at what date the national reserve will be made available and distributed to sheep farmers who have been so far denied a quota under the new scheme.

Mr. Redwood: The statutory instrument giving details of the national reserve for sheep quota came into force on 7 December. The deadline for receipt of applications for categories 1 and 2 is 7 January 1994. Quota allocations will then be made as soon as possible. Applications to the remaining categories of the 1993 sheep quota national reserve will be invited after we have dealt with categories 1 and 2.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *179*, what is the exact number of representations he has received on the question of the operation of the siphon in the context of sheep quota where it applies to changes in existing partnerships; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have received representations from 10 Members of Parliament and both farming unions in Wales. My officials have also received inquiries from a number of individuals and other interested organisations.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now take immediate and urgent steps to reverse the cuts in hill livestock compensatory allowance payments and restore these to their original value.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the reduction in farm incomes in Wales resulting from the recent reductions in hill livestock compensatory allowance payments; and what is his estimate of the maximum likely loss of income to any individual farming unit.

Mr. Redwood: Based on expected eligible livestock numbers it is estimated that total payments of hill livestock compensatory allowances to Welsh producers under the 1994 scheme will be £5·5 million lower than under the 1993 scheme. Figures are not available for the maximum reduction in payment to any individual farming unit. The reduced 1994 payments should be seen in the context of rising overall farm incomes in the less-favoured areas and an overall increase in subsidy resulting from changes in other agricultural support.

Home Improvement Grants

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the average waiting time between application and completion of work involving mandatory home improvement grants for the whole of Wales, and for each district council in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not available centrally.

School Inspections

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the financing of school inspections; what amount will be lost to each education authority's inspection and advisory services; and whether each education authority will receive a rebate if the actual cost of inspections is less than the estimate made at the start of the financial year.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The responsibility for school inspections rests with the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in Wales. Resources have been transferred from local to central Government for this purpose at the all-Wales level and in consultation with the Assembly of Welsh Counties. They amount to £0·933 million, £3·283 million and £4·651 in 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 respectively. The overall transfer sum remains appropriate and there is no question of it being revisited.

Arable Aid and Payments

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales by how much payments to Welsh arable farmers will be increased under the arable aid payments scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I am consulting the industry about the regionalisation proposals I announced on 29 October. Payment levels will depend on the terms of the final plan for the 1993-94 planting year which I shall announce as soon as possible after 17 December, which is the closing date for comments on my proposals.

Home Renovation Grants

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the number of applications received by each district council in Wales for home renovation grants, together with the percentage of these applications as a proportion of the total number of houses in each district, and the total number of such applications received for Wales as a whole.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not available centrally.

Student Grants

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding the proposed 10 per cent. reduction in student grants.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has received two letters on this subject.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding the timing of the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering for unitary authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I have received several representations and hope to make an announcement soon about the timetable for extending competitive tendering in Wales.

District Council Elections

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy that no elections will be held during 1994 in those Welsh district councils which retain elections by thirds.

Mr. Redwood: No. The elections due in May 1994 will go ahead.

Badgers

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) whether, following publication of the new five-year programme, badger culling will now cease in Wales;

(2) if there will be a suspension of badger culling following the announcement of the revised procedure.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced the Government's revised approach regarding badgers and tuberculosis on 8 December. This gave details of the action programme which it has been decided to set in place, which includes a trial of a new badger control strategy to run for at least five years based on the application of the test for tuberculosis in the live badger in areas of the south-west of England. In areas outside those proposed for the trial the existing arrangements will continue, which will mean that no action will be taken against badgers on any farm in those areas where there has been a tuberculosis breakdown unless it has been specifically sanctioned by a sub-committee of the consultative panel on badgers and bovine tuberculosis.

Local Authorities

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will issue guidelines for the listing of the assets of local authorities prior to their transfer to the new unitary councils and the residual authority.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Draft guidance was issued to local authorities on 31 August 1993.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date Welsh local authorities were advised of the proposed draft electoral wards which will be introduced for the unitary planning authorities.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is my intention to consult Welsh local authorities on proposed electoral wards soon, taking account of my right hon. Friend's recent announcement that there should be about 1,250 councillors in the proposed unitary authorities.

Local Government (Powys Model)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he received regarding the proposed Powys model structure of local government; if he will list those organisations making such representations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I have received representations from about 40 organisations and individuals, including the following:

Council of Welsh Districts
Assembly of Welsh Counties
Campaign for Mongomeryshire
Montgomeryshire Conservative Association
Powys County Council
Brecknock Borough Council
Clwyd County Council
Gwynedd County Council
Montgomeryshire District Council
Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council
Aberconwy Borough Council
Ynys Mon Borough Council
Blaenau Gwent Borough Council
Cardiff City Council
Swansea City Council
Meirionnydd Campaign Committee
Carreghofa Community Council
Arfon Borough Council

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards to each of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Redwood: Responsibility for appointing *(a)* chairs and (b) members of the boards of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by the Welsh Office rests with the Secretary of State for Wales, with the exception of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments whose appointments are made under royal warrant. My ministerial colleagues and senior officials assist in interviewing and selecting suitable candidates.

Council Tax

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many council tax appeals have been received in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: As at 30 November 53,623 proposals for the alteration of the valuation list had been received by the Valuation Office Agency. This represents 4·4 per cent. of all dwellings in the valuation lists. Of these 10,600 had already been settled. The Welsh Office is considering the arrangements for dealing with outstanding appeals with the agency and representatives of the valuation tribunal service.

Appointments (Women)

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the appointments made by him are held by women.

Sir Wyn Roberts: An updated list of appointments at 1 December 1993 has been placed in the Library of the House. Women hold 200—25 per cent.—appointments out of a total of 784; there are 14 vacancies.

EDUCATION

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will place in the Library tables showing in respect of each local education authority the number of school pupils of primary and secondary age who are resident within the local education authority area but who are educated in maintained schools outside the local education authority area, and the numbers of pupils educated in maintained schools within the local education authority area who are resident outside the area with the resident and receivintg local education authority area specified in each case.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested will be placed in the Library, together with an explanatory guide. The data are provisional and based on the position at January 1993.

Head Teachers

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the current average salaries for primary school head teachers, secondary school head teachers, primary school teachers and secondary school teachers.

Mr. Robin Squire: The new earnings survey recorded the average salary of all primary school teachers, including head teachers, in Great Britain at 1 April 1993 as £19,760 and of all secondary school teachers, including head teachers, as £21,663. The average salary of a primary school head teacher is estimated as £26,316 and a secondary school head teacher as £35,891.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a table showing, in 1992-93 prices, the gross public spending for each year since 1990-91 and the projected expenditure for each year to 1995-96 for each executive non-departmental public body sponsored by his Department, as listed in "Public Bodies 1992".

Mr. Boswell: Details of the Department's funding for these bodies, in 1992-93 prices, are shown in the table. Planning allocations for 1995-96 will be announced as soon as possible.

£'000s

	1990-91 outturn	*1991-92 outturn*	*1992-93 outturn*	*1993-94 current Estimates provision*	*1994-95 plans*
Business and Technology Education Council	Self funding. Became wholly independent and ceased to be NDPB sponsored by DFE 1 October 1993				
Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges	3,336	3,632	3,848	3,955 Merged with British Council 1 December 1993: FCO now sponsor but DFE pays grant	3,896
Council for Information on Language Teaching and Research	591	677	949	782	775
Council for National Academic Awards	Self-funding. Wound up 31 March 1993			—	—
Education Assets Board	609	519	858	2,609	2,516
Further Education Unit	4,274	3,249	3,545	Funding responsibility transferred to Further Education Funding Council 1 April 1993	
National Council for Educational Technology	5,145	5,151	5,658	4,790	4,563
National Curriculum Council	8,104	7,994	8,135	2,954 Wound up 30 September 1993	—
National Youth Agency	Established 1 April 1991	1,911	1,495	1,304	1,298
Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council	1,219,255	1,031,285	1,034,601	Wound up 31 March 1993	
School Examinations and Assessment Council	8,535	10,936	12,383	4,010 Wound up 30 September 1993	—
Teaching as a Career Unit	1,642	1,456	1,407	1,145	1,112
Universities Funding Council	2,027,988	1,850,557	1,806,426	Wound up 31 March 1993	

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards of governors of higher education corporations.

Mr. Boswell: The Secretary of State makes the initial appointments of members of boards of governors of higher education corporations. Subsequent appointments are for the boards themselves to determine. In certain circumstances the appointment of independent members may be made by the existing independent members of the board. Chairs of boards, in relation to either initial or subsequent appointments, are appointed by the boards of governors from among their members.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards of governors for grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: Chairmen of self-governing (grant-maintained) schools are elected by the governing body as a whole at the first meeting of every school year. Every governing body must include parent governors, teacher governors, the head teacher and either first governors (in the case of former county schools) or foundation governors (in the case of former voluntary schools).

Parent and teacher governors are elected respectively by parents of registered pupils at, and teachers employed by, the school. First governors are appointed by the governing body, while foundation governors continue to be appointed by those so entitled when the school had voluntary status.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards to each of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Boswell: The information required is as follows:

Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges

Chairman and members appointed by the Secretary of State for Education.

Centre for Information on Language Teaching

Chairman and 10 members appointed by the Secretary of State for Education.

One member appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Education Assets Board

Chairman and members appointed by the Secretary of State for Education.

(Appointment to the post of chief executive will in future be made by the board subject to the approval of the Secretary of State for Education.)

Further Education Funding Council for England

Chairman and members appointed by the Secretary of State for Education.

Further Education Unit Board of Management

Chairman and members appointed by the Secretary of State for Education after consultation with the Secretary of State for Wales.

Higher Education Funding Council, England

Chairman and members appointed by the Secretary of State for Education.

National Council for Educational Technology

Twelve appointments made by the Secretary of State for Education.

One appointment made by the Secretary of State for Wales.

One appointment made by the Secretary of State for Scotland.

One appointment made by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

National Youth Agency Management Committee

Chairman and members appointed by the Secretary of State for Education.

Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority

Chairman and members appointed by the Secretary of State for Education.

Teaching as a Career Unit Board

Director and members appointed by the Secretary of State for Education.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards of governors of further education corporations.

Mr. Boswell: The members of each further education corporation are responsible for appointing a chairman from among their number. Initial appointments were made by virtue of the instruments of government in the case of FE corporations to conduct former FE colleges and by the Secretary of State in the case of corporations to conduct former sixth form colleges. New or additional members are normally appointed by the corporation.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards of governors of city technology colleges.

Mr. Robin Squire: City technology colleges are charitable companies and under the model scheme of government the members of the companies are responsible for appointing the chairs and members of the boards of governors.

Student Loans

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education from which European Community countries students enrolled in United Kingdom universities qualify for the students loans schemes.

Mr. Boswell: European Community students may be eligible for a student loan if they have been ordinarily resident in the British islands for three years before the start of their course; or are refugees; or have established migrant worker status.

Student Grants

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received indicating that students falsely claim elements of grant for living away from home; what estimates he has of the amounts of money involved; and if he will make a statement on the measures he has in place to check this fraud.

Mr. Boswell: Mandatory awards are paid by local education authorities. The responsibility for ensuring that adequate controls and systems are in place, and operate satisfactorily, rests with them. Authorities receive grant from my right hon. Friend on their lawful expenditure on mandatory awards, and their annual certificates of expenditure must be endorsed by independent auditors. My right hon. Friend has received no representations of the kind to which my hon. Friend refers.

Schools Funding

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will review the system of funding for all primary and secondary schools to take account of their age and structural condition.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Stratford School

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how Mr. Mark Prisk became a governor of Stratford school; who nominated him; what are his local qualifications; when he was made a governor; and when he became chairman of the governors.

Mr. Robin Squire: All questions concerning the appointment of individual governors at Stratford school are a matter for the governing body.

Departmental Offices (Heating Bills)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list by location the annual fuel heating bills for each of his Department's offices for the last four years, and for this year to date.

Mr. Boswell: The information is set out in the table:

Fuel heating costs for DFE in financial years and by location

£000s

	1989-90	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*[1]1993-94*
Sanctuary Buildings, SW1[2] (occupied December 1991)	—	—	19·1	30·4	16·7
Elizabeth House, SE1 (vacated March 1993)	38·7	60·1	36·0	30·5	—
Lading House, WC2	2·3	2·2	2·5	3·0	2·0
Canons Park, Middlesex (minimal occupation from April 1992)	8·0	9·5	10·4	—	—
Orange Street, WC2[2] (vacated 1992-93)	3·3	2·5	2·0	—	—
Mowden Hall, Darlington	11·3	18·8	18·6	23·0	7·4
Vincent House, Darlington (occupied December 1991)	—	—	0·3	2·4	4·5
Corporation House, Darlington (occupied April 1990)	—	6·0	5·2	5·7	1·0
Enterprise House, Darlington	0·6	1·3	1·2	1·1	0·2
Stead House, Darlington (occupied 1992)	—	—	Space taken within Inland Revenue building		
HMI local offices (transferred to OFSTED April 1992)	18·6	15·6	24·4	—	—

[1] Data covers main gas and oil heating only except for Lading House which is electrically heated.

[2] Electricity consumption by air-conditioning systems (where installed) cannot be separated from consumption on other plant, equipment and lighting and is therefore not included.

Teachers (Citizenship)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list by local education authority the number of teachers employed who are not EU citizens; and if he will set out their nationality, qualifications and type of post occupied.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is not centrally available.

Theological Colleges

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what public funding is made available for theological colleges in England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: Fees are payable under the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations for eligible students holding mandatory awards attending designated courses at theological colleges. Fees are paid at varying rates for students at colleges which are part of publicly funded universities. Designated courses at other theological colleges attract fees of £715 per student.

Final Examinations (Deferment)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what means of publicly funded support are available to students who defer final examinations due to illness or personal circumstances.

Mr. Boswell: The financial support available to students who defer final examinations will depend on the arrangements made by individual institutions for students to take their examinations.

When the student holds a mandatory award and is absent from the course for a short period the local authority which bestowed the award has power to continue to make such payments of the award as they consider appropriate. If the student has to repeat some or all of the final year of the course he may receive payments of the award, at the discretion of the LEA, and a student loan, depending on the amount of time he is in attendance at the institution; and he can apply for help from the access funds. After 28 weeks of certified sickness a student may claim income support and housing benefit.

RAF Chivenor

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what additional support he intends to allocate to Devon county council and schools in Braunton to cope with the funding implications of the Government's announcement that it proposes to run RAF Chivenor down to a care maintenance regime.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Government set the framework for the distribution of resources through the standard spending assessment (SSA) system in a way which takes account of the number of pupils for whom local authorities are financially responsible. Allowing for local authority changes of function, the underlying increase in Devon's provisional education SSA for 1994-95 is 3·3 per cent.—a higher than average increase. Devon county council is responsible for determining its spending priorities and for allocating resources to schools through its scheme of local management. It will be free to take account of changes at RAF Chivenor.

Expenditure

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for each local authority for the last five years *(a)* the education component per pupil of the standard spending assessment, *(b)* net institutional expenditure per pupil and *(c)* the relationship of one figure to the other expressed as a percentage.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is not available in the form requested. I will write to the hon. Member.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Price Marking Order

Sir Donald Thompson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the current status of the Price Marking (Bargain Offers) Order.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Price Marking (Bargain Offers) Orders 1979 was revoked in 1989. Its provisions were replaced by the provisions of part III of the Consumer Protection Act 1987, which make it an offence to give a misleading price indication by any means, and the code of practice for traders on price indications issued under section 25 of that Act.

Milk Marketing Board

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will immediately refer for examination by the Office of Fair Trading the methods employed by the Milk Marketing Board in seeking to establish Milk Marque as its private monopolistic successor.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Office of Fair Trading has been consulted on the reorganisation scheme which the Milk Marketing Board has submitted to my right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Wales. My right hon. Friends have recently completed public consultation on the scheme. They will have regard to whether the scheme takes account of the interests of consumers and producers of milk and to whether the structure of the new arrangements contemplated by the scheme is such as to allow for the development of competition in milk marketing in deciding whether to approve it.

The wholesale supply of milk is at present excluded from the monopoly reference powers of the Director General of Fair Trading under the provisions of the Fair Trading Act 1973, but I propose to make an order withdrawing this exclusion from the date reorganisation takes place. The Director General of Fair Trading will then have a responsibility to monitor developments in the milk market and will be able to make a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission if he deems it appropriate.

EC Programmes

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will discuss with the European Commission what measures should be introduced to replace the integrated operations and RECHAR programmes after 31 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on 9 December, *Official Report,* column *348.*

Vehicle Tracker Devices

Mr. French: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many *(a)* United Kingdom manufacturers and *(b)* United Kingdom suppliers of vehicle tracker devices are known to his Department.

Mr. Sainsbury: We know of no United Kingdom manufacturers and only one supplier of this imported device.

Thorp

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when Her Majesty's Government first provided Euratom with a full set of design details of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant to assist in the preparations of safeguards and nuclear materials security arrangements.

Mr. Eggar: Such information is supplied to Euratom by the plant operator, BNFL, in confidence. However, a general description of the interaction of BNFL with Euratom on this subject is given in the paper "THORP: The route to a safeguardable plant", presented in May 1993 at the European Safeguards Research and Development Association, 15th annual symposium on safeguards and nuclear materials management held in Rome, Italy.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the cost to Her Majesty's Government for the assistance afforded to Euratom in its design verification of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant and attendant facilities in preparing its nuclear safeguards arrangements for THORP.

Mr. Eggar: The cost of undertaking design verification of the THORP plant was met by the Euratom safeguards directorate and BNFL.

Departmental Offices (Heating Bills)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list by location the annual heating fuel bills for each of his Department's offices for the last four years, and for this year to date.

Mr. Eggar: The information is not available in the form requested.

Accounts Services Agency

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures he is planning to take to retain the Accounts Services Agency in the public sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 13 December, *Official Report,* column *493.*

Insolvency Service

Mr. Garrett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library the report by Stoy Hayward, "Options for the Insolvency Service".

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I am currently considering what further work needs to be done following the Stoy Hayward review and shall announce to the House in due course what the next steps will be, including any plans for making public the contents of Stoy Hayward's report.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what the cost of advertising by his Department has been for each year since 1979 and for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Eggar: Expenditure in each of the last 12 months was as follows:

	£000
1992	
December	12
1993	
January	14
February	31
March	781
April	15
May	8
June	4
July	11
August	155
September	28
October	11
November	3

For expenditure in earlier years I refer the hon. Member to previous answers:

To the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) on 3 December 1993, Official Report, column *765,* which contains the details for 1992-93; and to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 2 June 1992, Official Report, column *496-97,* which has figures for 1991-92 and references to Official Report answers containing information for the earlier years.

Brewers

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what investigation his Department has carried out to find out whether the minimum purchasing limit is being implemented by brewers in line with his Department's policy as set out in the Beer Orders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Beer Orders require brewers owning more than 2,000 pubs to permit their tenants to purchase a guest beer. Imposition by the brewers of minimum purchase orders for their own beer is not necessarily incompatible with that requirement. The Director General of Fair Trading is responsible for monitoring compliance with the Beer Orders and anyone who believes they have evidence of a breach of the orders should write to him.

Business Link Projects

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out for each business link project *(a)* the amount of public sector money scheduled to be spent in 1993-94 and *(b)* the amount of private sector funding which has been attracted.

Mr. McLoughlin: My Department has made formal offers of, on average, £984,233 pump-priming grant to three business link companies payable over three years. The level of each offer depends upon the level of assistance the business link needs to help business in its area. Each business link company may also receive public sector funds from other sources such as local authorities or via TECs. The total DTI pump-priming grant to business links in the current financial year is expected to be about £2·9 million. Business links are private sector companies. It would therefore be improper for me to disclose financial information on private sector contributions to each business link project.

Atomic Energy Authority

Mr. Waterson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what external financing limit has been set for the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority for 1994-95.

Mr. Eggar: the UKAEA's external financing limit for 1994-95 will be minus £8·8 million.

Telecommunications Council

Mr. Waterson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Telecommunications Council on 7 December.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Council reached agreement on three resolutions. The first of these, on postal services, sets out a framework for future Community measures and major policy goals for liberalisation. It invites the Commission to bring forward proposals defining universal postal services and an appropriate area of reserved services, setting out quality standards and establishing technical standards by July 1994. It stresses the need to make progress on the reform of the terminal dues system and the necessity of a cost-related and quality-related approach, inviting the Commission to report to the Council by 1 March 1994 if further action is necessary.

The second resolution concerned universal service in the telecommunications sector. This sets out a general approach to the provision of universal service for basic voice telephony. I was successful in negotiating a text which takes account of the Government's view, both of the importance of universal service and that the market would provide this service in the majority of cases. The Council agreed a redrafted text which left to member states, rather than the Commission, the appropriate definition of universal service, but set out general criteria for the application of access charges and other financial support to a universal service provider. These will play an important role in ensuring open and fair competition.

The Council also agreed a resolution on the introduction of satellite personal communication services in the Community. This notes the importance of the planned use of satellites in personal communications and stresses the importance of developing a Community policy. It invites member states to make efforts to develop such a policy and invites the Commission to investigate the significance of satellite personal communications, define an effective policy to improve the competitive position of European space and telecommunication industries and to monitor international developments.

There were short general debates on transeuropean networks, interchange of data between administrations and the electronic exchange of commercial statistics. It was agreed that a full evaluation of the needs of member states for IDA would be conducted before the issue was brought before the Council again. The Council adopted conclusions on radio frequencies, inviting the Commission to sign a memorandum of understanding with the European Radiocommunications Committee on frequency matters.

The Commission presented a proposal for a directive on standards for the transmission of television signals and a communication on digital video broadcasting. Council conclusions were agreed supporting the initiative of the European project for digital video broadcasting, stressing the importance of common standards and conditional access systems based on standards that ensure fair and open competition.

No formal votes were taken at the Council.

Insolvency Service

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many complaints the Insolvency Service Agency received about the conduct of independent practitioners during each year since 1990 and so far in 1993.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Insolvency Service Agency does not keep a record specifically relating to complaints about the conduct of insolvency practitioners, but receives a range of correspondence relating to the administration of insolvencies.

Mr. Peter Joyce, the agency's chief executive, answered letters, some of which contained criticism of practitioners, totalling 26 in 1991, 85 in 1992 and 50 to 31 October 1993.

In addition, I and my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade have responded to letters from hon. Members concerning specific insolvencies totalling 399 in 1991, 355 in 1992 and 314 to 31 October 1993. Officials have answered on our behalf 207 letters in 1992 and 147 to 31 October 1993. Information on how many of these letters contained complaints about independent practitioners could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

No central record is kept of complaints about the conduct of insolvency practitioners made direct to official receivers.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many investigations the Insolvency Service Agency has conducted into independent practitioners during each year since 1990 and so far in 1993.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Insolvency Service undertakes routine monitoring visits to practitioners to test their compliance with the legislation. Detailed special inspections are carried out where the facts of the case suggest that this is merited. The following figures are on a financial year basis: detailed records were not maintained prior to 1991-92.

	Number
Monitoring visits:	
1991-92	31
1992-93	147
1993-94 (to date)	135
Special inspections:	
1991-92	2
1992-93	9
1993-94 (to date)	5

Energy Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the matters discussed and decisions taken at the EU Energy Council on 10 December.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the outcome of the EC

Energy Council of 10 December indicating the voting record of each member state on each item and where no formal votes were taken.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* The Council considered several major issues and received reports from the Commission on other matters of interest. I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council reached unanimous political agreement on a directive harmonising hydrocarbons licensing. This important internal energy market measure will ensure that all member states' licensing procedures for hydrocarbons are transparent, non-discriminatory and competitive. A formal common position should follow at an early date.

Unanimous political agreement was also reached on the Council's assent for a new Commission decision on coal state aids. This will take effect from 1 January 1994. The decision provides for tighter Community rules for state aid to the coal industry until the expiry of the ECSC treaty in 2002. Formal adoption of the Council's assent will take place at an early date.

A new stage was reached in the progress of the two directives on liberalisation of the gas and electricity markets. The Commission presented modified proposals, which took account of the recent opinion of the European Parliament and which it had prepared at the invitation of the Energy Council of 30 November 1992.

The Commission presented a paper on nuclear safety in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The Council confirmed the need to give priority to nuclear safety in assistance programmes.

The Commission outlined its ideas for developing guidelines for a Community energy policy. The Council invited the Commission to continue its work under the next Presidency.

The Commission reported to the Council on progress on the European energy charter and on its proposals for trans-European energy networks and cohesion. The Council also considered a mid-term review of the Thermie demonstration and dissemination programme and invited the Commission to come forward with a proposal on minimum standards for refrigerators and freezers.

No formal votes were taken by the Council.

Nuclear Reprocessing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether spent nuclear fuel and its constituent parts imported prior to 1976 for reprocessing at Sellafield, without obligation of return of nuclear materials to the country of origin, is subject to the ownership conditions set out in articles 86 and 197 of the Euratom treaty.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 30 November 1993]:* Article 86 of the Euratom treaty states that special fissile materials shall be the property of the Community and that the Community's right of ownership shall extend to all special fissile materials, as defined in article 197, which are produced or imported by a member state, a person or an undertaking and are subject to Euratom safeguards.

Equally, article 87 qualifies that right of ownership by providing that member states, persons or undertakings have unlimited right of use and consumption of these materials, subject to the obligations imposed on them by the treaty.

Article 75 states that the provisions of chapter VIII of the treaty, including articles 86 and 87, shall not apply to special fissile materials covered by commitments entered into by a person or undertaking with an international organisation or a national of a third state, where the material is to be processed inside the Community and then returned either to the original organisation or national or to any other consignee likewise outside the Community designated by such organisation or national.

The question of whether any particular special fissile material, which is introduced into the United Kingdom for processing, is subject to articles 86 and 87, depends therefore on whether it is contemplated by the commercial arrangement in question that the special fissile material will be returned after processing to the original organisation or national outside the Community or any other designated consignee outside the Community.

Granby Street Post Office, Liverpool

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will ask for a full report from the Post Office before he sanctions the closure of the Granby street post office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 14 December 1993]:* The decision to close Granby street sub-post office is an operational matter for Post Office Counters Ltd. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is fully aware of the factors which have led to this decision, and he understands that POCL are planning adequate steps to maintain full post office facilities in the vicinity, at larger premises in Lodge lane.

Aliens

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will seek to obtain a report of the European Parliament Trade and Research Technology Committee's conclusion that the theory that aliens are present in the asteroid belt cannot be ruled out; and what are the implications of this conclusion for public policy.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 14 December 1993]:* My officials have seen the report to which my hon. Friend refers by the European Parliament's Committee on Energy, Research and Technology. It has no implications for public policy.

Konver Programme

Mr. Hutton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how approved Konver-funded schemes will be financed after the expiration of the Konver initiative;

(2) what is his policy towards securing continuing EU support for defence diversification programmes when Konver funding expires; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is the period for which Konver funding for approved schemes will last; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* Successful Konver applications will be able to obtain grant for expenditure incurred until May 1995 from the European regional development fund and December 1994 from the European social fund.

It is too early to say whether there will be a second Konver initiative. Detailed proposals from the European Commission for the future of structural funds Community initiatives are awaited.

SCOTLAND

Young People

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* 16-year-olds and *(b)* 17-year-olds continued in full-time education in (i) Dundee and (ii) Scotland in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information for Scotland for the years 1988-92 is set out in the following table. Figures for 1993 are not yet available. Similar figures for Dundee are not available.

16 and 17-year-olds in full-time education in Scotland, January
Age at 30 August of preceding year

Thousands

		Age 16	*Age 17*
1992			
Full-time education in:	schools	26·6	13·4
	further education[1]	8·5	13·5
1991			
Full-time education in:	schools	26·4	12·7
	further education[1]	6·2	12·4
1990			
Full-time education in:	schools	26·4	12·5
	further education[1]	5·3	12·0
1989			
Full-time education in:	schools	28·3	13·0
	further education[1]	4·6	11·6
1988			
Full-time education in:	schools[2]	45·8	20·6
	further education[1]	3·2	8·2

[1] Non-advanced and advanced further education, teacher training and higher education.

[2] Not on a comparable basis. The destination is recorded in Autumn rather than January and age is recorded as at December rather than as at August. Autumn counts for full-time education would be higher than those recorded in January because they would include pupils who left school at the end of the first term in S5 and students who entered further education but subsequently left the course.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the numbers of 16 and 17-year-olds who entered full-time employment in *(a)* Dundee and *(b)* Scotland in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Stewart: The Scottish Young People's Survey provides, bi-ennially, information relating to the destination of school leavers in April after the academic session of leaving school. The table shows estimates of the number of leavers in full-time employment in the following April after the academic year of leaving secondary stages S4 and S5, which broadly equate to 16 and 17-year-olds respectively. Information is not available for Dundee.

Secondary school leavers in full-time employment
in April after session of leaving school

Thousands

	Leavers from S4[1]	*Leavers from S5*[2]
1983	15	14
1985	12	14
1987	9	11
1989	7	11
1991	7	10

[1] Approximately 16-year-olds.

[2] Approximately 17-year-olds.

Source: Scottish Young People's Survey.

Structural Funds

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has for the future administration of European structural funds in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I am currently responsible for expenditure under objectives 2 and 5b of the European structural funds financed by the European regional development fund and the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund. While my Department also has a co-ordinating role in relation to the Community support frameworks for the areas of Scotland designated under these objectives, the Department of Employment has hitherto administered European social fund expenditure in these areas.

I have agreed with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment that I should now assume responsibility for European social fund expenditure in Scotland under objectives 1, 2 and 5b of the new regulations. The responsibility for winding up ESF actions under the current programmes for objectives 2 and 5b in Scotland remains with my right hon. Friend, as does responsibility for the administration of Great Britain-wide programmes under objectives 3 and 4.

Legal Services

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress is being made towards the extension of compulsory competitive tendering to legal services.

Mr. Stewart: Since we announced in November 1992 our intention to further extend CCT we have been in discussion with local authority associations about the details of implementation. We are now in a position to consult more widely and have today issued a consultation paper on the Government's implementation plans. Comments are invited by 18 March on a detailed package of measures which will bring the benefits of CCT to local authority legal services. Copies of the consultation paper will be placed in the House Library.

Montrose Bridge

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimates he has of the expected life span of the Montrose new bridge; and what improvements are required for it.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: The Montrose new bridge is not a trunk road structure and is therefore the responsibility of Tayside regional council which is the local roads authority.

Ministerial Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the name and job description of each special ministerial adviser employed in his Department showing any particular outputs for which each adviser is responsible.

Mr. Lang: I have two full-time special advisers appointed to my Department—Mr. Gregor Mackay and Mr. Alan Young. As special advisers, both are outwith the normal Departmental hierarchy and are engaged on duties laid down by me which include contributing to the preparation of speeches and supporting my ministerial colleagues in the Scottish Office as far as time permits.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the political and other advisers employed by his Department; and what remuneration each receives and the previous occupation of each recruited in the last three years.

Mr. Lang: I have two full-time special advisers, Mr. Alan Young and Mr. Gregor Mackay. Both were recruited as graduates in December 1990 and February 1992 respectively and subsequently reappointed in May 1992.

In addition, there are currently two part-time advisers in the Scottish Office. They are Dr. Kenneth Benington and Professor David Tedford who were appointed in August 1988 and October 1992 respectively. They act as advisers to the Scottish Office Industry Department.

It is not our practice to divulge the remuneration of individual advisers.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements are made to ensure that special advisers to Ministers in his Department do not have access to the kind of information, and are not involved in the type of business, that would be likely to create suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment.

Mr. Lang: I have two full-time special advisers employed in my Department. The conditions under which they are employed are fully detailed in their appointment letter and are in accordance with Cabinet Office guidance. That guidance requires that they do not have access to the kind of information and are not involved in the kind of business which would create any suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment.

Written Questions

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions since 18 November he has not answered, other than with a holding answer, a parliamentary question for written answer on a named day within 10 days of it being tabled; on what subjects; and what is his normal length of time for replying to hon. Members following a holding answer to their written questions for named days.

Mr. Lang: As at 15 December there have been 217 questions tabled for written answer on a named day since 18 November of which 31 did not receive a substantive reply within 10 working days. The questions covered the subjects of the health service, forestry, transport issues and local authority matters. My ministerial colleagues and I ensure that wherever possible all questions receive substantive replies within the timescale set down by the House authorities.

Cormorants

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications his Department has received in the last 12 months for licences to control cormorant numbers on Scottish fisheries; and how many of these have been approved.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* Details of the number of applications made and licences issued in the last 12 months by my Department to shoot cormorants in order to prevent serious damage to fisheries are as follows:

	1992 September to December	*1993 February to April*
Cormorants only applications	6	8
Licences granted	6	7
Cormorants and sawbill duck applications	3	17
Licences granted	0	14

Licence information for autumn 1993—September to December—is not yet available.

Rams

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will continue the supply of rams in crofting areas under the livestock improvement schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* In August my Department invited applications from crofting townships for the supply of rams for 1993-94. Some 1,460 rams have since been supplied to over 200 townships.

My Department is currently reviewing all the livestock improvement schemes for crofters following a consultation exercise undertaken earlier this year. I hope to announce a decision soon on the future operation of these schemes.

Mr. Laurence Peterken

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the officials present at a meeting held on or between 20 and 23 August to consider the terms of the reply received from Her Majesty's Treasury to a letter sent on 6 August by the acting chief executive of the health service in Scotland regarding the former general manager of the Greater Glasgow health board, Mr. Laurence Peterken.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 14 December 1993]:* No such meeting took place on or between 20 and 23 August. However, there was a meeting on 30 August involving officials of the Scottish Office NHS Management Executive, Finance Group and Solicitor's Office.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a copy of the letter sent on 6 August by the acting chief executive of the health service in Scotland to the Treasury regarding the former general manager of the Greater Glasgow health board, Mr. Laurence Peterken.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 14 December 1993]:* No. The document concerned relates to the private affairs of an individual and it is long-established Government policy not to disclose such documents.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *180*, on what date his views were sought on the appointment of Mr. Laurence Peterken to the post of special projects director with the national health service management executive.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* On 5 November 1993.

Health Boards (Expenditure)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to review the procedures whereby he is informed of representations made to Her Majesty's Treasury by senior officials in his Department in respect of proposed expenditure by health boards in Scotland.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 14 December 1993]:* Yes. As my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State indicated to the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, this is already happening.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards to each of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Lang: I am responsible for making all the appointments to the following bodies:

Commission for Local Authority Accounts in Scotland
Crofters Commission
Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Macaulay Land Use Research Institute
National Galleries of Scotland
National Museums of Scotland
National Board for Nursing Midwifery and Health Visiting in Scotland
New Town Development Corporations (5)
Red Deer Commission
Royal Botanic Garden
Scottish Crop Research Institute
Scottish Enterprise
Scottish Examination Board
Scottish Higher Education Funding Council
Scottish Homes
Scottish Hospital Endowment Research Trust
Scottish Legal Aid Board
Scottish Medical Practices Committee
Scottish Natural Heritage
Scottish Seed Potato Development Council
Scottish Sports Council
Scottish Tourist Board

The responsibility, other than my own, for making appointments to the remaining executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by my Department is shown below; the number of members I appoint and whether or not I appoint the chair is shown in the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies", the 1993 edition of which will be available shortly.

Appointing responsibility other than the Secretary of State

Animal Diseases Research Association
In accordance with the rules of the Association which is a specially authorised Friendly Society.

Edinburgh New Town Conservation Committee
By the Committee itself.

General Teaching Council for Scotland
Elected members and members appointed by COSLA, Directors of Education in Scotland, Scottish universities, governing bodies of institutions in the higher education sector (other than universities) which are not relevant institutions (ie., colleges of education), the Education Committee of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the Scottish hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church.

Hannah Research Institute
Glasgow University, Scottish Agricultural College and the Board itself.

National Library of Scotland
The Crown on the recommendation of the Scottish Universities, CSLL, COSLA.

Police (Scotland) Examination Board
ACPOS, ASPS, SPF.

River Purification Boards (7)
50 per cent. of membership appointed by Local Authorities.

Rowett Research Institute
Aberdeen University, NFU(S), Scottish Agricultural College, the Royal Society or similar learned institution, the CBI or similar society.

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland
The Crown on my sole recommendation.

Scottish Agricultural Wages Board
NFU(S), TGWU.

Scottish Community Education Council
The Board.

Scottish Council for Educational Technology
COSLA.

Scottish Film Council
By co-option by the Board.

Scottish Vocational Education Council
COSLA, the Board.

Forestry

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make it his policy to inform the public when a definitive date is known for the submission of the report of the interdepartmental forestry review group to Ministers;

(2) what parliamentary procedure he will adopt to enact the conclusions of the interdepartmental forestry review group once they have been presented to Ministers.

Sir Hector Monro: Once the forestry review group has submitted its confidential advice, early next year, Ministers will require some time to consider it and decide what action, if any, should be taken.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for public and parliamentary consultation on the final report by the forestry review group before a decision is taken by Ministers.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 29 November 1993]:* I expect to receive the review group's report in the new year. This report will remain confidential to Ministers. There will be full consultation of the general public and interested bodies on the options preferred by Ministers before matters are taken forward. The form and timing of consultation will depend on the advice which the review group offers Ministers and what conclusions Ministers draw from that advice.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what specific access agreements have been negotiated in respect of areas of Forestry Commission land in each of the last five years.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* The arrangements for securing continued access to woodlands sold by the Forestry Commission, by means of agreements entered into between the Commission and local authorities before their sale, were introduced in October 1991. The Commission has since concluded access agreements with local authorities for the following woodlands:

County/Region and Woodland	*Area (hectares)*
England	
North Yorkshire	
Gateforth East	28
Hazelwood	107
Moreby Wood	33
Sutton Wood	33
Scotland	
Grampian	
White Cow	444
Wales	
Clwyd	
Nant y Ffrith (lot 2)	52
Nant y Ffrith (lot 3)	24
Dyfed	
Allt y Gwydre	14
Court Wood	19
Factory Wood	3
Penfarch	24
Taldrum Wood	5
Tan y Lan	32
Ty'r Dopa	14
Gwent	
Coed y Nant	8
Graig Syddi	28
Powys	
Tir y Gof	47
West Glamorgan	
Dewy Wood	15
Nantystalwyn	44

Negotiations are still taking place in a number of other cases.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy in respect of the continuation of the right to roam on publicly owned forestry land in the Clydebank and Milngavie constituency.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* Our policy is to allow the public "freedom to roam" on all forestry land managed by the Forestry Commission, subject only to considerations of safety, conservation and any legal constraints. We have no plans to change that policy.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what provision regarding freedom to roam has been attached to the offer for sale of public woodland between Glasgow and Loch Lomond; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the proposed sale of Forestry Commission woodlands in the Kilpatrick hills which have been selected for sale as part of the Commission's current disposals programme. Consideration was given to securing continued public access to these woodlands after sale, by means of a prior agreement entered into between the Commission and the local authority under the arrangements introduced in October 1991. This did not prove possible, however, as the access routes to the woodlands are across land belonging to third parties, none of whom wished to participate in an agreement.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the annual cost to her Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

Mr. Jack: The cost of providing a car service to the Ministers in this Department was £186,375 in the 1990-91 financial year. Four vehicles were involved.

Forestry Commission

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list all the woods owned by the Forestry Commission in East Anglia.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) on 10 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *432*.

Fishing Fleets

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the size of each of the 11 EC fishing fleets; and what is the percentage difference in size between the United Kingdom and Spanish fleets.

Mr. Jack: The following figures on fleet sizes as at 1 January 1992 are derived from member states' MAGP decisions dated 21 December 1992, as amended.

	Number of vessels	*Total gross registered tonnage*	*Total engine power (in Kilowatts)*
Belgium	205	27,089	79,816
Denmark	2,749	114,926	488,278
France	7,393	211,240	1,189,849
Germany	Not given	78,341	190,273
Greece	21,777	129,313	710,062
Ireland	Not given	52,912	186,054
Italy	16,670	267,471	1,536,518
Netherlands	520	140,460	441,953
Portugal[1]	15,920	187,993	504,067
Spain	20,518	657,680	1,978,036
United Kingdom	11,411	214,733	1,228,922

[1] Includes Azores and Madeira.

The Spanish fleet, which includes vessels fishing in the Mediterranean and those fishing in third country waters and international waters, thus has 80 per cent. more vessels than the United Kingdom fleet.

Fur Farms

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to introduce a ban on fur factory farms.

Mr. Soames: We are seeking the best possible welfare standards for all types of fur farming on a European Community basis.

Vitamin supplements

Sir David Steel: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to restrict the sale of vitamin supplements.

Mr. Soames: I have no plans at present to restrict the sale of vitamin supplements.

EC Surplus Food Scheme

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evaluation and monitoring is undertaken of charitable and non-profit making organisations involved in the distribution of produce to eligible recipients under the EC surplus food scheme.

Mr. Jack: Intervention Board executive agency officers annually inspect designated organisations' records and up to 30 per cent. of all organisations are visited by MAFF officers to check that produce is being distributed in accordance with the scheme's rules.

Brucellosis

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 25 November, *Official Report,* columns *120-22,* if she will provide the most recent figures she has available giving the total number of cattle testing positive for brucellosis; how many contracted the disease outside the United Kingdom and from which countries; how many were sero-positive before being imported into the United Kingdom and if any of those originate from herds officially declared to be brucellosis free; if the cattle testing sero-positive were subject to tests for the disease within 30 days of their export to this country; if the certification which accompanied each consignment of infected cattle provided an accurate account of the health of each animal in the consignments bound for the United Kingdom; and if the certification was fully compliant with the EC rules in other respects.

Mr. Soames: I wish to take this opportunity to correct the information I gave in my reply of 25 November. The number of cattle which had reacted positively to serological tests for brucellosis at the time the answer was given was 29 not 21. There have been no further positive reactions since then.

As indicated in my earlier reply detailed epidemiological investigations to determine the source of infection are continuing. It is not therefore possible to say if any of the cattle contracted the disease outside the United Kingdom. All the imported animals were accompanied by certification confirming that they originated from officially brucellosis-free herds and had been tested negative for brucellosis within the 30 days prior to export. We have no reason to doubt the accuracy of the certification, which complied fully with EC rules.

Ewe Premium Quota

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the countries in the EC which have not used up their full allocation of ewe premium quota and list the number of unused units in each case; and what steps she has taken, or is taking, to raise with the Commission the possibility of transferring the unused units of quota to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jack: Quotas operate for the first time under the 1993 sheep annual premium scheme. Payment details are not yet available for that scheme. I regret it is not possible to provide the information requested. More than one year's figures will be needed before conclusions can be drawn as to the long-term quota position in member states.

Farm Incomes

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of livestock farmers in the less-favoured areas producing *(a)* a net farm income and *(b)* cash income of (i) less than zero, (ii) less than £5,000, (iii) £5,000 to less than £10,000, (iv) £10,000 to less than £15,000, (v) £15,000 to less than £20,000 and (vi) £20,000 and over at the latest available date.

Mr. Jack: The latest available information, which is in the Library of the House, relating to survey results for 1991-92, is published in table 1·17 of "Farm Incomes in the United Kingdom 1991-92". Data for 1992-93 are being analysed and will be published at the end of March 1994 in "Farm Incomes in the United Kingdom 1992-93", a copy of which will be placed in the Library of the House.

Marine Ecosystem

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action she will take to ensure that the United Kingdom biodiversity action plan will take account of the need to protect marine ecosystems and wildlife.

Mr. Jack: The Ministry aims to build on the steps it has already taken to protect the marine esosystem and wildlife, for example by extending the powers of sea fisheries committees to give them a firmer basis for taking account of environmental needs, and by phasing out the dumping of industrial and other wastes at sea. This and other policies of the Ministry will be reflected in the United Kingdom biodiversity action plan.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will consult her ministerial colleagues to make sure that the national sustainable strategy will include a sustainable management system for marine fisheries.

Mr. Jack: Marine fisheries is one of the subjects addressed in the United Kingdom national sustainability strategy which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment proposes to publish in January 1994.

Sheep Quotas

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what legislation is being proposed to assist producers in applying for an allocation of sheep quotas from the national reserve.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* The legislation governing the national reserve came into force on 7 December. Producers asking for an application form will be sent an accompanying explanatory leaflet that gives detailed guidance about how to fill in the application form. Further explanatory leaflets and notes for guidance will be prepared in due course. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be making separate arrangements in Scotland.

The text of a letter sent to sheep producers in England which provides further guidance is available in the Library of the House.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has had concerning the administration and operation of the national reserve of sheep quotas; what plans she has to extend the national reserve; and what information she has in respect of the systems in force in each other European Union country.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* I have received a number of representations on this subject from both organisations and individual producers. The methodology for calculating the size of the national reserves is fixed under Community legislation which also sets out a number of categories of producers who have access to the reserves. The 1993 national reserve of sheep quota comprises some 380,000 units of quota. In addition, some 400,000 units of quota will be available for producers who claimed premium for the first time under the 1992 scheme. The reserves for 1994 and subsequent years will be made up almost entirely of siphoned quota. Each member state is bound by the terms of the Community legislation and is obliged to implement the arrangements accordingly.

Salmon Prices

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action her Department is taking to ensure that the reference price for salmon to be introduced by the European Commission on 1 January 1994 is realistic.

Sir Hector Monro: I have been asked to reply.

Scottish Office officials have submitted detailed information on market prices and production costs to contribute to the Commission's decision on a reference price for salmon. They have met Commission officials to discuss that information in detail and have made representations that the reference price should be significantly higher than the recently imposed minimum import price.

TRANSPORT

British Transport Police

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements he intends to make for the future organisation of the British Transport police from April 1994; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The British Transport Police will continue, as a unified public force, to police Britain's rail network, including services to the London Underground and the docklands light railway.

Police services will be provided to all railway operators, who will be obliged, through licence conditions, to use and pay for all law and order functions that require the use of professional police resources. Current functions include a range of activities in the prevention, investigation and detection of crime on the rail network, including safety, anti-terrorism, crime prevention and detection, public order, protecting public space and supporting the victims of crime.

Operators will be consulted about the level of resources required, and will have discretion, as now, to use non-BTP resources for ancillary tasks such as the static guarding of premises, supervision of car parks and the escort of high value loads.

The British Railways Board will remain the employer of the BTP for the time being. We intend to seek parliamentary approval at the earliest opportunity of the necessary legislation for Railtrack to become the employer of the BTP, until such time as Railtrack is privatised, when the BTP committee will become the employer.

The employer of the BTP will remain responsible for its funding, and will recover costs from other operators by charging. It will be for the employer to ensure that all the appropriate charges are collected.

While BR remains the employer of the BTP, it will retain the responsibility for appointing the chairman and members of the BTP committee.

To enable the BR Board to provide services to other users of the police on a repayment basis, we shall lay before Parliament in the spring some amendments to the existing secondary legislation—the British Transport Police Force Scheme (Amendment) Order 1992.

Merchant Fleet

Mr. Ottaway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to assist the future development of the British merchant fleet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government's economic and fiscal policies, which have produced low interest rates, low inflation and low taxation, have benefited industry as a whole, including shipping. However, where I can, I am keen to bring forward additional measures which help the shipping industry.

Accordingly, following extensive public consultation, new regulations governing the registration of ships in the United Kingdom were made today and will shortly be laid before Parliament in accordance with section 3 of the Merchant Shipping (Registration, etc.) Act 1993. These regulations represent a considerable simplification and consolidation of the existing mix of primary and secondary legislation which deals with the registration of merchant ships, small ships and fishing vessels, as well as the approval of names. I have no doubt that they will be welcomed by all who have to use them.

In addition the new regulations will, for the first time, allow bareboat chartered vessels to be brought on to the United Kingdom register for the duration of the charter period. I hope that this flexibility will encourage more British shipowners to fly the Red Ensign.

It is my intention that these regulations should come into force on 21 March 1994.

Secondly, I will shortly be consulting on changes to the current merchant navy office nationality rules. Under the new proposal the intention is that there should be no officer nationality requirements for United Kingdom registered ships except for certain "strategic" ships which will still be required to have a British, British Commonwealth, NATO or EC national as master.

I recognise that in allowing shipowners the option of employing non-United Kingdom officers, appropriate measures will be required to ensure that safety is not compromised. The proposed relaxation will, therefore, be accompanied by a scheme of licensing to ensure that all non-United Kingdom officers are not only professionally competent but have a good command of the English language and that masters have an appropriate level of understanding of British maritime law. A licence will be pre-requisite both to initial employment and to continuing employment on board a British flagged ship.

When these two measures are introduced—which, subject to the consultation, should be no later than spring 1994—the Government will have given effect to all the recommendations of the 1990 joint working party on British shipping.

This Government have a strong commitment to the training of British seafarers which, we recognise, is of vital importance to the long-term health of the industry and to associated onshore maritime businesses.

The present Government assistance for training scheme is a very successful form of support for our merchant shipping industry. The scheme, which has its origins in the 1988 Merchant Shipping Act, allows financial support to be given towards the cost of training officers and ratings to the standard of a first certificate of competency for service in merchant ships. Since its inception almost 2,000 cadets have benefited from the scheme at the aggregate cost of £11·6 million.

But I recognise that it is now appropriate to offer additional help to encourage the introduction of NVQ/SVQ training for those at sea while at the same time creating a pool of British officers with a career structure which will take them from cadet to senior officer level. I have, therefore, decided to extend training support to British junior officers while they are studying for their higher certificates of competency. With on-board assessment it should be possible for trainees to reach class 2 levels of competency within 12-18 months.

The new scheme will initially be for a trial period of three years. Assistance will take the form of a per capita cash contribution. The £1·5 million which will be made available in the first year will be targeted at helping those cadets who have been through the GAFT scheme and who, therefore, hold a first certificate of competency. Priority will be given to junior officers employed on ships on the British register.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has not only been able to confirm his willingness to continue to support the GAFT scheme but has also been able to commit resources to ensure the successful launch and ongoing assessment of this NVQ/SVQ initiative.

I believe that this package of measures represents further evidence of the Government's continuing commitment to the United Kingdom merchant fleet.

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will announce the allocation of the transport supplementary grant and credit approvals for capital expenditure on local roads and transport in England for 1994-95.

Mr. MacGregor: This year we are taking all local expenditure together, in accordance with the new package approach to funding. A total of £1,008 million is to be allocated to local highway authorities and passenger transport authorities in England for capital expenditure on their local transport infrastructure in 1994-95. This consists of £329 million in transport supplementary grant —TSG—plus £666 million in annual capital guideline—ACG—and supplementary credit approval—SCA, and £13 million in public transport facilities grant. With the help of capital reserves and developer contributions we therefore expect authorities to be able to spend considerably over £1,000 million in total.

Tables 1, 2 and 3 deal with the roads element of the settlement. Table 1 sets out the national totals for different types of expenditure. Table 2 shows the total amounts of TSG, credit approval and gross approved expenditure for each of the 108 local highway authorities. The Department's regional offices are notifying them today of their allocations.

The Government resources available for local roads are some 11 per cent. less than in 1993-94, but are comparable with those for 1992-93. I am glad to announce that authorities will be able to make a start on 35 important road schemes. Thirty-one will be accepted for TSG and four will be supported with only credit approvals.

The new major schemes will, like the 234 others that continue to receive support, relieve communities from the burden of heavy through traffic, and help economic regeneration in towns.

Road safety remains a high priority. Within the reduced overall total, the level of funding for local safety schemes has been maintained at the record 1993-94 level of £50 million. Local authorities continue to make good use of the funds. The 1994-95 allocation should finance schemes with potential to save over 60 lives and prevent about 750 serious injuries and some 4,000 other casualties in a 12-month period.

The £137 million accepted expenditure for bridge maintenance—the same level as last year—should allow authorities to keep up the momentum of this vital work. It has not yet been possible to establish a satisfactory way to help British Rail fund their share of the cost of assessing their road bridges. To avoid further delay on this important work it has been decided that in 1994-95 it should be funded from allocations to local highway authorities. Within the unchanged total for bridges, the distribution of allocations for 1994-95 takes account of this extra responsibility.

This is the first year in which urban transport packages have featured in the local transport settlement. The submission of packages has been optional in this settlement: but from next year packages are expected to become the norm for urban areas. In submitting a package bid, authorities are required to base proposals on a coherent transport strategy which covers all relevant modes of transport.

The settlement will allow a number of packages to get off to a strong start. Two packages submitted this year for metropolitan areas—the West Midlands and Leeds—have been allocated significant levels of funding. In addition, we are giving substantial support to a number of shire town packages.

The public transport settlement makes £103·577 million available, in addition to the funds provided for packages, and cover for ERDF. The Government's substantial commitment to the South Yorkshire Supertram continues, and there is continued funding for the Leeds/Bradford electrification. New starts include the next phase of the Robin Hood Line in Nottinghamshire and renewal of the electrical and traction equipment of the Blackpool tramway.

Table 1

	£ million
Existing commitments	391·305
New major TSG schemes	46·954
Maintenance of principal roads	151·000
Bridges	137·000
Non-grant-aided	
Local safety scheme SCA	50·000
Block SCA for minor works	60·254
Package SCA	10·000
Scheme-specific SCA	20·675
IDA	8·700
ERDF SCA	18·600
TOTAL	894·488

Table 2
Local authority capital expenditure on roads
1994-95

£ million

	Government grant (TSG)	*Total borrowing approval*	*Gross approved spending*
Counties			
Avon	7·320	10·230	18·750
Bedfordshire	1·910	3·127	5·037
Berkshire	2·426	5·699	10·203
Buckinghamshire	0·945	2·311	3·256
Cambridgeshire	2·244	4·362	6·716
Cheshire	8·794	11·433	21·989
Cleveland	4·216	6·710	12·702
Cornwall	5·036	6·202	11·260
Cumbria	1·803	2·946	4·927
Derbyshire	1·811	3·115	5·175
Devon	4·066	5·854	9·920
Dorset	2·258	3·700	5·958
Durham	4·607	5·921	11·203
East Sussex	3·154	4·676	8·260
Essex	7·757	11·561	19·318
Gloucestershire	2·595	4·542	8·302
Hampshire	10·192	16·236	28·264
Hereford and Worcester	1·179	2·328	3·647
Hertfordshire	5·019	6·984	12·011
Humberside	5·822	9·749	17·385
Isle of Wight	0·363	2·619	2·982
Kent	43·616	48·157	94·074
Lancashire	9·550	14·368	26·351
Leicestershire	1·257	4·635	7·603
Lincolnshire	2·611	4·821	7·432
Norfolk	4·902	8·256	14·275
Northamptonshire	2·457	3·678	6·135
Northumberland	3·569	4·207	7·776
North Yorkshire	4·298	8·904	15·614
Nottinghamshire	4·326	6·292	10·715
Oxfordshire	0·000	3·096	5·167
Shropshire	1·262	2·940	4·481
Somerset	3·271	5·615	10·460
Staffordshire	5·861	8·555	14·416
Suffolk	3·579	5·758	9·337
Surrey	10·863	14·282	26·095
Warwickshire	1·611	2·893	4·504
West Sussex	2·625	4·043	7·013
Wiltshire	0·705	2·518	4·000
Metropolitan Districts			
Bolton	1·424	2·032	3·694
Bury	0·860	1·406	2·266
Manchester	9·654	14·013	24·684
Oldham	1·360	2·881	5·115
Rochdale	0·874	1·546	2·420
Salford	1·032	1·917	2·949
Stockport	2·141	2·606	4·834
Tameside	0·712	1·214	1·929
Trafford	3·827	5·857	11·399
Wigan	0·336	0·904	1·414
Knowsley	3·764	10·130	19·498
Liverpool	2·572	3·446	6·018
St. Helens	0·209	0·513	0·722
Sefton	0·274	0·848	1·122
Wirral	0·963	1·980	3·083
Barnsley	2·674	3·619	6·667
Doncaster	2·437	3·428	6·248
Rotherham	1·613	2·606	4·802
Sheffield	5·286	10·369	20·146
Gateshead	0·000	0·939	1·351
Newcastle upon Tyne	3·442	4·801	9·255
North Tyneside	0·529	1·163	1·692
South Tyneside	0·350	0·880	1·319
Sunderland	0·569	2·144	3·733
Birmingham	15·749	18·912	36·093
Coventry	3·835	7·462	14·401
Dudley	4·408	5·441	9·849
Sandwell	2·288	2·792	5·080
Solihull	1·428	1·773	3·201
Walsall	7·854	8·742	17·034
Wolverhampton	7·483	9·790	18·857
Bradford	2·817	4·230	7·215
Calderdale	1·442	1·970	3·412
Kirklees	1·857	5·222	7·079
Leeds	6·981	10·647	18·507
Wakefield	1·344	2·077	3·421
London Boroughs			
City of London	0·305	1·444	1·749
Barking and Dagenham	0·269	0·863	1·132
Barnet	0·330	2·272	2·602
Bexley	3·342	4·322	8·022
Brent	0·829	1·914	2·743
Bromley	0·556	1·339	1·895
Camden	1·542	2·522	4·064
Croydon	1·859	3·184	5·045
Ealing	0·000	2·234	3·269
Enfield	1·909	3·077	5·507
Greenwich	0·948	1·590	2·613
Hackney	0·648	2·059	3·347
Hammersmith and Fulham	1·457	4·059	5·516
Haringey	0·718	2·441	3·159
Harrow	1·760	4·462	8·594
Havering	0·154	0·714	0·868
Hillingdon	0·000	3·223	5·129
Hounslow	2·103	3·462	5·599
Islington	0·703	2·424	3·127
Kensington and Chelsea	0·061	0·798	1·153
Kingston upon Thames	1·251	2·104	3·505
Lambeth	0·501	1·227	1·728
Lewisham	1·675	5·553	9·877
Merton	0·000	1·345	1·727
Newham	4·033	6·368	11·174
Redbridge	0·546	1·143	1·689
Richmond upon Thames	0·331	1·605	1·936
Southwark	1·282	2·551	3·842
Sutton	0·373	1·836	2·318
Tower Hamlets	1·927	3·446	5·373
Waltham Forest	0·455	1·746	2·510
Wandsworth	2·132	4·269	6·401
Westminster	1·166	2·316	3·709

Note: Gross approved expenditure exceeds the sum of grant and borrowing approval if an authority holds unused grant from previous years.

Table 3

Authority	*Scheme*
New TSG major schemes	
East Sussex	A22 new route (Dittons to Seaside), Eastbourne
Kent	A289 Gillingham northern link
Kent	A289 Wainscott northern bypass
Avon	Avon ring road stage 2 (B4465 Shortwood to A420 Warmley)
Cornwall	A390 Probus bypass
Devon	A386 Hatherleigh bypass
Somerset	A39-A371 Wells relief road
Wiltshire	A350 East Knoyle bypass
Birmingham	A34-A435 South Birmingham improvements (phase 1)
Staffordshire	A50 Uttoxeter bypass (phases 1 and 2)
Cheshire	A533 Davenham bypass
Salford	A5063 Trafford road (The Quays-White City)
Trafford	A5063 Trafford road improvement
Cleveland	A173-A174 Skelton and Brotton bypass
Durham	A691 Witton Gilbert bypass
Northumberland	A189 Kitty Brewster bridge duplication
Doncaster	A630 Wheatley Hall road dualling
Leeds	Leeds city centre loop road (phase 3)
Wakefield	A628 Hemsworth bypass
Derbyshire	A6 London road diversion, Derby
Northamptonshire	A45-A605 dualling, Higham Ferrers-Stanwick
Nottinghamshire	A6096 Awsworth and Cossall bypass
Nottinghamshire	A6117 Mansfield eastern outer ring road (phase 2)
Bedfordshire	A507 Arlesey-Stotfold bypass
Cambridgeshire	A1123 Needingworth bypass
Hertfordshire	A121 Cheshunt link road
Norfolk	A143 Brockdish-Needham bypass
Suffolk	A143 Rickinghall-Botesdale bypass
Greenwich	A206 Woolwich road improvement
Harrow	A409 Sheepcote road widening
Kingston	A240 north-south corridor improvements, Kingston
Other schemes (non TSG)	
Essex	A134 Colchester eastern approaches (stage 1)
Essex	B1013 access road to Southend
Lincolnshire	A16 Gosberton link to Spalding bypass
Staffordshire	A50 Victoria place link, Stoke on Trent

Table 4

	£ million
West Midlands	[1]93·579
Leeds/West Yorkshire PTA	93·628
Bournemouth and Poole	[2]0·5
Brighton	0·5
Exeter	0·4
Oxford	0·8
Shrewsbury	0·6
Staines	0·3
Swindon	0·6
Winchester	0·6
Hull	0·1
Canterbury	0·05
Ipswich	0·05

[1] The figures for the West Midlands and Leeds packages include existing commitments to major schemes in the package area.

[2] Figures for shire town packages are in addition to the normal allocations for the relevant shires, as shown in Table 2.

Table 5

Local authority capital expenditure on public transport Metropolitan Districts and Passenger Transport Authorities

Scheme	*Approved expenditure £ million*
Greater Manchester	
Bury	
bus priority	0·050
Manchester	
Victoria Arena—transport aspects	0·750
Salford	
bus priority	0·075
Stockport	
bus priority	0·100
Trafford	
bus priority	0·150
PTA	
new signalling centre	1·000
other works	3·400
Merseyside	
Knowsley	
bus priority	0·330
Wirral	
bus priority	0·040

Scheme	*Approved expenditure £ million*
PTA	
New signalling centre	1·800
City Challenge-related work	2·500
other works	2·537
South Yorkshire	
Doncaster	
bus priority	0·070
PTA	
South Yorkshire Supertram	54·712
other works	2·500
Tyne and Wear	
Gateshead	
bus priority	0·075
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	
bus priority	0·003
PTA	
general works	2·539
West Midlands	
package[1]	
West Yorkshire	
Leeds	
package[1]	
PTA	
West Yorks electrification	11·810
Class 308 refurbishment	2·030
other works	2·500
County councils	
Avon	
bus priority	0·230
Cleveland	
bus priority	0·825
Cornwall	
minor projects	0·085
Derbyshire	
Ivanhoe rail re-opening	0·110
Devon	
bus priority	0·008
package[1]	
Dorset	
package[1]	
East Sussex	
package[1]	
Hampshire	
bus priority	0·080
package[1]	
Humberside	
package[1]	
Kent	
noise measures	0·600
bus priority	0·300
package[1]	
Lancashire	
Blackpool Tramway re-cabling	1·460
bus priority	0·420
Leicestershire	
Ivanhoe rail re-opening	2·684
Nottinghamshire	
Robin Hood rail re-opening[2]	6·500
bus priority	0·225
Oxfordshire	
bus priority	0·085
minor projects	0·024
package[1]	
Shropshire	
bus priority	0·100
package[1]	
Suffolk	
bus priority	0·850
package[1]	
Surrey	
package[1]	
Wiltshire	
package[1]	

[1] See table 4.

[2] Provisional.

Marchioness

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has anything to add to the oral ministerial statement of 9 July 1992, *Official Report*, column 699, that there was no case for an inquiry into the Marchioness disaster since it was clear that all the facts had been established.

Mr. Norris: No.

Lorries (Loads)

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce a requirement for lorries carrying minerals, stone, sand, grit and excavated materials on public roads to have such loads securely sheeted.

Mr. Key: The safety of loads on vehicles used on the roads is controlled by the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986. Regulation 100(2) requires that any load carried by a vehicle be secured, if necessary, by additional restraints so that it is not likely to cause danger or nuisance by moving, falling or blowing off the vehicle. This would cover the sheeting of loads.

In addition, regulations have recently been introduced under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 specifically to require lorries working in quarries to sheet their loads to prevent dust. While these regulations do not apply on a public road, vehicles will need to be sheeted before entering a quarry and to remain sheeted after loading as far as the exit from the site. Drivers are unlikely to deliberately remove the sheeting once on the road.

Road Safety Report

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the next road safety report will be published.

Mr. Key: We plan to issue a new road safety report in about a year's time.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the cost of advertising by his Department has been for each year since 1979 and for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Norris: The cost of advertising for publicity campaigns by my Department for each year since 1979 is as follows:

	£'000s
1979-80	5,840
1980-81	5,704
1981-82	5,488
1982-83	4,648

	£'000s
1983-84	6,499
1984-85	5,279
1985-86	5,788
1986-87	5,819
1987-88	5,510
1988-89	5,709
1989-90	6,434
1990-91	8,062
1991-92	9,522
1992-93	9,831
[1]1993-94	9,555

[1] estimated

Cost of advertising for each of last 12 months cannot be readily calculated since advertising campaigns are planned, researched and executed over a period of months with expenditure being incurred over a similar period. Therefore only the total annual cost of campaigns has been given.

Trunk Roads

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be able to announce details of his Department's expenditure on trunk roads for 1994-95.

Mr. Key: I expect to make an announcement about my plans for national roads early in the new year.

Klondyker Ships

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to ensure the safety of Klondyker ships in United Kingdom territorial waters but outside the Lerwick harbour boundary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The primary responsibility for ensuring the safety of any ship rests with the flag state.

As the Klondykers are engaging in a commercial activity they require a licence, in this case from the Secretary of State for Scotland. Section 27 of Merchant Shipping Act 1979 allows the inspection of any such foreign ship in United Kingdom territorial waters. My right hon. Friend has implemented an intensive programme of inspections of Klondyker ships around the Shetland Islands.

A code of practice for Klondykers is being prepared. This will apply to vessels within United Kingdom territorial limits.

The Government will take appropriate action where there is a threat to human life or to the environment.

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

Mr. MacGregor: The annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91 was £186,000. Five vehicles were involved. These charges did not cover the full cost of the car service and rates have since been raised to reflect this.

Air Safety

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the titles, names of contractors and dates of all external research contracts on air safety commissioned by his Department since 1985.

Mr. Norris: Following an examination of the Department's records I can inform the hon. Member that the only external safety-related research directly commissioned by the Department are the following:

1. Impact Modelling Programme commissioned with the University of Cranfield's Impact Centre in 1991, and;
2. Explosion/Decompression Signature Identification Research Programme, commissioned with the University of Southampton in 1993.

These are both in support of the Department's air accident investigation branch.

The responsibility for the safety regulation of civil aviation rests with the Civil Aviation Authority. As a consequence research aimed at improving safety standards is commissioned by the Authority. Occasionally the Department has contributed funds for specific projects managed by the CAA.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice is given to civil pilots concerning the actions to be taken to maximise safety when entering an area known to be subject to directional flow control for military low flying.

Mr. Norris: In the interest of mutual flight safety civilian pilots have been given advice and information on military low flying operations and the directional flow control for military low flying in the following recent publications and circulars:

1. June 1993—Information Circular AIC 89/1993.
2. August 1993—The United Kingdom Aeronautical Information Publication (the United Kingdom Air Pilot) section RAC 5-0-1.1.
3. August 1993—The Civil Aviation Authority's General Aviation Safety Information Leaflet.

I have made arrangements with the Civil Aviation Authority for the hon. Member to receive copies of the documents mentioned.

MV Braer

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the report of the Donaldson inquiry into the Braer incident at Orkney will be published.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on 24 November, column 64.

Thameslink

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what provision has been made in the Government's public spending plans for 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97 for expenditure on improvements to Thameslink including those that British Rail and London Underground have advised will be required for the King's Cross-St. Pancras interchange and the Victoria and Piccadilly lines to be able to cope with commuters using the channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Norris: No provision has been made as yet. We are giving careful consideration to the 29 October report from Union Railways and to the comments which we have received from London Transport.

It is too early to say what provision might be required.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will call off DVLA's review into its local offices until the trail of automated direct registration has been completed; and how the DVLA's review can come to any conclusions before the direct registration trail has been completed.

Mr. Key: No. The review will provide the agency with a range of options for the future. Estimates of the effect of automated first registration on local offices have been built into the business case for the project and the consultants carrying out the review will take these into account in framing their proposals.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many roadside checks Touche Ross consultants attended while carrying out the review for DVLA on the work of inquiry officers in London;

(2) on how many occasions Touche Ross consultants accompanied inquiry officers on duty whilst compiling its report on the work of DVLA inquiry officers in London;

(3) what were the costs of the recent review of inquiry officers' work in DVLA enforcement offices in Sidcup and Great Marlborough street, London.

Mr. Key: Touche Ross has not carried out any investigation into the work of these officers. It has been advising the agency on its overall market testing strategy for 1993-94, of which the LEO inquiry officers are only one element.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost of new DVLA stationery bearing the charter mark; and whether DVLA has scrapped all existing non-charter mark stationery.

Mr. Key: There is no additional cost. The charter mark logo is being incorporated into new stationery as it is reprinted in the normal course of business with old stocks being used up first.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost of producing the DVLA staff magazine "Licence" for the year 1992-93 and for the current financial year to date.

Mr. Key: The cost of producing "Licence" for 1992-93 was £40,000. The cost so far for the current financial year is £25,000.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what were the total number and value of returned cheques passed to the DVLA staff magazine Licence for the financial year 1992-93 and for the current financial year to date;

(2) what were the total number and value of returned cheques passed to DVLA for the financial year 1992-93 and for the current financial year to date.

Mr. Key: Since April 1992 Post Office Counters Ltd. has been responsible for recover, but not prosecution, action on cheques accepted by them in payment for vehicle excise licences. The numbers and value are:

	April 1992 to March 1993	*April 1993 to November 1993*
Number	132,000	81,000
Value	£13 million	£9 million

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if Touche Ross consultants have carried out a review of inquiry officers' work in the DVLA: and whether consultants visited the enforcement offices concerned.

Mr. Key: No such review has taken place.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if staff employed by DVLA have been issued with instructions not to answer questions from National Audit Office staff carrying out a study into vehicle excise duty collection-enforcement, unless a manager is present.

Mr. Key: The guidance notes issued to DVLA staff are designed to help the NAO to carry out their work as efficiently as possible. To avoid any misunderstandings an account of all NAO interviews will be kept by a designated staff member. All staff interviewed are asked to give honest, factual and considered answers. This arrangement is in accordance with standard procedures and was agreed with the NAO team involved in this study.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the amount of unpaid vehicle excise duty in the United Kingdom for each year from 1987-88;

(2) if he will estimate for the financial year 1992-93 the amount of unpaid vehicle excise duty in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Key: The figures for Great Britain with the revenue recovered from fines and penalties are as follows:

£ million

	Unpaid VED	*Revenue from fines and penalties*
1987-88	95	23·6
1988-89	100	25·7
1989-90	105	26
1990-91	105	27·6
1991-92	115	34·4
1992-93	130	37·5

In addition, in 1992-93 an extra £14 million in revenue was raised through evaders relicensing vehicles as a direct result of enforcement action. Corresponding figures are not available for earlier years.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by vehicle registration office, the number, grades and salary costs of staff employed on vehicle excise duty enforcement and the total amount of revenue collected by those staff in 1992-93.

Mr. Key: The information requested is as follows:

Staff In Posts and Salaries 1992-93

(£000s)

VRO by Region	*Executive staff*	*Clerical staff*	*Salary costs*
Scottish			
Aberdeen	—	4	40
Carlisle	1	4	53
Dundee	—	4	33

VRO by Region	*Executive staff*	*Clerical staff*	*Salary costs*
Edinburgh	1	11	140
Glasgow	2	25	262
Inverness	—	3	23
Middlesborough	2	12	104
Newcastle	3	18	197
Total			852
North England and North Wales			
Bangor	2	7	86
Chester	1	8	91
Huddersfield	1	7	93
Hull	2	7	95
Leeds	4	20	234
Liverpool	3	21	252
Manchester	4	21	278
Preston	2	14	135
Sheffield	2	14	155
Total			1,419
Midlands			
Birmingham	5	24	326
Coventry	1	12	120
Dudley	1	9	99
Leicester	1	13	114
Lincoln	2	10	130
Northampton	1	11	148
Nottingham	1	15	152
Peterborough	1	9	106
Shrewsbury	—	5	37
Stoke	1	8	85
Total			1,317
Southwest England and South Wales			
Bristol	4	23	270
Cardiff	4	20	205
Exeter	4	17	179
Gloucester	2	10	130
Haverfordwest	1	3	17
Swansea	2	9	75
Taunton	2	7	91
Truro	2	5	100
Worcester	2	8	110
Total			1,177
London and Eastern			
Chelmsford	5	24	310
Ipswich	2	9	115
Luton	6	30	397
Norwich	2	10	101
Total			923
Southern			
Bournemouth	3	12	163
Brighton	4	24	274
Guildford	3	14	179
Maidstone	4	20	288
Oxford	1	11	105
Portsmouth	3	15	177
Reading	2	16	201
Swindon	1	7	76
Total			1,463
London Enforcement Office	37	207	3,391

The total salary costs for 1992-93 was £10·5 million. The revenue recovered for 1992-93 was as follows:

	£ million
Out of court settlements paid	10·5
Prosecution	27
Total	37·5

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each no further steps code the number of vehicle excise duty offence reports written off for the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Key: VED offence reports are written off as "no further steps" when enforcement action has had to be discontinued for a specified reason. The figures for 1992-93 were:

	Number
NFS 1 (unable to trace the offender or prove liability for the offence)	408,000
NFS 2 (time expired for court action)	1,200
NFS 3 (insufficient staff resource)	1,200

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many vehicle excise duty offence reports *(a)* were settled out of court or *(b)* resulted in a prosecution and fines, in 1992-93 and in the current financial year.

Mr. Key: The number of VED enforcement cases brought to a successful conclusion in 1992-93 and between April and November 1993 were:

	1992-93 April-March	*1993-94 April-November*
By out of court settlement	242,000	157,000
By prosecution	193,000	140,000

In addition, in 1992-93 180,000 motorists were induced to take out a licence as a direct result of enforcement action. To November this year the figure stands at 137,000.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many vehicle excise offences reports have been generated so far this financial year;

(2) how many vehicle excise offences reports were received by DVLA in 1992-93.

Mr. Key: The number of vehicles reported to DVLA for alleged VED offences in 1992-93 was 1·8 million and 1·2 million for this financial year to November.

Child Road Deaths

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by year since 1979 the number of children below 16 years of age killed as a result of road traffic accidents *(a)* between 7 am and 10 am and *(b)* between 2 pm and 6 pm when clocks were set at (i) GMT and (ii) BST.

Mr. Key: The information requested is shown in the table.

The data indicate that:

(a) there are more child road deaths in the summer than in the winter and that especially in the summer many more deaths occur in the afternoon, when children are out and about more; and

(b) very significant progress has been made over this period in reducing child road casualties but more needs to be done.

Child fatalities, morning and afternoon periods, during BST and GMT[1] *1979-92*

Year	*Clocks set at GMT* *Morning (7-10 am)*	*Clocks set at GMT* *Afternoon (2-6 pm)*	*Clocks set at BST* *Morning (7-10 am)*	*Clocks set at BST* *Afternoon (2-6 pm)*
1979	26	101	36	234
1980	28	96	34	193
1981	25	105	56	197
1982	28	89	34	170
1983	24	114	40	203
1984	23	92	33	194
1985	26	91	22	166
1986	30	87	33	144
1987	20	66	43	154
1988	25	82	31	142
1989	19	68	32	153
1990	18	54	29	139
1991	11	66	23	135
1992	16	60	13	86
Total	319	1,171	459	2,310

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[1] Clocks are set at BST for approximately seven months of the year and at GMT for approximately five months.

Catalytic Converters

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research has been undertaken to evaluate the performance of catalytic converters in a typical urban driving situation in Britain; and whether the reductions in emissions have been quantified.

Mr. Key: The Department has a number of research programmes on vehicles emissions which include analysis of catalyst cars. Recent unpublished work at the Warren Spring Laboratory, has compared the emission performance of catalyst-equipped cars against non-catalyst cars, for an equal mix of hot start and normal ambient cold start operation, over actual urban road driving and over dynamometer driving cycles that simulate typical urban driving. The results show, on average, that a catalyst equipped car reduces carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and oxides of nitrogen by 76 per cent., 81 per cent., and 77 per cent. respectively over an equivalent non-catalyst car over a typical journey length of 4 km. Similar research carried out under the EU Drive programme, but under hot starting conditions only, shows reductions of 77 per cent., 90 per cent. and 85 per cent. respectively for the same pollutants.

Heavy Vehicles

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate has been made of the volume of heavy goods vehicle traffic that will transfer from the M6 to the proposed Birmingham northern relief road; and what percentage this is of through and overall HGV traffic.

Mr. Key: The BNRR concessionaire, Midland Expressway Ltd., currently estimates that by the design year of 2011 the HGV traffic on BNRR would be as follows, about 55 per cent.—or approximately 7,000 vehicles per day—of the through trips which otherwise would have used M6 between junctions 4 and 11 are predicted to transfer. These figures represent up to about 20 per cent. of the total HGV traffic along this section of M6.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what authority has been given or licences issued by his Department to Collins Road Services or to CRS to operate or park heavy vehicles on land known as Chaney's, Hubbards farm, West Drayton road, Hillingdon, Middlesex; what consultations have taken place with the London borough of Hillingdon on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 14 December 1993]:* Decisions on individual operator licences are the responsibility of the traffic commissioners. I have asked the traffic commissioner for the south-eastern and metropolitan traffic area to write to my hon. Friend.

Trunk Road Assessment

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the report of the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment on how far new roads generate traffic will be published; and what were the reasons for delay in publication.

Mr. Key: The standing committee on trunk road assessment is still looking into the question of generated traffic and has not yet reported its findings to my Department.

HEALTH

NHS Trusts

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list each contract made with NHS trusts by *(a)* Her Majesty's Government and *(b)* regional health authorities for the current year.

Dr. Mawhinney: The readily available information is shown in the table. More detailed information could only be provided at disproportionate cost. A list of contracts made by trusts with regional health authorities is not available centrally.

Supra-regional services
Choriocarcinoma
Weston Park Hospital NHS Trust, Sheffield
Fulminant liver failure
King's College Hospital NHS Trust, London
Heart transplantation
Harefield Hospital NHS Trust (in association with Royal Brompton Hospital)
Northern General Hospital NHS Trust, Sheffield
Papworth Hospital NHS Trust, Cambridge
St. George's Hospital NHS Trust, London
Freeman Hospital NHS Trust, Newcastle

Liver transplantation
St. James's University Hospital NHS Trust, Leeds
King's College Hospital NHS Trust, London
Royal Free Hospital NHS Trust, London
Addenbrooke's Hospital NHS Trust, Cambridge
Freeman Hospital NHS Trust, Newcastle
Neonatal and infant cardiac surgery
Freeman Hospital NHS Trust, Newcastle
Guy's Hospital NHS Trust, London
Harefield Hospital NHS Trust
Bristol Royal Hospital for Sick Children NHS Trust
Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital NHS Trust (Alder Hey)
Southampton General Hospital NHS Trust
Paediatric liver services and Complex hepatobiliary surgery
King's College Hospital NHS Trust, London
Proton therapy for large uveal melanomas
Mersey Centre for Radiotherapy and Oncology Clatterbridge Hospital NHS Trust, Wirral
Managed through Centrally Commissioned R&D programme
Vitamin K a possible risk for childhood cancer (Welsh Office)
Llandough Hospital NHS Trust, Penarth, Glamorgan
Nottingham heart attack register
University Hospital Nottingham NHS Trust
The patterns of delay in mental health review tribunals
King's College Hospital NHS Trust, London
Managed as part of the NHS R and D programme
Development of a transport incubator support system
King's Healthcare NHS Trust, (care of King's College Hospital NHS Trust, Denmark Hill site, London)
Development of a novel pneumatic driver for a paracorporeal ventricular assist device
Harefield Hospital NHS Trust
Development of a supra-pubic urine collection system
Southmead Health Services NHS Trust, Bristol
Development of a neo-anal system
The Royal London Hospital NHS Trust
Poisons Information Services
Guy's and St. Thomas's Hospital NHS Trust, London
United Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust
High Security Infectious Diseases Unit
Coppetts Wood Hospital (managed by the Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust)
Minimally Invasive Therapy Project
Minimally invasive therapy project, United Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

EC Health Statistics

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, for each EC country for the latest available year, *(a)* the life expectancy for men and women and *(b)* the death rate from (i) asthma, (ii) heart disease, (iii) breast cancer, (iv) lung cancer and (v) suicide, *(c)* the deaths from road traffic accidents per head of population, *(d)* the number of under-16 pregnancies per 1,000 population, *(e)* the number of 11 to 15-year-old boys and girls smoking per 1,000 girls and boys and *(f)* the number of (1) nurses and (2) midwives per head of population.

Mr. Sackville: The life expectancy for men and women in each European Economic Community country for the latest available year is shown in Table 1. Table 2 shows death rates per 100,000 population for various causes of deaths.

The number of under 16 pregnancies per 1,000 population for each EEC country is not available centrally. This information is collected for England and Wales. For the latest available year, 1991, the pregnancy rate is 9·3 per 1,000 girls in the 13-15 age group. Comparable data are not available for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The number of 11 to 15-year-old boys and girls smoking per 1,000 population is not available centrally. However, a report on the European position on smoking amongst 11 to 15-year-old children in 1990 was published by the European Bureau for Action on Smoking Prevention (BASP). The survey was based on a small sample of only 9,312 young people (4,778 boys and 4,534 girls) representing about 800 young people per country (250 in Luxembourg) and the results are shown in table 3.

Information on the number of nurses and midwives per head of population for each EEC country is not available centrally.

Table 1
The life expectancy for men and women in each EEC country for the latest available year

		Males	*Females*
Belgium	1987	72·0	78·9
Denmark	1991	72·6	78·2
France	1990	73·4	81·8
Germany	1990	72·0	78·6
Greece	1990	74·6	79·8
Ireland	1990	72·0	77·7
Italy	1989	73·6	80·4
Luxembourg	1991	71·8	79·2
Netherlands	1990	73·9	80·3
Portugal	1991	69·8	77·3
Spain	1989	73·4	80·5
United Kingdom	1991	73·3	78·8

Source: 1992 World Health Statistics Annual.

Table 2: Death rates per 100,000 population for selected causes of death for each EEC country for the latest available year

		Bronchitis, chronic and unspecified emphysema and asthma (ICD 490-493)		*Diseases of the circulatory system (ICD 390-459)*		*Malignant neoplasm of breast cancer (ICD 174-175)*		*Malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung (ICD 162)*		*Suicide and self-inflicted injury (ICD E950-E959)*		*Motor vehicle traffic accidents (ICD E800-E819)*	
		Males	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*
Belgium	1987	39·6	15·8	406·4	451·5	n/a	45·5	119·2	14·1	32·0	13·8	29·1	10·6
Denmark	1991	57·6	40·7	511·7	508·6	0·3	50·4	79·4	45·5	30·0	15·1	16·8	6·5
France	1990	16·5	12·8	287·3	327·0	n/a	34·9	68·1	9·7	29·6	11·1	26·5	9·2
Germany	1990	42·9	22·4	503·8	657·5	n/a	42·7	71·6	16·5	24·9	10·7	19·5	7·6
Greece	1990	4·1	2·3	474·6	498·0	n/a	24·8	81·2	13·9	5·5	1·5	33·9	11·0
Ireland	1990	21·5	13·8	437·0	380·2	n/a	34·4	59·7	27·7	14·4	4·7	19·2	6·9
Italy	1989	43·6	19·8	387·2	416·9	n/a	36·8	89·9	14·6	11·2	4·1	24·4	6·4
Luxembourg	1991	34·2	15·2	412·0	462·2	n/a	45·6	80·6	15·7	28·5	11·7	31·1	11·7
Netherlands	1990	30·9	10·2	350·3	340·3	n/a	43·5	94·9	16·3	12·3	7·2	12·2	5·1
Portugal	1991	19·8	10·3	451·5	489·1	n/a	29·3	38·5	8·6	14·9	4·6	47·7	12·3
Spain	1989	14·3	7·5	317·6	371·1	n/a	26·7	64·8	6·4	11·6	3·9	32·9	9·8
United Kingdom	1991	20·2	12·5	508·1	525·4	n/a	52·2	94·5	42·7	12·4	3·6	12·7	5·2

Source: 1992 World Health Statistics Annual.

Table 3

Regular smokers, occasional smokers and non smokers aged 11-15 by EEC country

Per Cent.

	Regular Smokers	*Occasional Smokers*	*Non Smokers*
Belgium	5	2	93
Denmark	6	2	92
France	6	2	92
Germany	7	5	88
Greece	4	1	96
Ireland	4	2	94
Italy	3	1	96
Luxembourg	5	2	93
Netherlands	6	2	92
Portugal	5	2	93
Spain	7	5	88
United Kingdom	6	2	92
EEC	6	3	91

Figures may not add to 100 per cent. due to rounding.

Source: BASP—European Bureau For Action on Smoking Prevention. Survey undertaken 1990.

Zantac

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the health risks of the colouring matter in the drug Zantac.

Mr. Sackville: Zantac is a licensed product. Before any medicinal product may be marketed in the United Kingdom a full assessment of the safety, quality and efficacy is carried out to enable a product licence to be granted by the licensing authority. This assessment also includes consideration of any excipients. All drugs by necessity contain excipients, these are products which must be present for a defined purpose and which must not be of unacceptable toxicity. Colouring agents in medicines are examples of excipients. The colouring in Zantac is one of those permitted by an European Community directive which states that the use of only certain colours in medicinal products is allowed.

Health Service Gifts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what gifts or hospitality officers or directors of health authorities and trusts may accept; and whether such acceptance is required to be recorded.

Dr. Mawhinney: Guidance on the acceptance of gifts and hospitality is contained in HSG(93)5, copies of which are available in the Library.

NHS Staffing

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff were employed in the national health service for the year 1993 in *(a)* nursing and midwifery, *(b)* medical and dental and *(c)* others, to include professional/technical, ancillary, administration/clerical, maintenance, managers, ambulance, staff and others.

Dr. Mawhinney: The latest available information is shown in the table.

National health service staff groups in England at 30 September 1992 in whole-time equivalents in the hospital and community health service.

	Numbers
NHS Staff Group	
Nursing and Midwifery	378,790
Medical and Dental	47,220
Others	363,980
Total	789,990

Notes:

1. All figures are independently rounded to the nearest 10 whole-time equivalents.
2. Figures exclude general medical and dental practice staff.

Acute Beds

Mr. Raymond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will publish a table showing the number of acute beds available in each accident and emergency department in hospitals within the Greater London area in each year since 1989;

(2) if she will estimate how many acute beds will be available in each accident and emergency department in hospitals in the Greater London area in the first week on January 1994.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. Each authority or trust decides the number of beds to be designated as accident and emergency beds in the light of local needs and experience.

Neurosurgery

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what neurosurgical advice is being made available to her on the future location of the regional neurosurgery now carried out at the Brook Hospital;

(2) if proposals for the future location of the South East Thames regional neurosciences will be based on *(a)* advice from a professor of psychiatry, *(b)* advice from the Brook team or *(c)* others.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have received advice from a number of sources, including the South East Thames regional health authority review of regional neurosciences, the neurosciences specialty review and the special health authority research review. All advice will be considered carefully alongside proposals for the development of a neurosciences centre from the Guy's and St. Thomas' Hospital Trust, and from King's Healthcare Trust and the Maudsley hospital.

NHS Trusts (Cars)

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing the number and average cost of cars made available by trusts in the Greater London area to *(a)* chief executives, *(b)* senior managers, *(c)* doctors, *(d)* nurses, *(e)* midwives and *(f)* other staff.

Dr. Mawhinney: Every health authority and national health service trust is required to complete an annual financial return giving details of total expenditure on leased and contract car hire charges. This includes the cost of charges passed on to staff. Detailed information about the number of cars and their allocation is not available centrally.

Rights of the Child

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for health what consideration her Department has given to articles 9 and 18.2 of the UN convention on the rights of the child in relation to the costs to parents of visiting children in hospital; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Consistent with articles 9 and 18.2, we attach particular importance in involving parents in the care and treatment of their children. Under the hospital travel costs scheme, financial assistance is available to parents on low incomes to accompany their children to and from hospital where this is medically necessary. Most national health service hospitals also provide accommodation for parents to enable them to stay overnight at the hospital whilst their children receive treatment. Additional financial help is available from the social fund to enable parents in receipt of income support to visit their children in hospital.

NHS Trusts Budget

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total budget for NHS trusts for *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94; and what is the planned budget for 1994-95.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested for 1992-93 and 1993-94 is shown in the table. The information for 1994-95 will be available in April 1994 following the submission of trust business plans for that year.

Total expenditure: NHS trusts[1]

Year	*£ million*
1992-93	7,416
1993-94	[2]13,721

[1] This figure comprises NHS trust income plus external finance.

[2] Forecast outturn.

NHS Public Bodies

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total budget for NHS public bodies for *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94; and what is the planned budget for 1994-95.

Mr. Sackville: Gross national health service expenditure was £29,413 million in 1992-93. It is forecast to be £30,253 million in 1993-94, and planned to rise to £31,937 in 1994-95.

Air Pollution

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will publish the report of the Advisory Group on Medical Aspects of Air Pollution Episodes on Nitrogen Dioxide.

Mr. Sackville: Oxides of Nitrogen: 3rd report by the Advisory Group on the Medical Aspects of Air Pollution Episodes was published on Monday 13 December. Copies are available in the Library.

Royal Marsden Hospital

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from charitable donors concerning the loss of the new facilities to which they contributed at the Royal Marsden hospital since the publication of the special review report on cancer services.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since the publication of the speciality review report on cancer services in London, we have received 28 such representations, both from organisations and from individuals.

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations she has received from the general public in connection with the future of the Royal Marsden hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: Up to 14 December we had received representations from 1,450 hon. Members and members of the public and two petitions.

Hospices

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretry of State for Health what assessment she has made of the future demand for hospices in Lancashire and the north-west.

Mr. Sackville: It is for health authorities to assess the palliative and other health care needs of their resident populations and ensure that appropriate services are provided, within available resources and reflecting national priorities. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Bruce Martin, chairman of North Western regional health authority, for information on assessments made by that authority.

London Hospitals (Assaults)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital staff have been assaulted by patients or the general public at hospitals in the four regional health authorities that cover the Greater London area during the last 12 months.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the individual regional health authorities for details.

Heart Pacemakers

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many incidents there have been, nationwide, where the cause of death of a patient fitted with Siemens pacemaker lead models 1010T, 1050T and prototype T93 has been related to the pacemaker lead.

Mr. Sackville: According to information held by the National Pacemaker Database there are no recorded incidents. This is a correction to the answer I provided in my reply to the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Ms Prentice) on 4 November 1993 at column *452*.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to make improvements to the London ambulance service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In the last year the London ambulance service (LAS) has made progress both towards improving its response times and in implementing the recommendations of the inquiry into its performance set up last autumn. The management of the service has been re-structured and lines of management accountability strengthened. These moves complement the substantial investment which the Government have made in the service. For example, the number of fully trained paramedics has risen in the last three years from three to 400.

I am pleased to announce today that a further £14·8 million will be invested in the LAS next year. This will make a significant contribution to improving services further, especially by enabling the LAS to replace its older vehicles with 120 new accident and emergency ambulances, over one third of its current fleet, by the summer.

Of the new money, £6·8 million in revenue will be provided by the four Thames Regions. In addition to this, the Government will provide an extra £8 million. £4 million extra capital investment will buy the further 120 new accident and emergency vehicles. The remaining £4 million in revenue funding will be used to increase front line ambulance crews and to train more staff to the required level of paramedic skills.

The Government are determined that this substantial extra investment is well spent and that it produces significant improvements in patient services. For this reason the extra money will be tied to firm targets for improving ambulance performance. The LAS remains below the standard set out in the patients charter with around 60 per cent. of 999 calls currently answered within 14 minutes. We have agreed with the LAS that this should rise to 80 per cent. by next September and to 85 per cent. by April 1995. The Government will keep the LAS under close scrutiny to ensure that these targets are met.

"Making London Better"

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she next intends to meet the chairman of the North East Thames regional health authority to discuss progress implementing "Making London Better".

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I am writing today to Sir William Staveley, Chairman of the North East Thames regional health authority, to inform him of decisions which I have taken relating to health services in north-east London. These will bring an end to uncertainty in the health service in this part of London and will enable us to take a decisive step forward towards better patient care. I intend to make a further announcement in the new year relating to services in other parts of the capital.

A copy of my letter to Sir William, and a further more detailed letter to his regional general manager, will be placed in the Library.

"Making London Better" made clear the strategic need to retain an accident and emergency (A and E) department at University College hospital/Middlesex in order to serve a part of London with a significant local resident population and heavy concentration of visitors, shoppers and commuters. The Government remain committed to this policy, as they do to retaining University College London hospitals (UCLH) as a world-class centre of medical teaching and research. The Government will therefore ensure that UCLH has a secure future.

UCLH will need to make further progress to improve its efficiency. We welcome the fact that, after pressure from its main purchaser, the Camden and Islington health authority, it has already taken steps to do so. In order to ensure that some local acute services are retained at UCLH, discussions are in progress at local level. In addition, we shall accept the advice of the independent specialty reviews to develop the UCLH as the major centre for cancer and cardiac specialty services for this part of London. However, we are not persuaded that renal transplantation work should move from the Royal Free hospital.

As UCLH has itself made clear, its continuing ability to provide high quality patient care and achieve economies will be enhanced by consolidating its services into fewer buildings. I await its detailed proposals for doing so. In the meantime, transitional funding will be available, against an agreed programme of change.

"Making London Better" made clear the need to develop the Homerton Hospital to improve local acute services for the people of Hackney. To achieve this, we will undertake a major redevelopment of the Homerton over the next five years, at an estimated cost of around £25 million subject to formal appraisal.

As part of the Homerton development we will speed up the expansion and improvement of the hospital's accident and emergency department, and the in-patient facilities that support it. This work is in addition to improvements to local primary care facilities which, among other things, will help relieve pressure on local accident and emergency services.

The Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel is already the main accident and emergency centre in East London. It has seen substantial investment recently in the accident and emergency department. We intend to add to this by completing a new 28-bed admissions ward adjacent to the A and E department.

In the light of the improvements to A and E services at the Homerton and the Royal London, our firm commitment to retaining the A and E at UCLH, and new projects to improve local primary care, I have decided that it is both safe and sensible to close the small accident and emergency department at the Smithfield site.

Expert professional advice is that the needs of local residents, and those who work in the City during the day, can be properly met by the alternative services we will be providing. I am also announcing today new investment in the London ambulance service which will enable it to put new emergency vehicles on the road and further improve the service it provides.

Almost half of the patients attending the A and E department at St. Bartholomew's have relatively minor injuries or conditions which do not need to be treated in an accident and emergency department. Their needs will be met by a new national health service facility at St. Bartholomew's specially geared to treating minor injuries and conditions. I welcome the interest the City has shown in this proposal and we will be exploring what positive and practical contribution they can make to its development. In addition, a permanent ambulance base, staffed by paramedics, will be located at Smithfield.

The St. Bartholomew's A and E will not close until the additional facilities at the Homerton and the new facility at Smithfield are ready. We anticipate this happening by October 1994.

The decisions I have announced today are consistent with the long term strategy being developed by the Royal London/St. Bartholomew's/London Chest project team for a phased concentration of services at Whitechapel. This offers the greatest potential for improving patient care.

Detailed proposals for the first phase of the development of the Whitechapel site will come forward shortly. A number of specialist patient services, including cancer, will be retained at Smithfield for some years to come. Medical research and education will continue at Charterhouse square.

Family Guidance Clinics

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many child and family guidance clinics were in existence in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing in 1992-93 prices, the gross public spending for each year since 1990-91 and the projected expenditure for each year to 1995-96 for each executive non-departmental public body sponsored by his Department, as listed in "Public Bodies 1992."

Mr. Sackville: Gross expenditure at 1992-93 prices, as measured by movements in the gross domestic product, for the financial years 1990-91 to 1993-94 for executive non-departmental bodies sponsored by the Department of Health is shown in the table. Planned expenditure for the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting, Medical Practices Committee and Standing Committee on Post Graduate Medical Education in 1994-95 (at 1992-93 prices) is also shown in the table. Allocations for 1994-95 for the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work, Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, National Biological Standards Board, National Radiological Protection Board and Public Health Laboratory Service Board have yet to be agreed. Allocations for 1995-96 will be decided after the 1994 Public Expenditure Survey.

£'000

	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*1994-95*
Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work	17,698	22,893	26,901	30,391	n/a[3]
English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting[1]	136,316	143,185	147,726	15,791	5,871
Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority	—	684	810	1,052	n/a[3]
Medical Practices Committee	300	313	384	346	346
National Biological Standards Board	8,147	9,687	9,592	9,259	n/a[3]
National Radiological Protection Board	5,940	6,142	6,294	6,218	n/a[3]
Public Health Laboratory Service Board	68,481	80,332	75,130	109,430	n/a[3]
Standing Committee on Post Graduate Medical Education	310	357	370	424	424
United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting[2]	272	—	—	—	—

[1] The functions of the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting were altered as a result of the Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Act 1992.

[2] The United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting is largely self financing. The contribution from the Department has reduced over a number of years to nil.

[3] Not available.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards to each of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by her Department.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department sponsors nine executive non-departmental public bodies as listed in the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies", copies of which are available in the Library.

Appointments to the National Biological Standards board, the Public Health Laboratory Service Board and the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting are made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Appointments to both the National Radiological Protection Board and the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work are appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State after consultation with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health makes all the appointments to the Medical Practices Committee except one member who is appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health makes all the appointments to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority and also appoints members on behalf of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Forty per cent. of the members of the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting are elected from the professions and 20 per cent. are directly appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State who also formally appoints elected members. The body has a president, not a chairman, who is elected by the members from amongst their own number.

The chairman and members of the Standing Committee on Postgraduate Medical Education are appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State after consultation and on the recommendation of the Chief Medical Officer.

Community Care Grant

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each local authority what the indicative allocation of social security transfer reviews of social community care grants for 1993-94 would have been if the formula being applied for the composition and distribution of the grant in 1994-95 had previously been applied; and if she will indicate *(a)* the actual increase or decrease in overall funding to each authority that would have occurred, *(b)* the impact upon grant per pensioner, *(c)* the impact upon grant per over-75 and *(d)* the overall ranking in terms of grant per pensioner.

Mr. Bowis: The information will be placed in the Library.

Electoral Register

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the latest estimates by the Registrar General of Populations of those aged 17 years and over, plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16 years, for each district council area and parliamentary constituency in England and Wales, together in each case with the equivalent year's registration figures.

Mr. Sackville: The Registrar General's mid-1992 estimates of residents aged 17 years and over plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16 years in each local authority area of England and Wales have been compared with roughly corresponding 1993 electorate figures and copies will be placed in the Library. There are no similar population estimates for parliamentary constituencies.

EC Health Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the outcome of the EC Health Council of 13 December indicating the voting record of each member state on each item and where no formal votes were taken.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Council adopted resolutions on future guidelines for the "Europe against Cancer" programme and on the extension to the end of 1994 of actions under the "Europe against AIDS" programme. It agreed conclusions on blood self-sufficiency and on setting up an epidemiological network in the Community, and a declaration on European drug prevention week. The Commission presented its Communication on the framework for action in the field of public health, detailed discussion of which is expected at the next Council meeting, under the Greek Presidency. The Council referred back for further consideration by the Committee of Permanent Representatives the subject of reducing tobacco consumption, specifically the Commission's amended proposal for a directive on the approximation of laws on advertising for tobacco products. No formal votes were taken.

Health Service Executives

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the salaries of the chief executives of *(a)* Warrington Hospital Trust, *(b)* Warrington Community national health service trust and *(c)* North Cheshire area health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Asthma

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to promote compliance with the British Thoracic Society's guidelines on the treatment and care of asthma sufferers.

Mr. Sackville: The national health service management executive is considering how it can best promote the use of professionally developed clinical guidelines, such as those of the British Thoracic Society, to improve services to patients.

The NHS management executive recognises the importance of improving the services for people with asthma. It has recently introduced a specific payment for general practitioners who organise chronic disease management programmes for the care of patients with asthma which we expect will result in many more GPs using these guidelines. Ninety per cent. of GPs have been approved for this initiative.

Domiciliary Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what safeguards exist to monitor the quality of domiciliary care purchased privately by elderly or disabled persons.

Mr. Bowis: Reputable agencies are developing codes of practice to ensure that the quality of care they provide is satisfactory. Local authorities who purchase domiciliary care services are able to incorporate quality standards and assurances in their contracts with providers and to monitor compliance. A number of authorities are also inspecting, on a voluntary basis, other independent providers.

The social services inspectorate has recently produced a report "Developing Quality Standards for Home Support Services", which has been sent to all social services authorities and made available to independent providers. In due course more detailed guidance on standards is to be produced after further consultations with interested groups. Copies of the report are available in the Library.

Waiting Times

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what percentage of patients are seen and assessed for treatment within five minutes of arriving in accident and emergency departments;

(2) how many patients are not admitted within a month of their second cancelled operation;

(3) what percentage of patients are seen within 30 minutes of their out-patient appointment time.

Dr. Mawhinney: In the quarter ending 30 September 1993, 80 per cent. (estimated based on samples) of patients attending accident and emergency departments were assessed immediately, only 117 patients failed to be admitted to hospital within one month of their second cancelled operation (most health authorities met this standard in full) and 78 per cent. (estimated based on samples) of patients were seen within 30 minutes of their specified appointment time in out-patient clinics.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of elective episodes, waiting list and booked, by specialty, do not require an overnight stay.

Mr. Sackville: In the first six months of 1993-94 national health service hospitals treated some 47 per cent. of elective episodes in the general and acute sector as day cases. The percentages by specialty are not yet available.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of NHS patients, by specialty, are admitted within *(a)* three months and *(b)* 12 months of being put on a waiting list.

Dr. Mawhinney: The data are shown in the table. The latest year for which figures are available is 1989-90. The figures show, for patients who were admitted, the percentage of those who had been on the waiting list for up to three months, and up to 12 months (including those up to three months).

Percentage of admissions which took place (a) within three months; (b) within 12 months, of being put on a waiting list

England 1989-90	*Up to three months (as per cent. of all in specialty)*	*Up to one year (as per cent. of all in specialty)*
Specialty		
General Surgery	78·3	96·2
Urology	73·9	95·9
T and O	63·8	92·0
ENT	61·2	92·6
Ophthalmology	57·2	91·2
Oral Surgery	65·1	93·0
Restorative Dentistry	73·9	100·0
Paediatric Dentistry	87·5	99·4
Orthodontics	59·0	90·2
Neurosurgery	89·8	99·0
Plastic Surgery	68·3	88·3
Cardothoracic Surgery	85·2	98·2
Paediatric Surgery	78·4	95·5
Accident and Emergency	80·3	98·6
Anaesthetics	92·3	99·1
General Medicine	95·9	99·6
Gastroenterology	94·2	99·5
Endocrinology	95·2	99·4
Clinical Haematology	96·3	99·7
Clinical Physiology	100·0	100·0
Clinical Pharmacology	99·2	100·0
Audiological Medicine	100·0	100·0
Clinical Genetics	100·0	100·0
Palliative Medicine	96·2	96·2
Cardiology	83·1	98·9
Dermatology	93·3	99·2
Thoracic Medicine	94·6	99·6
Infectious Diseases	82·8	99·4
Genito-urinary Medicine	100·0	100·0
Nephrology	97·6	99·8
Medical Oncology	99·7	100·0
Nuclear Medicine	100·0	100·0
Neurology	94·4	99·5
Clinical Neurophysiology	97·0	99·0
Rheumatology	90·8	98·7
Paediatrics	96·6	99·6
Paediatric neurology	95·2	99·7
Geriatric Medicine	95·2	99·3
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	95·6	100·0
Obstetrics (delivery)	62·6	99·4
Gynaecology	81·6	97·9
General Practice	88·9	94·4
Maternity function	50·2	100·0
GP (other than maternity)	89·2	98·9
Mental handicap	93·5	99·9
Mental illness	97·2	99·2
Child/adolescent psychiatry	90·8	99·5
Forensic psychiatry	100·0	100·0
Psychotherapy	100·0	100·0
Old age psychiatry	94·9	96·9
Radiotherapy	99·1	99·8
Radiology	95·1	99·3
General pathology	98·6	100·0
Blood transfusion[1]	—	—
Chemical pathology	87·2	99·3
Haematology	98·4	99·7
Histopathology	100·0	100·0
Immunopathology	100·0	100·0
Medical microbiology[1]	—	—
Neuropathology[1]	—	—
Community Medicine	100·0	100·0
Occupational Medicine	88·9	100·0
Other Maternity Event[1]	—	—
or specialty code invalid	80·4	95·8

[1] No elective episodes were recorded for these specialties.

Source: Hospital Episode System, England, 1989-90

Notes:

1. Those episodes with a waiting time under three months are also contained in the figure for waiting times under 12 months.
2. Specialties are shown as listed at 31 March 1990.

ENVIRONMENT

Beaches

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the beaches to be monitored by the National Rivers Authority for pollution levels in 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr. Yeo: Bathing waters, within the scope of the bathing water directive, which were monitored by the National Rivers Authority in 1993-94 are listed in the Department's News Release No. 818. Copies have been placed in the Library. The same waters and any additional waters identified as within the scope of the directive will be monitored next year. Information on the monitoring of waters outside the scope of the directive is available from the NRA.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environmental, pursuant to his answer of 30 November, *Official Report,* column *497,* when in 1994 he expects the extension to Beckton will open; how long the delays in start up have been to date; what penalties Alcatel has incurred for late delivery of operating software; and whether the service will also operate in evenings and at weekends.

Mr. Baldry: The opening of the extension of the docklands light railway to Beckton will take place next March. The original completion date for the extension was the end of 1992; that date was revised to October 1993 when the docklands light railway appointed a prime contractor to take overall responsibility for delivering the Beckton extension and for the switchover of the existing railway to the new SELTRAC automatic train control system manufactured by Alcatel. The prime contractor is paid once the extension is fully tested and proven reliable. Alcatel is now liable to substantial liquidated damages for each week's delay in delivering the automatic train control system. Next year docklands light railway intends to return to a full-time schedule similar to that of London Underground, with trains running at evenings and weekends across its network.

Prompt Payment Policy

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what progress had been made on implementing the Government's prompt payment policy in the construction industry;

(2) what advice he gives to specialist sub-contractors when experiencing payment delays on securing implementation of the Government's policy on prompt payment;

(3) when he will be able to implement the prompt payment clauses in Government construction contracts following the issue of guidelines to Government Departments in July.

Mr. Baldry: Government Departments are implementing the policy on prompt payment announced in 1992. My Department has already undertaken a first stage of consultation with the construction industry on the further advice to be given to Departments on incorporation of more specific prompt payment clauses than those currently used in Government works and construction contracts. Our intention is to provide model amendments to standard forms of contract which will give sub-contractors a right to prompt payment by the main contractor, enforceable through the courts. In the light of comments from industry organisations, our proposals are being revised and a further set will be issued for consultation shortly.

Sprinkler Systems

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans his Department has to make the installation of sprinkler systems compulsory in newly constructed homes.

Mr. Baldry: There are no plans at present to make the installation of sprinkler systems compulsory in newly constructed houses in England or Wales, although this will be kept under review.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities in County Durham requested that he direct the Local Government Commission to conduct a further review in accordance with the revised guidelines both before and after the publication of the Commission's final report.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 3 December, *Official Report,* column *761.*

Commercial Leaseholds

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses he has received to the consultation paper on commercial leaseholds; and if he will list the people or organisations concerned.

Mr. Baldry: I have placed in the Library of the House a list of 246 individuals or organisations who have responded to the consultation. A further 13 respondents have asked that their replies remain confidential.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors in relation to dispute resolution procedures for commercial leasehold valuations.

Mr. Baldry: My Department held discussions with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors before issuing our consultation paper on commercial property leases on 27 May 1993. The paper discusses arrangements for dispute resolution procedures, among other issues. The Institution has responded to the paper; we are paying careful attention to its views, as well as to those of the many other respondents.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the results of his consultations on commercial leaseholders.

Mr. Baldry: We hope to make an announcement before Easter.

National Sustainability Strategy

Mr. Milligan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the national sustainability strategy will include a national coastal strategy to integrate wildlife, land claim, marina developments, fisheries and recreation; and if the biodiversity national plan will include targets to protect threatened flora and farms in the coastal zone.

Mr. Yeo: The Government's proposals for managing the coast and the control of development below the low water mark were set out in the consultation documents issued on 18 October 1993; the responses are under consideration. A sustainable development strategy and the United Kingdom biodiversity action plan will be published in January, after the House returns.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the national sustainability strategy will help to protect the threatened wildlife of lowland raised bogs.

Mr. Yeo: The sustainable development strategy will contain a section on wildlife and habitats but the main strategy and programmes for the conservation of species and habitats will be explained in the United Kingdom biodiversity action plan. Both the sustainable development strategy and the biodiversity action plan are due to be published after the House returns in January.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what measures will be included in the United Kingdom action plan to safeguard lowland raised bogs;

(2) if the threatened wildlife of lowland raised bogs including the Baltic bog moss, the fen violet, the large heath butterfly and the rosy marsh moth will be listed as priorities in the United Kingdom biodiversity action plan.

Mr. Yeo: A strategy for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, including species and habitats will be contained in the United Kingdom biodiversity action plan, which is due to be published after the House returns in January.

Local Government Review

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received calling for the reform of local government in Warwickshire.

Mr. Baldry: Representations are not recorded in this way, so the information could be discovered only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the Local Government Commission's review of Lancashire to be concluded.

Mr. Baldry: The Local Government Commission proposes to submit its final recommendations on the structure of local government in Lancashire to my right hon. Friend by the end of July 1994.

Forests

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, within the newly designated community forest areas, the planting of trees and the provision of public access will be entirely a matter of voluntary agreement between landowners and farmers on the one side and the authorities responsible for the community forests on the other.

Mr. Yeo: Both planting and public access will be voluntary in community forests. We are encouraging landowners to make voluntary agreements on new access arrangements through the community woodland supplement which is part of the woodland grant scheme.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the designation of community forest areas confers a more restrictive planning designation upon those areas than existed before.

Mr. Yeo: No. Local planning authority decisions on individual planning decisions must take account of the development plan, national policy guidance and other material considerations. Applications must be decided in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Community forest plans should be taken into account in the preparation of development plans.

Smoke Detectors

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what monitoring regulations he has introduced in relation to the installation of mains-operated smoke detectors in new-built homes.

Mr. Baldry: The current building regulations, which came into effect on 1 June 1992, call for mains-operated smoke detectors in new homes. There are no regulations requiring the monitoring of detectors over the life of the dwelling. The fire research station periodically investigates local authority and fire service experience of domestic detectors, under a research contract with my Department.

Planning Inspectorate

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what circumstances he takes into consideration in deciding to reverse a decision of the Planning Inspectorate;

(2) how often he has used his powers to overrule a decision reached by the Planning Inspectorate since its inception as an executive agency.

Mr. Baldry: I assume the question relates to planning appeal cases recovered for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment's own decision, where the inspectorate's recommendation is not accepted. Each case is decided on its merits, taking into account the available evidence, which includes relevant development plan policies and all other material considerations. The only information available relates to planning appeals involving local public inquiries. In 1992-93, nine of the 166 decisions issued by my right hon. Friend in respect of such cases were contrary to inspectors' recommendations. Between April and September 1993, four of the 66 appeal decisions issued by my right hon. Friend fell into this category.

Habitats

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary State for the Environment what plans he has to protect those areas of the sea that are important for wildlife under the Habitats and Species directive.

Mr. Yeo: The Government's plans for implementation of the EC habitats directive were set out in their public consultation paper issued on 4 October 1993, a copy of which is in the House library. The document includes proposals for conservation of marine areas which will be selected under the directive.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes to make the proposals for implementation of the new Habitats directive complement the Government's biodiversity action plan and national sustainability strategy.

Mr. Yeo: Yes.

Housing Association

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards to housing associations.

Mr. Baldry: The position for an individual housing association depends on the particular form of its constitution. For associations which are charities, the position on appointments is determined by the terms of their trusts or governing instruments. For associations which are constituted as industrial and provident societies, appointments may be made by election at an annual general meeting. The Housing Corporation, as part of its statutory function of supervising the performance of registered housing associations, monitors the membership of its management committees and expects them to have an appropriate range of skills and experience.

European Environmental Bureau

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, column 497, if he will make a statement on his meeting with United Kingdom members of the European Environmental Bureau held on 6 December.

Mr. Yeo: I met United Kingdom representatives of the EEB on 6 December. We discussed the outcome of the Environment Council held on 2 and 3 December and other issues including the European Environment Agency, the fifth action programme, enlargement and subsidiarity.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will clarify the powers of local authorities to borrow by the issue of stock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I am aware that some local authorities are contemplating borrowing by the issue of stock. I am also aware that authorities' powers to borrow in this way are not considered clear. The Government have no objection to the issue of stock by authorities. My right hon. Friend has therefore today given an approval, with the consent of the Treasury, to this form of borrowing. I understand that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has issued a similar approval today in respect of local authorities in Wales.

It remains the Government's policy that the great majority of local authorities' requirements for borrowing should be met by the Public Works Loan Board.

Council Tax

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many proposals to amend the council tax valuation list have been made in the current year; and how many have already been settled.

Mr. Curry: As at 30 November 1993, 860,305 proposals for the alteration of the valuation list in England had been received by the Valuation Office Agency. This represents 4·28 per cent. of the total number of dwellings in the valuation lists. Of these, 146,400 had already been settled. My Department is considering the arrangements for dealing with outstanding appeals with the agency and representatives of the valuation tribunal service.

Housing Management

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to amend the implementation timetable for introducing compulsory competitive tendering for housing management in the light of his decision to accelerate the programme for reviewing the structure of English counties and districts.

Sir George Young: I have given careful consideration to the timetable for implementing compulsory competitive tendering for housing management in the light of the acceleration of the programme for reviewing the structure of counties and districts in England. I consider that a distinction can be drawn between housing management, as a front-line, locally delivered service and other white-collar services when considering the implementation timetable. The preparatory work for CCT for housing management and supporting white-collar services will not be wasted if an authority is subsequently reorganised and will stand authorities and tenants in good stead. Housing managers are already making good progress in preparing for CCT. I am keen that they should press ahead as soon as possible.

I recognise, however, that new authorities will need some additional time to complete the competition process. The arrangements for temporary exemptions from CCT for authorities being restructured as a result of the review, announced on 29 March 1993, *Official Report*, column *56*, for white-collar services generally, will therefore continue to apply to housing management. These will allow authorities 18 months following reorganisation to complete the first round of competitive tendering.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has today made a separate announcement about CCT for other white-collar services and for manual services already subject to CCT.

Officials will write to the secretaries of the Association of District Councils and the Association of County Councils with further details of the arrangements which my hon. Friend and I have announced today. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library.

Legal Services

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his proposals for extending compulsory competitive tendering to local authority legal services.

Mr. Baldry: On 10 November 1992 my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State for the Environment announced to the House the Government's decisions on proposals to extend compulsory competitive tendering to local authority white-collar corporate and professional services, including legal services, *Official Report*, column *744*. He undertook that the Government would discuss details of implementing these decisions with representatives of local government and other interested parties.

Since then, my officials have had very useful discussions with the local authority associations, the Audit Commission and CIPFA in several joint working groups. Following this we are today issuing a consultation document inviting comments on detailed proposals for extending CCT to local authority legal services. Early next year, we intend to consult on detailed proposals for CCT for construction-related services—that is, architecture, engineering and property management—followed by IT, finance, personnel and corporate and administrative services.

The consultation document, copies of which I will place in the Library, includes a definition of legal services, indicates how much legal work authorities will be required to subject to CCT and gives details of modifications which we intend to make to the statutory framework for competitive tendering to ensure that authorities will continue to be able to deliver services in a way which meets their own objectives and local peoples' aspirations.

We propose that local authorities be permitted to carry out up to 55 per cent., by value, of all legal work using their own staff without going through competition, subject to smaller authorities being able to retain a minimum of £300,000 worth of work. This recognises that certain work must be retained in-house both to enable an authority to fulfil its democratic responsibilities and to act as an intelligent client for bought in services.

An authority will not be able to award any of the remaining 45 per cent. of work to their own staff unless they have won it in fair and open competition. Experience with the manual services already subject to CCT has shown that competition bring not only financial savings, but also significant improvements in the management, efficiency and quality of public services. I have no reason to doubt that it will bring the same benefits for legal and other white-collar work.

Following consideration of comments received on the proposals included in this consultation document, I will submit to the House the statutory instruments required under the Local Government Act 1988 to give effect to our proposals. I anticipate CCT will take effect from 1 October 1995 in metropolitan districts and in London.

In shire counties and districts which are subject to review by the Local Government Commission, the implementation timetable for legal and other white-collar services requires some modification to reflect the acceleration of the Commission's review programme announced recently.

Our objective is that authorities should, wherever possible, continue to subject services to the pressures of competition which can bring so many benefits. We also hope to see the same benefits realised for corporate and construction-related services as soon as possible.

An authority's approach to organising these services is determined by the way in which its front-line services are delivered. We would not wish to see new authorities tied to inappropriate arrangements made by their predecessors and I have therefore concluded we should not require authorities to implement CCT for their core white-collar functions when a reorganisation is expected in their area.

I have concluded that the CCT timetable should be modified so that no county or district, or their successor authorities, will be required to implement competition for the new services before reorganisation has taken place in their area, or the decision has been taken that they will remain unchanged. New services will be introduced to the regime in a phased programme thereafter.

This timeable will apply to all new authorities which come into being in April 1995 or April 1996 and to any areas where there is to be no change from the existing two-tier structure. Authorities reorganised at a later date will continue to benefit from the exemptions already announced.

My right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction has today made a separate announcement about the implementation timetable for CCT for housing management services.

My officials will write to the secretaries of the Association of County Councils and Association of District Councils giving further details of these modifications. I will place a copy of that letter in the Library.

Energy Efficiency Committee

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Energy Efficiency Committee was created; how many times it has met; what issues were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 14 December 1993]:* An interdepartmental energy efficiency steering group at senior official level was set up earlier this year and has met twice since then. It reviews progress on the Government estate 15 per cent. energy efficiency target at a strategic level.

Disabled People

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to surcharge employers who do not employ a minimum percentage of registered disabled and to provide funds to employers employing above the minimum percentage of registered disabled people.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to introduce such a system. The idea of a levy on employers who do not meet a requirement to employ a quota of disabled persons, with the money raised being used for schemes of assistance to people with disabilities, was one of a number of legislative alternatives to the quota scheme discussed in the consultative document published by the Department in 1990, "Employment and Training for People with Disabilities". Responses to the consultative document on these issues were inconclusive and following that exercise we decided to retain the quota but keep the position under review. That remains the situation.

UB40 Card

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will consider, when the job seeker's allowance is introduced in April 1996, amending the UB40 card used by employment benefit claimants for identification purposes to incorporate a photograph.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The UB40/UBL18 booklet "Helping You Back to Work: Information for Clients" is issued to new clients when they make a claim to unemployment benefits and is not primarily a means of identifying a client. It is a source of information to clients on their obligations and entitlements.

We are, however, aware of issues around the identification of clients and the employment service is considering ways in which they can improve the safeguards they provide to clients about the confidentiality of the information they provide them with, and reduce the possibilty of mistaken identity and wrong or inaccurate payments.

Graduate Employment

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many graduates were unable to secure employment by the end of 1992 for *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* each standard region.

Miss Widdecombe: Surveys co-ordinated out by the central services unit on behalf of the higher education institutions show that out of a total of 148,037 people who graduated with first degrees in 1992, 16,763 were unemployed at the end of the year. Figures by standard region are not available.

European Social Fund

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to include homeless people as a specific group for application of the European social fund in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The primary purpose of the European social fund (ESF) is to help unemployed people back to work through vocational training and guidance and other labour market measures. Unemployed people who are also homeless may therefore benefit from ESF support, but there are no plans for a special priority category for them.

Departmental Offices (Heating Bills)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list by location the annual fuel heating bills for each of his Department's offices for the last four years, and for this year to date.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available in the form requested.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing, in 1992-93 prices, the gross public spending for each year since 1990-91 and the projected expenditure for each year to 1995-96 for each executive non-departmental public body sponsored by his Department, as listed in "Public Bodies 1992".

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The figures set out in the following table show in 1992-93 prices the Employment Department's spend from 1990-91 to 1992-93 and published expenditure plans for 1993-94 to 1995-96 in respect of the non-departmental public bodies sponsored by the Department, as listed in Public Bodies 1992.

Details of any revisions to planned expenditure for 1994-95 and 1995-96 following the Financial Statement and Budget Report will be published in the departmental report in spring 1994.

Executive non-departmental public bodies (Public Bodies 1992)[1]

(£thousand)

	Spend			Plans		
	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*1994-95*	*1995-96*
Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service	16,091	18,965	22,622	23,431	24,976	27,200
Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members	238	280	431	539	574	609
Equal Opportunities Commission (a)	[2]4,147	[3]4,671	4,746	5,982	6,388	6,846
National Council for Vocational Qualifications (b) (c)	4,989	5,791	8,743	3,706	2,070	—
Remploy Ltd.	65,360	72,560	83,995	92,099	98,878	104,902
Wages Councils (d)	91	96	128	43	—	—
Women's National Commission (e) (f) (g)	[2]138	[3]138	[4]150	231	241	250
Health and Safety Commission (h)	296	358	410	—	—	—
Health and Safety Executive (h)	173,512	201,380	211,381	224,890	226,925	225,338

Notes:

(a) Transferred from the Home Office to Employment Department on 1 May 1992.

(b) NCVQ becomes self financing from 1995-96.

(c) Figures relate to net expenditure reflecting the actual departmental contribution.

(d) Wound up August 1993.

(e) Transferred from Cabinet Office to Employment Department on 1 June 1992.

(f) Figures for 1993-94 to 1995-96 are provisional and subject to change.

(g) Although listed in Public Bodies 1992 as an executive body, in previous years the Women's National Commission was listed by the Cabinet Office as an advisory body.

(h) Disaggregation of HSC/HSE costs undertaken at the end of each financial year.

[1] Information relating to Industrial Training Boards is not included. Some residual costs are recorded for 1991-92 in the table in Public Bodies 1992 but these bodies ceased to receive direct funding prior to 1990-91.

[2] Figures from Public Bodies 1991.

[3] Figures from Public Bodies 1992.

[4] Planned expenditure.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those responsbile for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards to each of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is responsible for appointing the chairmen and members of all the boards of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by the Employment Department.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards to training and enterprise councils.

Miss Widdecombe: Eligibility for training and enterprise council (TEC) board directors is set by the TEC operating agreement. TECs are private companies. The board is appointed in accordance with company law by the members of the TEC. The chairman is elected from the board.

DEFENCE

Police Study

Sir Jim Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when Sir John Blelloch and his team will begin their study of the Ministry of Defence police; and when the team is due to report.

Mr. Hanley: The Ministry of Defence study team, comprising Sir John Blelloch and three other members, began work on 1 December this year with the principal aim of reviewing the future role, aims, objectives, structure and pay of the Ministry of Defence police. The team has been requested to present its report to the Chairman of the Ministry of Defence police committee by 1 June 1994. The study was commissioned before the major study of defence costs, announced on 1 December. Sir John's work will be of relevance to the wider study and he will be making his findings available to the Ministry of Defence as his review proceeds.

RAF Support and Maintenance Tasks

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has for RAF support and maintenance tasks.

Mr. Hanley: Work continues to be undertaken in the support area to ensure the appropriate balance is maintained with the front line and that tasks are undertaken in the most cost-effective manner. The maintenance group element of RAF support command became a defence agency (MGDA) on 1 April 1991 as part of that process. We are now starting an overall review of the MGDA, to evaluate the agency's past performance and look at options for the future, including abolition, privatisation and contractorisation, in whole or in part, in addition to maintaining the status quo. The review will include representatives from the OPSS and the Treasury as well as outside consultants. It will take full accoount of the findings of the feasibility study currently under way into the scope for market testing at RAF Sealand. The trade unions have been informed about the review, which is to be completed by 30 June 1994. A copy of the terms of reference of the review has been placed in the Library of the House.

In the meantime, we have been looking at the potential for undertaking specific support and maintenance tasks more efficiently and cost-effectively in the light of the changing requirement.

A study has been completed into the equipment supply depots located at RAF Carlisle, RAF Quedgeley (near Gloucester) and RAF Stafford. There is already excess storage capacity overall at these depots and this will increase as our requirement to hold spares decreases. Our studies have concluded that significant savings of some £85 million over 10 years could be achieved by concentrating technical storage at RAF Stafford, which would mean the closure of RAF Carlisle by 31 March 1997 and the progressive run-down and closure of RAF Quedgeley by 31 March 1998 at the latest. Formal consultation with the Trades Unions and other interested parties will now begin and final decisions will be taken in the light of representations made.

A further study has been completed into the avionics communications-electronics servicing and maintenance depots. This has concluded that appreciable savings could be achieved by transferring the engineering and maintenance tasks currently undertaken at RAF North Luffenham to RAF Sealand. RAF North Luffenham would close by 1 October 1996. I propose to accept this recommendation as the basis for informal consultation with the Trades Unions and other interested parties, subject to any more cost-effective solution than RAF Sealand being identified by the MGDA review.

I am placing a copy of both consultation documents in the Library of the House.

Submarine Operations

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the subfacts scheme for providing fishermen with advance notice of dived submarine operations will be extended to cover the Minches and the Sea of Hebrides; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The extension of SUBFACTS into the Minches and Sea of Hebrides will take place on 10 January 1994. On the same date there will be changes in the arrangements for broadcasting SUBFACTS information in the northern parts of the Irish sea and in waters to the west of Scotland. British Telecom marine radio service will transmit SUBFACTS information six times a day, on both VHF and MF, for the entire Clyde subordinate sea area, from Cape Wrath to the Calf of Man. In addition, the Clyde Coastguard will transmit SUBFACTS information six times a day over the Inner Clyde exercise areas, out to a line extending from the Mull of Kintyre to Corsewall Point. Throughout the Clyde subordinate sea area, fishermen will at any time be able to obtain SUBFACTS information on request from HM Coastguard. These revised broadcasting arrangements have been worked out in consultation with the fishing industry safety group, and will be reviewed by the group after 12 months.

Following the extension of SUBFACTS into the Plymouth and Portland exercise areas earlier this year, this latest extension of SUBFACTS meets the Government's commitment to operate the scheme in all regularly used submarine exercise areas around the coast of the United Kingdom. Together with the operational procedures set out in the code of practice for submarines which was published in October, it represents an important step forward in maritime safety and will help to minimise the risk of any further incidents between dived submarines and fishing vessels.

Support Costs

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the areas which will be examined with a view to reducing support costs in preparation for the study entitled "Front Line First".

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 7 December at column *176*.

International Military Services Ltd.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how he exercised his controlling share holding in International Military Services Ltd.; and how often he asked for, or was given, reports on the activities of this company;

(2) how he, or his predecessors, exercised their shareholding in International Military Services Ltd.; and what reports of its activities were asked for, or given.

Mr. Aitken: My right hon. and learned Friend and his predecessors have exercised their controlling shareholding in International Military Services Ltd. in the normal commercial way by attending, or being represented at, the annual general meeting of the Company. To facilitate this they have been provided with the statutory consolidated financial statements.

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

Mr. Hanley: Five vehicles, including a reserve vehicle for the Secretary of State, were provided for Defence Department Ministers in 1990-91 at a cost to the defence budget of some £4,200,000.

Emergency Landings, Newcastle Airport

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates, aircraft types and nature of the emergency for all emergency or precautionary landings by military aircraft at Newcastle airport during 1992; and which of those aircraft were armed with live weapons.

Mr. Hanley: The information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Aircraft Accidents

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates, aircraft types and circumstances of all *(a)* Army and *(b)* Royal Navy helicopter major accidents in 1987.

Mr. Hanley: The information for all aircraft types is as follows:

Date	*Aircraft*	*Accident*
24 February 1987	Sea King (RN)	Falmouth Bay. Cause not determined.
18 March 1987	Lynx (A)	Germany. Six minutes into sortie the rotor gear box seized.
16 July 1987	Gazelle (A)	Canada. During unauthorised manoeuvre the tail struck the ground breaking off the tail boom. A crewman on the ground was fatally injured.
23 September 1987	Sea King (RN)	Culdrose. Tail rotor failure during final approach. Crashed on runway.
15 October 1987	Sea Harrier (RN)	North West coast of Scotland. Aircraft suffered birdstrike during low level sortie.
16 October 1987	Wessex (RN)	Cornwall. Engine failure during winching exercise.
23 October 1987	Gazelle (A)	Middle Wallop. During sloping ground practice, the aircraft slid backwards causing the port skid to dig into the ground.
25 November 1987	Gazelle (RN)	Predannack. Loss of yaw control during turn.

Jaguar Incident, Solway Firth

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the military aircraft accident summary on the accident to a Royal Air Force Jaguar in the Solway firth on 12 September 1990 was released.

Mr. Hanley: On 21 October 1992.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at what altitude the accident aircraft's leader was flying at the time of the crash of a Royal Air Force Jaguar in the Solway firth on 12 September 1990.

Mr. Hanley: The aircraft was slightly above 250 ft.

Low flying

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the outcome of the Royal Air Force inspectorate of flight safety's review in 1990 of the potential safety benefits, in respect of bird strike hazards, of introducing speed limits on fast jets operating at low level.

Mr. Hanley: The outcome of the RAF inspectorate of flight safety's review was that speeds during low-level flight should be constrained to that required to achieve the objective of each low-level sortie. No specified limits were either recommended or imposed. In practice, the speed of aircraft operating in the United Kingdom low flying system (UKLFS) is regulated in order to limit noise disturbance to those on the ground. The normal maximum cruising speed overland in the UKLFS is 450 knots.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to restricting low flying during peak bird migration months.

Mr. Hanley: The United Kingdom Military Low Flying Handbook contains seasonal information on areas of high bird concentration, and some specific locations are granted permanent or seasonal avoidances. My Department is conscious of the need to keep low-flying military aircraft clear of such concentrations and measures to achieve this are kept under continuous review.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the minimum weather requirements for low-level flight at night by fast jet aircraft not equipped with terrain-following radar or electro-optical navigation equipment.

Mr. Hanley: The minimum weather requirements for low level flight at night by fast jet aircraft not equipped with terrain following radar or electro-optical navigational equipment are the normal visual flight rules for fast jets operating in the United Kingdom low flying system, namely: flight visibility of five kilometres, and 1,500 metres horizontal and 500 feet vertical separation from cloud.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the reason for the increase in the minimum authorised altitude for night low flying over the United Kingdom by US Air Force F111 aircraft from October 1992, from 400 to 1,000 ft.

Mr. Hanley: The decision to increase to 1,000 ft the authorised minimum altitude for USAF F111 aircraft flying at night in the United Kingdom was taken by the USAF in the light of a reassessment of the training needs of the aircrew concerned.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current minimum authorised altitude for Royal Air Force Tornado aircraft conducting terrain following radar flight in daylight visual meteorological conditions in the United Kingdom low-flying system.

Mr. Hanley: It is 300 ft.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the requests made to his Department for authorisation of low-level jet flying between the hours of 2300 and 0700 since 1988, listing in each case the date of the request, the unit submitting the request, the nature of the flying for which authorisation was sought, and his Department's response to the request.

Mr. Hanley: Such requests and the responses to them are held on departmental files but separate records are not kept. The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. It is most unlikely however, that such training would have been authorised other than in a very small number of exceptional cases.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what methods are used by military aircrew to ensure accurate adherence to minimum authorised altitudes during low flying in aircraft not equipped with radar altimeters.

Mr. Hanley: Those training aircraft which are not equipped with radar altimeters make use of the barometric altimeter, which indicates the altitude of the aircraft above mean sea level. From the initial stages of flying training students are taught to recognise and maintain their minimum authorised height above the ground; they will also spend a greater proportion of their time at higher than their authorised minimum levels until they graduate to squadron service.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the purpose of the low flying avoidance area around Milford Haven.

Mr. Hanley: It is not my Department's practice to release specific details of the United Kingdom low flying system.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the fast jet types which are authorised to conduct night low flying in the United Kingdom low flying system.

Mr. Hanley: The fast jet types normally authorised to operate in the United Kingdom night low flying system are: Buccaneer, Canberra, F-15, Harrier, Jaguar and Tornado.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what sources of information are made available to military pilots on the location and timing of activities on the ground involving gatherings of large numbers of people, to enable them to observe the regulations concerning overflight of such activities; and what definition of large number of people is used in applying these regulations.

Mr. Hanley: Temporary avoidances of gatherings of large numbers of people are promulgated by notices to airmen. In this context, a large number of people is defined as 10,000 although temporary avoidances are frequently arranged for events involving significantly fewer people.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the distance from the shore of the United Kingdom beyond which military aircraft operating at less than 2,000ft are not required to book into the low flying system.

Mr. Hanley: Aircraft are not required to book into the United Kingdom low flying system if the low flying element of a sortie takes place over the sea more than three nautical miles from the coastline (half a nautical mile in the case of helicopters and light fixed wing aircraft).

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the planned route of the United States Air Force F-111 aircraft involved in the aircraft proximity hazard incidents at Plymouth airport on 15 October 1992 and 21 October 1992 was a fixed low flying route in use by the unit concerned; and what changes were made to the route following these incidents.

Mr. Hanley: The aircraft involved in the two incidents were operating on a standard route. Both RAF and United States air force air crew use standard routes as little as possible which are in any case replaced at regular intervals.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many sorties are conducted for each student on the Royal Air Force advanced flying training courses at RAF Chivenor and RAF Valley, in which the student is required to navigate at low level to a set of turning points whose locations are not known until after the student boards the aircraft.

Mr. Hanley: There are two distinct types of exercises which are flown by students.

Handling exercises (in which the student can either fly as a singleton or as part of a formation) are not flown to a pre-planned route, but are dependent on weather conditions, terrain, distance from base and possible flying restrictions. Suitable general areas for flying would however be decided upon before such exercises commenced. A student would fly a total of six sorties of this type.

Navigation exercises (again either as a singleton or as part of a formation) are generally flown to a pre-planned set route. During such exercises however students are required to deviate from the planned route to practice self-navigation to a prominent point or to simulate unexpected weather avoidance or a change of tactical planning. On these occasions particular emphasis is placed on avoiding restricted or built-up areas. Students would fly a total of 13 singleton sorties, whilst 11 would be flown as part of a formation.

Mr. Llywd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to authorise the reduction of the minimum altitude at which Royal Air Force Tornado aircraft are permitted to fly on automatic terrain following radar in inclement meteorological conditions to less than 500 ft.

Mr. Hanley: The restrictions placed on low flying training are kept under review.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the eastward directional flow control for low-flying aircrew was introduced in the Clywd valley north of Denbigh.

Mr. Hanley: On 10 August 1992.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the Harrier pilots trained at the US Marine Corps air station at Yuma, Arizona, retain their qualification to fly at 200 ft at night following completion of the training course.

Mr. Hanley: Any low level qualification gained as part of the overall training at Yuma will last for 90 days. Pilots who do not fly a night sortie in that period have to fly two simulator sorties plus two night time low level sorties to regain their night time low level currency. The minimum height at which Harrier GR7 aircraft would be authorised to fly at night in the United Kingdom would be 250 ft.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what regulations are contained in the group air staff orders of No. 1 RAF Strike Command, which supplement the instructions in the UK military low-flying handbook concerning use of the United Kingdom low-flying system.

Mr. Hanley: Headquarters No. 1 group's air staff orders contain regulations governing low flying which are specific to aircraft of that group and which amplify the regulations set out in the United Kingdom military low flying handbook.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what requests have been received from foreign air forces since 1990 for permission to fly at less than 250 ft over the United Kingdom; and what response was given to each request.

Mr. Hanley: A request was received for a small number of USAF aircrew based in the United Kingdom to be permitted to carry out a limited amount of Operational Low Flying training in the Welsh tactical training area during December 1990 in preparation for deployment to the Gulf. The request was approved but, in the event, no such training took place. No further requests have been received from foreign air forces since that time.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of complaints about low flying in 1992 were withdrawn after the complainant had been interviewed by RAF Provost and Security Service investigators.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, the hon. Member might wish to know that only a very small number of complaints are withdrawn, although a significantly greater number are not pursued further, at the instigation of the complainant, in the light of information provided during the interview with the RAF Provost and security service investigator.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the average time taken by Secretariat (Air Staff) 2b to send initial responses to public complaints about low flying in each year since 1985; and what is the current target for the timeliness of such responses.

Mr. Hanley: Such statistics are not maintained and the information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. In line with the provisions of the citizens charter, the air staff secretariat introduced in July 1991 a target time of four weeks for initial response to complaints from members of the public about low flying. This target has been met in all but exceptional circumstances.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what restrictions are placed on the types and locations of simulated targets for mock attacks by Harrier GR7 aircraft during night low-level electro-optical sorties.

Mr. Hanley: The restrictions placed on types and locations of simulated targets for mock attacks by Harrier GR7 aircraft during night low level sorties are the same as those which apply to sorties flown during the day. Targets are carefully selected and account is taken of the location of nearby habitation and the environmental and safety factors involved.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the standing instructions to RAF Provost and Security Service flying complaints flight personnel concerning the aims and conduct of their interviews with complainants about low flying.

Mr. Hanley: The documents requested are either classified or protected by a privacy marking and cannot be released.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the average time taken from receipt of the complaint by his Department to the final response to the complainant for all complaints about low flying which resulted in a full investigation of the circumstances, in each year since 1985.

Mr. Hanley: Such statistics are not maintained and the information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to devolve the investigation of low flying complaints to regional units of the RAF Provost and Security Service.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has no such plans.

Aircraft Repair Costs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current cost threshold used to determine whether an aircraft damaged in an accident is worth repairing; and if he will list the changes made in that threshold figure since 1985.

Mr. Hanley: There is no cost threshold used to determine whether an aircraft damaged in an accident is worth repairing. The assessment and categorisation of a damaged aircraft, and the subsequent decision to repair it or not, is based on a number of financial, engineering and operational factors which are applied on a case by case basis. These include the unexpired fatigue life of the aircraft concerned, the overall availability and future in-service life of the aircraft type, any special equipment that may be fitted, the costs of materials and manpower, and the availability of funds.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of repairs to military aircraft damaged by bird strikes in each of the last four years.

Mr. Hanley: This information is not recorded separately and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Simulated Attack Targets

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes were made to the measures for monitoring United States 3 Air Force compliance with the provisions of the RAF Strike Command approved list of simulated targets for toss or dive attack, following the report on the accident to an F111 near Lauder on 28 July 1987.

Mr. Hanley: United States air force aircraft based in the United Kingdom are subject to the same regulations governing simulated toss and dive attacks as other military aircraft based here. This situation has not changed since 1987.

WE177 Bomb

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to *(a)* extend or *(b)* shorten the service life of the WE177 bomb; and what effect the cancellation of the tactical air-to-surface missile has had on the planned service life of the WE177 bomb.

Mr. Hanley: The announcement that we do not plan in current circumstances to procure a tactical air-to-surface missile does not affect the planned service life of the WE177 bomb.

Tornado Incident, Dalmellington

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the incident in which a Royal Air Force Tornado struck electricity cables near Dalmellington on 26 November 1990 occurred during a run-in between an intitial point and a simulated target; and what was the estimated speed at which the aircraft hit the cable.

Mr. Hanley: The incident occurred before the aircraft had reached the initial point. It was flying at an estimated speed of 435 knots when it struck the cable.

Trident

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to the procedures required for co-ordination or targeting, air tasking and airspace deconfliction between naval and air force commands when the substrategic nuclear role is transferred to the Trident system.

Mr. Hanley: These factors have been taken fully into account.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to the requirement for visible deployments of Trident submarines to foreign ports in order to demonstrate credibility and commitment in the substrategic role.

Mr. Hanley: The credibility of a submarine-launched deterrent has never been judged to rely on visits to foreign ports.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated additional expenditure required on the Trident programme to adapt the weapon to perform the tactical or theatre nuclear roles currently performed by tactical aircraft; and if he will provide a breakdown of the estimated additional expenditure into *(a)* missile, *(b)* warhead, including nuclear testing, *(c)* submarine, *(d)* command and control systems, *(e)* shore construction and *(f)* operating costs.

Mr. Hanley: It is not our practice to provide details of these costs separately. The adaptation of the Trident system to meet our sub-strategic requirements will not require any additional nuclear tests, and the overall additional cost will be small.

"Panorama"

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what opportunities were given to his Department to vet the script of the BBC "Panorama" programme on the Secret Intelligence Service, broadcast on 22 November; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Government were aware in advance of the contents of the "Panorama" programme on 22 November, but the responsibility for its contents was that of the BBC alone.

Airborne Nuclear Capability

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated saving in the annual budget of the Royal Air Force as a result of the withdrawal of airborne nuclear capability.

Mr. Hanley: The airborne nuclear capability has not been withdrawn.

Flying Hours

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated overall effect on defence expenditure of a reduction of 10 per cent. in the number of hours flown per year by military aircraft.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not available and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all changes over the past five years in *(a)* the Supreme Allied Commander Europe-recommended number of flying hours per year and *(b)* the SACEUR-recommended minimum number of flying hours per year for front-line tactical fighter aircrew.

Mr. Hanley: There have been no such changes in the past five years.

RAF Fast Jet Aircrew

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the current total number of combat-ready strike/attack/reconnaissance fast jet aircrew in the Royal Air Force;

(2) what was the turnover rate of combat-ready fast jet strike/attack/reconnaissance aircrew in the Royal Air Force in 1992, expressed as a proportion of the total number of such aircrew.

Mr. Hanley: The turnover rate of combat ready fast jet strike/attack/reconnaissance aircrew in the Royal Air Force in Financial Year 1992-93, expressed as a proportion of the total number of such aircrew (505), was 26 per cent. Personnel left the strike/attack/reconnaissance force on promotion, for training for another role or on leaving the Service. Replacement aircrew were trained or promoted to replace them.

Controlled Airspace

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the date, location, aircraft involved and circumstances of each of the incidences of unauthorised penetration of controlled and/or restricted airspace since 1987.

Mr. Hanley: This information is classified.

Tornado

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what use has been made of the highlands restricted area by Tornado aircraft from *(a)* the German air force, *(b)* the German navy and *(c)* the Italian air force.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has no record of German air force, German navy or Italian air force Tornado aircraft being authorised to use the Highlands restricted area.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the reason for the increase in the minimum authorised height for trinational Tornado training establishment crews in 1991.

Mr. Hanley: The minimum authorised height for tri-national Tornado training establishment crews prior to 1991 was 250 feet for instructors only. This was increased to 500 ft in 1991 following a reassessment of the need for these personnel to operate below this height during their tour at RAF Cottesmore.

Sea King Incident

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the serial number, location and circumstances of the accident to a Royal Navy Sea King on 19 January

1991, listed in the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1992, table 3·9; and what are the reasons for the omission of this accident from the list in the answer of 6 May 1993, columns *243-46*.

Mr. Hanley: The accident referred to involved a Royal Navy Sea King Mk 4, tail number ZA312, which was operating approximately 29·5nm outside Al Jubayl airfield in Saudi Arabia. The helicopter was preparing to land when the tail rotor blade struck the ground. There were no injuries. An administrative error resulted in the omission of this accident from the list contained in the answer given on 6 May at columns *243-46*.

Condor System

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many incidents were reported under the Royal Air Force Condor system in each year since 1979; if he will provide a breakdown of these figures into categories of incident; and what changes have been made to the Condor system since its introduction.

Mr. Hanley: There are no categories of incident under the CONDOR system. As reports submitted under the Condor system are in confidence, long term database records are not maintained. Records available are as follows:

Year	*Number of Condor reports*
1989	25
1990	22
1991	25
1992	27
1993	[1]21

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[1] Up to 9 December 1993.

Since the introduction of the CONDOR system, a confidential telephone answering machine has been added to supplement written submissions.

Defence Service Employees

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures he is planning to take to ensure alternative employment for former and current employees in the defence service in Wales.

Mr. Hanley: Wherever practicable, employees under notice of redundancy are offered alternative jobs within MOD or other Government Departments in the area. Where this is not possible, the MOD offers up to eight weeks paid leave for job-search and approved re-training, and also provides a counselling and outplacement service which liaises closely with local offices of the employment service and training and enterprise councils (TECs) to help with job-search and vocational training.

The employment service and the TECs also provide a range of programmes and services designed to take account of special local circumstances to help former employees of any industry, including defence, to help them find alternative employment.

Harriers

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which domestic RAF bases will be considered as potential headquarters for the German-based Harriers in the event of their being brought back to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hanley: There are no current plans to return the Harriers based in Germany to the United Kingdom.

RAF Personnel (Commercial Recruitment)

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the levels of recruitment of retiring RAF personnel by the commercial air sector, and its implications for the intro-productive service figures for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Hanley: The RAF's personnel planning takes account of many factors, including an assessment of the numbers likely to be lost to the civil air sector. Because of the length of training and the need to make the most efficient and economical use of scarce and expensive training resources however, the RAF does not make large changes to its recruiting and training targets from year to year. The aim is to balance recruitment and outflow to achieve stability in the service.

Harrier Crash (Iraq)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action to date has been taken to retrieve sensitive equipment that was aboard the Harrier aircraft that crashed in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq on 23 November; what was the cause of the accident; if he will send to the hon. Member for Don Valley a copy of the accident report inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The recoverable wreckage from the accident has been transported to Incirlik, Turkey for onward shipment to the UK. The cause of the accident is still under investigation by the RAF board of inquiry. A summary of its findings will be produced in the normal way and a copy will be sent to the hon. Member. Copies will also be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Western European Union Defence Corps

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the development of the Western European Union defence corps.

Mr. Hanley: There is no such formation as the WEU defence corps. The WEU Petersberg declaration of June 1992 announced that military units for WEU missions would be drawn on a case-by-case basis from forces with national and NATO roles. The WEU planning cell in Brussels has been given responsibility for compiling a list of units which could be made available for potential WEU operations. Multinational units which have already been declared available include the European corps, the multinational division (central) and the UK/NL amphibious force.

Nitro-cellulose and Nitro-glycerine

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 8 December, *Official Report*, column *289*, what production capabilities in the United Kingdom he regards as strategic necessities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The importance of particular production capabilities for defence alters over time. Such matters are kept under review, but we do not categorise particular production capabilities as being essential to maintain at all costs whatever the circumstances.

Racial Discrimination

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 8 December, *Official Report*, column *295*, what was the nature of the complaint relating to racial discrimination in the Army which has been resolved and how it was resolved.

Mr. Hanley: The complaint in the army involved racial abuse. The matter was investigated under the normal redress of grievance procedures and resolved to the satisfaction of the victim by means of a public apology.

Ammunition

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 8 December, *Official Report*, column *292*, what commitments he has received from the firms mentioned in his answer relating to the suipply of ammunition in a time of crisis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: No such commitments are required. Provision of ammunition for a time of crisis is managed by the maintenance of reserve stocks, not by any arrangement with industry, either in the United Kingdom or abroad.

Reserve Forces

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 8 December, *Official Report*, column *296*, what consideration he has given to deleting the private addresses and service affiliations from the responses he has received to his consultative document on the reserves; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Simply to delete the address and signature block would not in all cases serve to prevent the identity of the respondent being established. Moreover, to delete all references to service connections would in many cases reduce the value of the letter by removing the context and background experience against which the comments were made. Rather than publish the letters complete, therefore, I consider it appropriate to release a factual summary of the responses, supported by extracts from the replies.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the cost of advertising by his Department has been for each year since 1979 and for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Hanley: Centrally controlled expenditure by my Department on advertising in the financial year 1979-80 to 1992-93 was as follows:

Financial year	*Expenditure £ million*
1979-80	8·07
1980-81	6·81
1981-82	4·25
1982-83	3·98
1983-84	5·37
1984-85	7·37
1985-86	8·66
1986-87	9·02
1987-88	8·26
1988-89	12·60
1989-90	17·80
1990-91	12·31
1991-92	11·47
1992-93	8·70

It is not possible to provide the details of expenditure on advertising for each of the last 12 months without disproportionate cost. Estimated expenditure for the financial year 1993-94 is, however, £8·78 million.

Hercules C130

Mr. Wilkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from hon. Members and British industry in support of the Hercules C130 J programme.

Mr. Hanley: We have received a variety of representations from hon. Members and British industry regarding the Hercules rolling replacement programme, including a number supporting the C-130J.

Mr. Wilkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual cost of operating and maintaining the existing C130 K Hercules fleet of transport aircraft in Royal Air Force service including the personnel cost of both the associated air and ground crews.

Mr. Hanley: The average annual operating and maintenance cost (at 1993-94 outturn prices) of the RAF C130 K Hercules fleet (CMk1, CMk3 and CMk1K)) is approximately £140,000,000. This includes personnel costs but excludes depreciation, interest on capital, station and administration costs.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when *(a)* the first and *(b)* the last C130 K Hercules aircraft entered squadron service with the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Aitken: The first C130K entered squadron service on 1 August 1967 while the last aircraft entered service in 1970.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what modifications have been made to the C130 K Hercules fleet since it entered service; when these modifications were carried out; and what numbers of aricraft were involved.

Mr. Aitken: A total of 433 modifications has been embodied in the C-130 fleet since its introduction in service. One hundred and five are considered to be significant from both a cost and operational point of view. The most notable of these are as follows:

1972—Introduce W MK2 Met aircraft. One aircraft embodied.
1976—To introduce a new centre wing structure. 100 per cent. fleet embodied.
1976—To introduce reconditioned outer wing. Applied to 95 per cent. of the fleet. Fully embodied.
1979—Convert MK1 to MK3 (15ft extn). Applied to 50 per cent. of the fleet. Fully embodied.
1982—Introduce full modification to enable use as tanker. Applicable to only six aircraft. Fully embodied.

1982—Introduce in-flight refuelling facility. 100 per cent. fleet embodied.

1983—Introduce Station Keeping Equipment. Applied to 34 per cent. of the fleet. Fully embodied.

1985—Introduce flight deck lighting compatible with night vision goggles. Applicable to 10 aircraft for use with technical squadrons. Fully embodied.

1993—Introduce flight deck protective armour. Fitted to three aircraft in response to an Urgent Operational Requirement in support of Operation Cheshire. Fully embodied.

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the Hercules rolling replacement programme.

Mr. Aitken: As announced in the Defence White Paper in July, we intend to undertake a rolling programme to replace or refurbish our C-130 Hercules aircraft, starting with about half the fleet by the end of the century. In order to determine whether refurbishment or replacement offers the best value for money we have placed a contract for studies to establish the costs and risk of refurbishment. It has now been decided that we will issue an invitation to Lockheed Aerospace Systems Corporation to tender for the provision of a replacement aircraft. We shall also—as part of the front line first study—be exploring options for greater use of leasing of cargo aircraft, as my right hon. and learned Friend announced to the Defence Committee on 1 December.

The issue of an invitation to tender does not constitute a commitment to purchase any replacement aircraft. It will, however, provide essential data on price from which we can make a valid assessment of all the options. Following comparison of the results of the studies and prices for new aircraft we hope to be in a position to reach a decision by the end of 1994.

Defence Imports

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the importing of one battle tank from the Russian Federation as listed in the United Nations register of conventional arms.

Mr. Aitken: The tank was imported for defence research and development purposes.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday, 16 December, 1993

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what formal or informal approaches Her Majesty's Government have received from Governments of nations with utilities with a contract with British Nuclear Fuels plc for the use of THORP, to cancel or vary the contract or its terms; and what steps have been taken to alert other departments.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Dry Cleaning

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what research he has commissioned and what grants he has offered for research on future dry cleaning technology from OTEC (MSG) Ltd.; and if he will place the conclusions of that research in the Library.

Mr. McLoughlin: OTEC is a subsidiary of Master Services Group—MSG—which leads a project assisted by a Department of Trade and Industry grant under DEMOS—DTI's environmental management options scheme. The grant fo £134,332 over 13 months is in support of the research and development of a hydrocarbon non-halogenated fluid as a possible replacement for CFC 113, a solvent used in the dry-cleaning industry. Production of CFC 113 is to be phased out by 1 January 1995.

A summary of the results of the project will be issued in late 1994 for the benefit of the dry cleaning industry, and will be placed in the Librry of the House.

Solvents

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what compliance tests were carried out on European regulations to phase out the use of solvent 113; who conducted these tests; and what alternative solvents or technologies were recommended.

Mr. McLoughlin: My Department commissioned consultants Touche Ross to carry out a study into the effect of phase out of CFC 113—solvent 113—in the solvent-using sector. Copies of its report "The use of CFC 113 and 1,1,1 trichloroethane as solvents in UK industry" dated October 1992 were placed in the Library of the House.

My Department has also produced a free leaflet entitled "Ozone Depleting Solvents. CFC Phase Out: Advice on Alternatives and Guidelines for Users", which is also in the Library of the House, and has supported a nationwide series of seminars organised by the Engineering Employers Federation to advise users on the range of alternatives.

Research and Development

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the spending on research and development in each of the last five years given in 1992-93 prices in his Department.

Mr. Heseltine: The Department of Trade and Industry's expenditure on research and development is recorded in the "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development", copies of which are placed in the Library of the House. Table 1.2.3. of the latest edition shows DTI expenditure on research and development from 1987-88, based on 1991-92 prices. Revised figures, based on 1992-93 prices, will be published in the 1994 forward look of science and technology, which replaces the annual review.

British Nuclear Fuels plc

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects BNFL to publish its accounts for 1992-93; and what reasons it has given for the delay.

Mr. Eggar: BNFL will file its accounts for 1992-93 within the period allowed by the Companies Act 1985, as amended, for laying and delivering accounts. In accordance with section 244 of the Act, BNFL has claimed and been granted a three-month extension to this period on the ground that it is a company which carries on business or has interests outside the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. The accounts are now due to be delivered to Companies House on or before 31 January 1994.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the average annual running costs of BNFL plants at *(a)* Capenhurst, *(b)* Springfields, *(c)* Chapelcross, *(d)* Sellafield and *(e)* Calderhall.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc.

Press Releases

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many press releases his Department has issued in each year since 1979.

Mr. Eggar: The following numbers of press notices were issued by the Department for the years requested.

Year	*Number of notices*	*Department*
1979	897	Department of Trade, Department of Industry and Department of Consumer Protection
1980	937	Department of Trade and Department of Industry
1981	944	Department of Trade and Department of Industry
1982	1,039	Department of Trade and Department of Industry
1983	956	Department of Trade, Department of Industry and subsequently, from June 1983, the merged Department of Trade and Industry
1984	762	Department of Trade and Industry
1985	839	Department of Trade and Industry
1986	931	Department of Trade and Industry
1987	816	Department of Trade and Industry
1988	944	Department of Trade and Industry
1989	876	Department of Trade and Industry

Year	*Number of notices*	*Department*
1990	799	Department of Trade and Industry
1991	724	Department of Trade and Industry
1992	838	Department of Trade and Industry, including Department of Energy from April
1993	745	Department of Trade and Industry, including Department of Energy from April, up to 14 December

Bankruptcies

Mr. Dowd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many companies have been declared bankrupt each year since 1989, including that year.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Information on company insolvencies is regularly published by the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, on behalf of the Department of Trade and Industry, in "Business Briefing", copies are available in the Library of the House. The figures concerned were most recently published in the edition dated 5 November.

Administration

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total expenditure by his Department on administration in 1992-93; what is the estimated outturn for expenditure by his Department on administration for 1993-94 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms in, 1992-93 prices; and what is his estimate for expenditure on administration by his Department for 1994-95 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1992-93 prices.

Mr. Eggar: The final outturn for the recurrent costs of running the Department in 1992-93 is £291·2 million. The running costs limit for 1993-94 is £330·6 million. An estimated outturn will be published in the spring in the 1994 departmental report and the unified Budget supplement. The Department's planned running costs expenditure for 1994-95 will be published in the unified Budget supplement.

Electricity Licences

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to relax the conditions of the order which exempts companies from the requirement to hold an electricity generation or supply licence.

Mr. Eggar: Following consultations with the Director General of Electricity Supply, electricity companies and other interested parties, I have decided to amend the Electricity (Class Exemptions from the Requirement for a Licence) Order 1990 to reduce the regulatory burden on small generators, own generators and consumers who sell on a small proportion of the electricity they purchase.

The changes will be made as early as possible in 1994, I expect the changes to be broadly as follows, subject to considering the detailed technical amendments that will be required to achieve our aims.

At present, small generators require a generation licence unless each of their generating stations provides not more than 10 MW, disregarding power going to certain qualifying customers on site. I will extend this exemption to cover generating stations which have a capacity of less than 100 MW and provide more than 10 MW but not more than 50 MW, disregarding power going to certain qualifying customers on site.

At present, a consumer without an electricity supply licence may resell electricity to franchise customers if that electricity was originally purchased from the local public electricity supplier or in certain cases a second tier supplier. I propose to extend the exemption to allow the resale of electricity purchased from a second tier supplier to any franchise customers located on the reseller's site —this subject to overall limits based on the proportion and aggregate amount resold; these are expected to be 10 per cent. and 250 MWH per site respectively. I am also minded to exempt the resale of electricity purchased from an own generator subject to the same conditions and limitations.

The existing exemptions for own generators and deminimis generators allow for the provision of electricity to qualifying groups of companies. I propose to allow more companies to be included in such qualifying groups by reducing the proportion of shares required to be held in a company for it to qualify as a subsidiary forming part of a qualifying group. I am also examining how we might allow certain joint venture companies to be included in a qualifying group. At present, an own generator requires a supply licence unless at least 51 per cent. of the electricity from his generating station goes to qualifying customers located on the own generator's site. I will remove this condition. In future, the proportion of electricity provided to particular customers will not be a factor in determining whether a supply licence is needed.

At present, most generators who are exempt from the need for a generation licence but who have stations over 200 KW capacity must notify the Secretary of State of their name and address. I will remove that requirement.

These changes will encourage own generators and others by reducing the regulatory burden with which they must contend.

In addition, the Director General has granted a full second tier supply licence to Nuclear Electric. This will help to promote competition in the provision of electricity supply contracts to non franchise customers.

The Government recognise the concern that rises in pool prices have caused, particularly to those large users who are on pool related contracts. The Director General of Electricity Supply has investigated the matter. He has carried forward work on the costs and margins of National Power and PowerGen and other relevant issues and has concluded that further steps need to be taken to ensure that customers are protected in future and to allow the satisfactory development of the industry. Discussions with the companies are continuing and he anticipates being able to decide by mid January whether a Monopolies and Mergers Commission reference is required.

In their White Paper "The Prospects for Coal", the Government said that they would consider whether allowing large users to trade outside the electricity pool would be beneficial to the electricity market.

The responses to my Department's consultation paper on dedicated generation established that there were many practical problems to be overcome if a workable dedicated generation scheme were to be found which would not disadvantage other consumers. The Government have concluded that they should not proceed with amendments to the order which would allow an interim scheme to operate within the electricity pool.

I have, therefore, asked the Director General of Electricity Supply to look further into the possibility of trading outside the pool and to report on this by 30 June 1994. He has agreed.

European Economic Area

Mr. Congdon: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the European economic area will enter into force.

Mr. Needham: Following ratification of the European Economic Area—EEA—agreement by all EC member states and participating states of the European Free Trade Association the Community formally concluded the EEA at the ECOFIN Council on 13 December. This means that the European Economic Area will enter into force on 1 January 1994.

The European Economic Area agreement extends most of the EC's single market to five states of the European Free Trade Association: Austria, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden; Liechtenstein may join later. The United Kingdom ratified the EEA on 15 November 1993.

Remote Sensing

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has for a legal national regime in which remote sensing can be accommodated; and what plans he has to develop an international regime in which the interests of have-not technology states can be accommodated.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 15 December 1993]:* I have no plans to add to the provisions of existing legislation including those of the Outer Space Act 1986. United Nations resolution 41/65 of 3 December 1986 creates an international framework within which the International Committee on Earth Observation Satellites, of which the British National Space Centre is a member, is at present exploring mechanisms for the closer involvement of developing countries.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Merchant: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress he has made in preparing for the Government's review of the future prospects for nuclear power in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: In their White Paper "The Prospects for Coal", CM 2235, the Government undertook to bring forward work on their review of the future prospects for nuclear power and to make a further announcement later this year.

The Government have received a considerable number of representations about the review from hon. Members, members of the public, the nuclear industry and other interested parties, both on the areas which the review should cover and on the way in which the review should be conducted. In addition, the Trade and Industry Select Committee made recommendations in its report "British Energy Policy and the Market for Coal"—HC 237—earlier this year.

The Government are carefully considering these representations as part of their preparatory work on the review. Some of the issues identified in the context of this work are the extent to which nuclear power is now competitive; the present economics of nuclear power generation; nuclear power's contribution to diversity and security of supply; and environmental aspects of nuclear power.

We will announce the precise terms of reference for the review, and how it will be conducted, as soon as possible.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Commercial Property Law

Mr. Stern: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he intends to bring forward legislation to put into effect the reports announced on 31 March to implement most of the Law Commissioner's recommendations for reforming the law on commercial property leases.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Legislation to give effect to the Government's decision to implement the recommendations in the Law Commission's report, "Landlord and Tenant Law: Privity of Contract and Estate"—Law Com. No. 174—for all future leases including commercial leases but not for existing leases, will be introduced as soon as there is a suitable opportunity.

Judges

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will introduce requirements for all judges to undergo comprehensive medical and psychological examinations prior to appointment and thereupon annually.

Mr. John M. Taylor: High Court judges, circuit judges and district judges are required to undergo a medical examination as a condition of their appointment. In addition, medical examinations of serving judges are undertaken when appropriate. The Lord Chancellor has no plans to revise the current requirements.

Special Ministerial Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) what arrangements are made to ensure that special advisers to Ministers in his Department do not have access to the kind of information, and are not involved in the type of business, that would be likely to create suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment;

(2) if he will list the names and job descriptions of each special ministerial adviser employed in his Department showing any particular outputs for which each adviser is responsible.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There are no special advisers to Ministers in the Lord Chancellor's Department.

Departmental Offices (Heating Bills)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list, by location the annual fuel heating bills for each of his Department's offices for the last four years, and for this year to date.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Department's courts and offices are organised administratively into six circuits, the

Supreme Court group and headquarters. The total expenditure for the last two financial years and year to date are as follows:

Location	*1991-92* £	*1992-93* £	*1993-94* £
Circuits			
Midland and Oxford	1,047,150	991,539	456,937
North Eastern	596,478	692,134	230,214
Northern	640,705	714,775	409,274
South Eastern	2,514,268	2,338,134	668,232
Wales and Chester	315,991	300,854	206,347
Western	332,923	455,838	192,910
Supreme Court	643,157	640,979	237,755
Headquarters	421,374	399,934	218,899
TOTAL	6,512,046	6,534,187	2,620,568

Details of expenditure incurred prior to 1991-92 are not held centrally. A detailed list of expenditure in each individual court and office has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Clean-break Settlements

Mr. Hall: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many clean-break settlements have been agreed in divorce cases since the inception of the Child Support Agency.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Children (Court Appearances)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many court cases there have been in each of the last two years involving children *(a)* under 17 years and *(b)* under 14 years; how many of these children requested the use of (i) video link, (ii) video recording and (iii) the use of screens in court; and how many requests were granted.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information sought by the hon. Member on the total number of criminal cases involving children in the last two years has not been collated, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The tables give the information sought with regard to the usage of live television link equipment, pre-recorded video evidence and screens in criminal cases in the Crown court. In non-criminal cases, existing legislation does not allow for either television links or pre-recorded video evidence to be used, and the information sought with regard to the use of screens is not collated.

i. Live TV Link Applications (s.32 Criminal Justice Act 1988). Implementation 5 January 1989.

	Age Unknown[1]	*Under 14*	*Under 17*	*Mixed age range*	*Total number of cases*
1992					
1 January-30 September 1992					
Granted	229				229
Refused	9				9
1992					
1 October-31 December 1992					
Granted (or case disposed of prior to trial)		60	12	7	79
Refused		0	0	0	0
1993					
1 January-to date					
Granted (or case disposed of prior to trial)	270	120	57	447	
Refused		8	4	2	14

[1] Prior to the implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 the age of the child was not recorded. The 'Mixed age range' column includes those cases where the child witnesses spanned both age ranges.

ii. Pre-Recorded Video Interview Application (s.32A Criminal Justice Act 1988, as inserted by s.54 Criminal Justice Act 1991). Implementation 1 October 1992.

	Under 14	*Under 17*	*Mixed age range*	*Total number of cases*
1992				
1 October-31 December 1992				
Granted (or case disposed of prior to trial)	4	2	1	7
Refused	0	0	0	0
1993				
1 January-to date				
Granted (or case disposed of prior to trial)	122	42	32	196
Refused	4	0	1	5

iii. Applications to use Screens

	Under 14	*Under 17*	*Mixed age range*	*Total number of cases*
1993				
Granted	19	24	11	54
Refused	0	0	0	0

Note: Applications to use screens were not recorded prior to 1 January 1993.

High Court Judges

Mr. Cox: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the number of High Court judges who are *(a)* Asian and *(b)* black, on 1 December.

Mr. John M. Taylor: As at 1 December 1993, there were 94 High Court judges. The ethnic origin of those appointed as High Court judges has not been recorded formally in the past, but it is known that none is black or Asian.

Press Releases

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many press releases his Department has issued in each year since 1979.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's Department issued 170 press releases in 1986; 147 in 1987; 182 in 1988; 175 in 1989; 206 in 1990; 245 in 1991; and 333 in 1992. A total of 297 have been issued to 14 December in 1993. There are no records of press releases before 1986.

Immigration

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many adjudicators there are *(a)* at first instance and *(b)* on appeal dealing with immigration cases; how many are (i) full-time and (ii) part-time, and how many are (1) black, (2) Asian and (3) female.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There are dealing with immigration cases *(a)* 116 immigration adjudicators at first instance and *(b)* 12 legal members and 27 lay members on appeal.

Of the immigration adjudicators at first instance, 16 are full time and 100 are part time; three are black, four are Asian and 23 are female.

Of the members of the Immigration Appeal Tribunal, three are full time and 36 are part time; four are black, six are Asian and 14 are female.

Administration

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the total expenditure by his Department on administration in 1992-93; what is the estimated outturn for expenditure by his Department on administration for 1993-94 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms in, 1992-93 prices; and what is his estimate for expenditure on administration by his Department for 1994-95 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1992-93 prices.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The total expenditure by the Lord Chancellor's Department on running costs for 1992-93, estimated outturn for 1993-94 and plans for 1994-95 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms (in 1992-93 prices) are shown in the table:

£'000

	1992-93	*1993-94*	*1994-95*
Cash terms	396,548	419,000	427,000
1992-93 prices	396,548	405,811	397,653

Expenditure Review

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what will be the terms of reference of the Lord Chancellor's Department proposed fundamental review of expenditure by his Department.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Government announced in February 1993 that they would conduct in-depth reviews of all public spending by every department of state. The work will examine long-term trends in spending on individual programmes to assess whether they are sustainable, and seek out areas from which the state might withdraw altogether or where better targeting is now appropriate. The "Financial Statement and Budget Report" laid before the House of Commons on 30 November 1993 mentioned that the next batch of reviews would cover, among others, the legal departments.

The terms of reference of the review will be to:

(a) assess whether the trends in expenditure on courts and legal services are sustainable and advise what must be done if they are not;

(b) consider whether public expenditure by the legal departments in England and Wales has a clear purpose, whether the purpose is right for the 1990s and if so whether it is being pursued cost effectively.

The review team will make its first report to the Lord Chancellor by June 1994.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Quangos

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission, what plans exist to modernise audit and accountability arrangements for Government and quangos.

Sir Peter Hordern: The Comptroller and Auditor General is the statutory auditor of all Government Departments, executive agencies, and of a wide range of other public sector bodies. In addition, he audits the accounts of some other public sector organisations by agreement. For all these bodies, the Comptroller and Auditor General reports to Parliament.

The Comptroller and Auditor General is also the auditor of some 50 per cent. of executive non-departmental public bodies. For other non-departmental public bodies the auditor, normally from the private sector, is appointed by the responsible Secretary of State. The accounts of these bodies are laid before Parliament.

Recent reviews of the financial audit methods of the National Audit Office suggest that they are comparable with best practice in the auditing profession in the United Kingdom.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Arts Expenditure

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what has been public expenditure on the arts in real terms in each year since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: Government funding for the arts is mainly provided through the Arts Council. Since 1979, its grant in aid in each year has been, in 1979-80 prices

	£000s
1979-80	63,125
1980-81	59,980
1981-82	61,995
1982-83	65,678
1983-84	66,053
1984-85	66,703
1988-86	65,771
1966-87	81,706
1987-88	79,689
1988-89	81,704
1989-90	77,940
1990-91	81,537
1991-92	84,711
1992-93	92,922
1993-94	91,799

Arts Funding

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many meetings he has held with the Secretary of State for the Environment to discuss local authority funding of the arts; and when the meetings took place.

Mr. Brooke: I have had no bilateral meetings with the Secratary of State for the Environment specifically to discuss local authority funding for the arts, but my officials remain in contact with their colleagues in the Department of the Environment on this and other issues.

Departmental Offices (Heating Bills)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list by location the annual fuel heating bills for each of his Department's offices for the last four years, and for this year to date.

Mr. Sproat: My Department was established in April 1992. In the year 1992-93, the Department and its agencies spent £225,367 on identifiable heating costs. In the current year, we have spent £161,064 on identifiable costs. Costs are estimated in some cases where the new Department was a part-occupier of other Department's premises, or where energy costs refer also to other uses.

The breakdown of costs is as follows:

	£
1992-93	
Horseguards road	2,441
Grove house	1,210
Historic Royal Palaces Agency:	
Hampton court	61,500
Kensington palace	15,854
Tower of London	141,416
Banquetting house	2,946
1993-94 to date	
Horseguards road	274
Grove house	1,746
Historic Royal Palances Agency:	
Hampton court	53,700
Kensington palace	8,175
Tower of London	97,169

Time Zone

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations his Department has received on the subject of Britain's time zone.

Mr. Brooke: My Department has received representations on a move to central European time from its sponsor bodies and various trade organisations. All have been in favour of such a change.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what studies his Department has commissioned on the effects of an extra hour of evening daylight on rates of participation in outdoor sports activities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: There has been no direct assessment of this kind. However the Sports Council, which is my Department's adviser on matters relating to sport and active recreation, takes the view that an additional hour of evening daylight would help to increase the opportunities for participation.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what estimate his Department has made of the likely effect on the British tourist industry of an extra hour of evening daylight all through the year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: There has been no direct assessment of this kind. However, the English tourist board, which is my Department's adviser on domestic tourism matters, takes the view that an additional hour of evening daylight would help to extend the tourist season by enabling many outdoor attractions to open to a later hour. Such a move would also promote greater employment opportunities.

Commercial Television

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what mechanism there is for taking into account when determining his policies towards the awarding of commercial television franchises and towards possible mergers and takeovers in commercial television the level of violence depicted on television.

Mr. Brooke: The licensing and regulation of commercial television are matters for the Independent

Television Commission, which carries out the responsibilities laid on it by the Broadcasting Act 1990. All licensees, regardless of ownership, have to comply with the ITC programme code, which includes guidance on the portrayal of violence in programmes.

Press Releases

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many press releases his Department has issued in 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Sproat: The Department of National Heritage was established in April 1992. Between April and December 1992, the Department issued 129 press notices. In 1993, to date, the Department has issued 177 press notices.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the name and job description of each special ministerial adviser employed in his Department, showing any particular outputs for which each adviser is responsible.

The Attorney-General: There are no special ministerial advisers employed in my Department.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Attorney-General what arrangements are made to ensure that special advisers to Ministers in his Department do not have access to the kind of information, and are not involved in the type of business, that would be likely to create suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment.

The Attorney-General: There are no special advisers to Ministers in my Department.

Bromley Social Services Department

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Attorney-General if the Crown Prosecution Service has yet reached a decision in respect of prosecution over the alleged fraud within the social services department of the London borough of Bromley; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: No. The Metropolitan police have been asked to make further inquiries. When the result of those inquiries is known, the decision will be taken.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Sudan

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations have been made to the Government of Sudan on the subject of human rights and the rights to freedom of religious worship; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Her Majesty's ambassador in Khartoum takes every suitable opportunity, both bilaterally and in concert with other European Union heads of mission, to express our concern to the Sudanese authorities at reported abuses of human rights and fundamental freedoms, freedom of religion among them. We were active earlier this year in securing the appointment of a special rapporteur to investigate the human rights situation in Sudan. At the United Nations General Assembly, we co-sponsored a hard-hitting resolution in the third committee, commending the work of the special rapporteur, which was passed on 6 December by 102 votes to 11.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his Department's policy is regarding the use of executive search consultants in making appointments to public bodies; and if he will *(a)* list the appointments where such consultants have been used and *(b)* list the cost in each case since April 1992.

Mr. Goodlad: Foreign and Commonwealth Office practice is not to make use of executive search consultants in making appointments to public bodies.

(a) Since April 1992 executive search consultants have not been used in making appointments to public bodies.

(b) None.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which of the appointments made to public bodies by him since April 1992 have been advertised.

Mr. Goodlad: None.

Press Releases

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many press releases his Department has issued in each year since 1979.

Mr. Goodlad: The number of press releases issued per year by the FCO and ODA press offices is as follows:

	FCO	*ODA*
1979	176	160
1980	168	155
1981	221	125
1982	169	129
1983	138	149
1984	120	148
1985	142	186
1986	163	178
1987	168	148
1988	120	127
1989	177	135
1990	263	114
1991	221	102
1992	182	111
1993	189	[1]91

[1] At 13 December 1993.

Administration Costs

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total expenditure by his Department on administration in 1992-93; what is the estimated outturn for expenditure by his Department on administration for 1993-94 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms, in 1992-93 prices; and what is his estimate for expenditure on administration by his Department for 1994-95 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1992-93 prices.

Mr. Goodlad: The final outturn for the recurrent costs of running the Department in 1992-93 is:

	£ million
FCO Diplomatic Wing	520·976
Overseas Development Administration	45·650
Total	566·626

The total running cost limit for 1993-94 in cash terms is:

	£ million
FCO Diplomatic Wing	579·877
Overseas Development Administration	51·771
Total	631·648

An estimated outturn will be published in the spring in the 1994 departmental report and the unified Budget supplement.

Estimates of expenditure will be published in the spring in the 1994 departmental report and in the 1994-95 supply estimates.

The GDP deflators required to calculate real terms figures are shown on page 121 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95", HC 31, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Manchester United Supporters

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 10 December, *Official Report*, column *407*, if there has yet been any response from the Turkish Government to the representations made by the British ambassador in Ankara in regard to the treatment of Manchester United supporters by the Turkish authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Turkish authorities have told the British ambassador in Ankara that a formal response to his representations would be available soon. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has also received a letter from the Turkish ambassador confirming this stressing that the Turkish authorities are taking the allegations very seriously.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 10 December, *Official Report*, column *407*, if he has *(a)* met or *(b)* plans to meet the Turkish ambassador to discuss the allegations of mistreatment of Manchester United supporters by the Turkish authorities.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has not met the Turkish ambassador to discuss these allegations. However, I met him on 8 November. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs wrote to the Turkish ambassador on 2 December with a list of the main allegations. We are currently awaiting his detailed response. When we have this we shall decide what further action should be taken.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 10 December, *Official Report*, column *407*, what further action he now proposes to take in regard to the treatment of Manchester United supporters by the Turkish authorities.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have pressed for a report from the Turkish authorities. Further action will be considered in the light of that report.

EDUCATION

Further and Higher Education

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many educational institutions the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education has visited during his first 12 months in office.

Mr. Boswell: I have visited a total of 67 educational institutions during my first 12 months in office, as follows:

Date	*Institution visited*
Tuesday, 15 December	Royal Holloway and Bedford New College
Monday, 1 February	Brooklands College
Friday, 12 February	Beanfield Infant School, Corby; Beanfield Junior School, Corby; Brooke CTC, Corby
Monday, 15 February	Exeter University
Friday, 19 February	Open University, Milton Keynes
Friday, 26 February	New College, Oxford
Monday, 8 March	Coventry University
Tuesday, 16 March	University of West of England
Friday, 19 March	Kirby College; University of Teeside
Monday, 22 March	Edge Hill College
Friday, 26 March	Daventry William Parker School
Wednesday, 31 March	Hackney College
Wednesday, 21 April	Central St. Martins School of Art
Friday, 23 April	Blackburn College; William Temple High School, Preston; North Cheshire College, Warrington
Wednesday, 28 April	University of Westminster
Friday, 30 April	Tresham College, Kettering
Friday, 14 May	Northampton School for Boys; Daventry Tertiary College
Thursday, 20 May	London Institute of Education
Friday, 21 May	St. Crispin's School; Reading University
Saturday, 12 June	Nuffield College, Oxford
Friday, 28 May	Campion School, Northants
Friday, 4 June	Manchester College, Oxford
Wednesday, 16 June	St. Vincent College, Gosport
Friday, 18 June	Beachborough School
Monday, 21 June	ADT College, Wandsworth
Friday, 25 June	Churchill College, Cambridge; Malvern Girls' College
Wednesday, 30 June	Berkshire College of Agriculture
Friday, 2 July	Magdalen College School, Brackley; Spoone School, Towester
Thursday, 8 July	St. Anthony's College, Oxford
Tuesday, 20 July	South Bank University
Wednesday, 21 July	Keele University
Tuesday, 17 August	Europa Kolleg, Kassel, Germany
Thursday, 30 September	North Oxfordshire College, Banbury
Friday, 1 October	Nene College, Northampton (and also Friday, 5 November)
Wednesday, 6 October	Blackpool and Fylde College
Thursday, 7 October	Blackpool Sixth Form College
Tuesday, 12 October	Martin-Luther-University, Halle, Germany; Leipzig University
Wednesday, 13 October	Technical College, Dresden; Teachers' Academy, Dresden
Friday, 22 October	Sparsholt College, Hampshire
Wednesday, 27 October	Leeds Metropolitan University; University of Leeds (Main Campus); University of Leeds, Bretton Hall; Birkbeck College

Date	*Institution visited*
Sunday, 31 October	Worcester College, Oxford
Monday, 1 November	East Birmingham College; Bournville College
Thursday, 11 November	Farnborough 6th Form College
Monday, 15 November	Wootton Bassett School, Wiltshire
Wednesday, 17 November	St. Martins' College, Lancaster; Lancaster University
Sunday, 21 November	Oriel College, Oxford
Friday, 19 November	Guilsborough School, Northants
Thursday, 25 November	Cambridge Regional College
Friday, 26 November	University of Luton
Wednesday, 1 December	Bonn University, Germany
Thursday, 2 December	European University Institute, Florence

Nursery Education

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education for what reasons, at what legislative stage and by which procedure, the provisions contained in section 8(2)(b) of the Education Act 1944, concerning nursery education, were removed from the statute book.

Mr. Robin Squire: Section 8(2)(b) of the Education Act 1944 was repealed by section 38(6) and schedule 7 of the Education Act 1980, and provision was substituted by section 24 of that Act. This was designed to clarify the imprecise wording of the 1944 Act as regards the nature of any duty to provide nursery education. The 1980 Act established that, as indeed had generally been assumed to be the position, there was a discretionary power, but no duty, on local education authorities to provide either nursery schools or education in nursery classes for children under five.

Examinations

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what evidence he has of any correlation between a school's examination performance and the number of taught hours.

Mr. Robin Squire: Initial work carried out in the Department indicates on average a small but statistically significant positive correlation between the length of the taught week and educational performance as measured by public examinations and national tests. My right hon. Friend wrote to Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in England on 9 December taking up his offer of help with a review of the length of the taught week and in particular asking for his advice on the relationship between the amount of taught time and the quality and standards of pupils' work; a copy of the letter, attached to DFE press notice 420/93, is in the Library. The chief inspector will be submitting an initial report by the end of January 1994.

Degrees

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what changes he plans in the balance of numbers of masters level and doctoral level degrees in the arts and humanities in line with the changes for science and technology courses announced in the White Paper "Realising our Potential"; if he will discuss this issue with the British Academy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: The British Academy implemented a revised structure for its awards for postgraduate research in the humanities at the start of the current academic year. This new structure is similar to that proposed in the White Paper "Realising our Potential" for courses in science and technology. For the 1993-94 academic year, the academy has made 529 new awards for study at masters level and 519 for doctoral study. It is for the academy to determine this balance.

Environmentl Education Advisers

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the local education authorities that currently employ environmental education advisers and the ones that have ceased to do so over the last five years.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is not centrally available.

Environmental Education

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will make it his policy to ensure that all schools, in stating their moral values and outlining their general ethos, refer to the importance of their responsibility for the environment and the development of such awareness among their pupils;

(2) how he intends to meet the requirements of "Agenda 21", objectives 36.5D, incentive training, E, local environmental studies and F promoting proven education methods with respect to estuaries;

(3) if he will help to increase schools' awareness of estuarine sites of importance to wildlife by providing educational resources and training for the interpretation of estuaries;

(4) what plans he has to set up pre-service and in-service training programmes for all teachers and educational planners to ensure delivery of environmental education as recommended at the Rio summit.

Mr. Robin Squire: Environmental education is addressed through the statutory subjects of the national curriculum: schools themselves are responsible for how environmental education is delivered. National curriculum geography includes study of rivers, river basins and seas; and requires that pupils are taught about the quality and vulnerability of different environments and the possibilities for protecting and managing them.

Schools are free to include reference to the importance of their responsibilities for the environment and the development of such awareness among their pupils in the statement of the school's ethos and values included in their prospectuses, if they so wish.

The Government provide specific grant to support expenditure on the national curriculum which is devolved mainly to schools to spend on books and equipment or training. It is for schools and LEAs to decide what priority to give to particular subject areas and to make detailed plans in the light of their own staff development needs.

My right hon. Friend seeks to ensure, through his criteria for the approval of initial teacher training—ITT—that courses give a thorough preparation for teaching the national curriculum. The detailed content of courses is a matter for ITT providers and not the Government.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidance he has issued to local education authorities, schools and institutions of further and higher education on those aspects of Agenda 21 dealing with education for sustainable development and the environment.

Mr. Robin Squire: None. A general Government strategy document on sustainable development is in preparation.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what progress has been made in the implementation of the recommendation of the Toyne report: "Environmental Responsibility: An Agenda for Further and Higher Education".

Mr. Boswell: When the report was published in February 1993, I welcomed it as a valuable contribution to debate in an area which involved complex issues. The report's recommendations were addressed to the whole higher and further education sector, but particularly the institutions themselves and the funding councils. We therefore distributed the report to vice-chancellors of universities, principals of colleges and the chairmen of the funding councils, drawing the recipients' attention to the recommendations addressed to their institutions. Implementation of these is a matter for them.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to ensure that Office for Standards in Education inspectors comment on the quality of environmental education when compiling reports following a school inspection.

Mr. Robin Squire: Under the Education (Schools) Act 1992, registered inspectors conducting inspections of schools must report on the quality of education and standards achieved in accordance with Ofsted's published framework for inspection.

I have asked Professor Sutherland to write to the hon. Member.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what his Department's policy is regarding the use of executive search consultants in making appointments to public bodies; and if he will *(a)* list the appointments where such consultants have been used and *(b)* list the cost in each case since April 1992.

Mr. Boswell: The Department occasionally uses the services of executive search consultants as one of the options available to ensure a sufficiently wide field of suitable candidates for appointment to our public bodies. Since April 1992, we have used these services once. On 4 December 1992, we announced that the Department had paid £27,000 to employ Saxton Bampfylde International plc to assist us in searching for candidates suitable for consideration for the chairmanship of the Schools Curriculum and Asessment Authority.

Funding Councils

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what criteria are used in the selection of the chair and the executive members of *(a)* the Further Education Funding Council, *(b)* the regional committees of the Further Education Funding Council, *(c)* the Higher Education Funding Council and *(d)* the Funding Agency for Schools, in respect of relevant experience and qualifications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: The criteria governing appointments to the Further Education Funding Council are set out in section 1(4) of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. There are no statutory requirements governing appointments to the regional committees of the Further Education Funding Council. However, the White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st Century", Cm 1536, made it clear that the composition of the regional committees would be similar to that of the council. The criteria governing appointments to the Higher Education Funding Council for England are set out in section 62(4) of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. The criteria governing appointments to the Funding Agency for Schools are set out in section 3(3) of the Education Act 1993.

Education Boards

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the minimum and maximum numbers of possible board members of *(a)* higher education corporations, *(b)* further education corporations, *(c)* grant-maintained schools and *(d)* city technology colleges; what guidelines he has issued concerning the composition of these boards; and what specific guidance has been given on how many board members should be (i) from ethnic minorities, (ii) women, (iii) from the local business sector, (iv) from local authorities and (v) from trade unions.

Mr. Boswell: *(a)* The board of governors of higher education corporations must consist of not fewer than 12 and not more than 24 members, plus the principal unless the principal chooses not to be a member. The composition of the board is governed by the provisions of schedule 7A to the Education Reform Act 1988. This requires that up to 13 members shall be independent members appearing to have experience in industrial, commercial or employment matters or the practice of any profession. No specific guidance has been given on particular areas from which membership should be drawn.

(b) In accordance with their instruments of government, which have been prescribed by regulations, further education corporations must have between 10 and 20 members, of whom at least half must be business members, including a representative of the local training and enterprise council. They may co-opt up to two persons who are employees or members of a local authority. In the case of corporations to conduct sixth-form colleges, the initial members of which were appointed by my right hon. Friend, those responsible for submitting nominations were asked by my right hon. Friend to have regard to the overall balance of the membership in terms of age, gender and ethnic background.

(c) The minimum number of possible members of a grant-maintained school governing body is 15. Although there is no maximum number, my right hon. Friend expects governing bodies to be of a manageable size. A guide giving details of the composition of governing bodies is available to all grant-maintained schools. It is a statutory requirement that some governors be members of the local business community. There is no requirement that governing bodies include members of ethnic minorities, women, local authorities or trade unionists.

(d) The model scheme of government for city technology colleges suggests a minimum of nine and a maximum of 20 persons on the board of governors. General guidance on the composition of the governing body is included in the model scheme, but there is no specific guidance on how many board members should come from any of the groups named.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the minimum and maximum numbers of possible board members of the *(a)* Further Education Funding Council, *(b)* regional committees of the Further Education Funding Council, regional committees of the Further Education Funding Council; *(c)* action trusts and *(d)* Funding Agency for Schools; what guidelines he has issued concerning the composition of these boards; and what specific guidance has been given on how many board members should be (i) from ethnic minorities, (ii) women, (iii) from the local business sector, (iv) from local authorities and (v) from trade unions.

Mr. Boswell: Information relating to the first part of this question is as follows: Following my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's initiative, goals were set for increasing the representation of ethnic minority groups and women on our public bodies and the Department has made steady progress in this direction. Guidance is available on how these goals may be achieved. Notwithstanding this consideration, appointments to all our public bodies are made solely on the basis of the aptitude, merit and suitability of candidates to undertake the varying requirements associated with individual bodies.

	Maximum number of board members	*Minimum number of board members*
Further Education Funding Council	15	12
Regional Committees of the Further Education Funding Council	approximately 12 members	
Education Associations	not less than 5 members	
Funding Agency for Schools	15	10

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the total numbers of *(a)* chairpersons and non-executive board members of city technology colleges, *(b)* chairpersons and members of the governing bodies of grant-maintained schools and *(c)* chairpersons and members of the governing bodies of further education and sixth form colleges.

Mr. Robin Squire: (a) There are currently 14 chairmen of the city technology college governing bodies. Information is not held centrally on the total number of members of governing bodies but each governing body has at least nine members.

(b) There are 697 chairmen of operating self governing —grant-maintained—schools' governing bodies. There are a further 108 chairmen designate for schools which are shortly to become self governing. Information is not held centrally of the total number of members of governing bodies but each governing body has at least 15 members.

(c) The governing bodies of the 464 further education and sixth form colleges normally have between 10 and 20 members, including a chairman.

Assisted Places

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much was spent on the assisted places scheme in Devon in each financial year since 1990.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is given in the table:

Financial Year	*DFE expenditure £000s*
1990-91	1,903
1991-92	2,259
1992-93	2,573

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what the cost of advertising by his Department has been for each year since 1979 and for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Boswell: The expenditure figures for advertising, including press, television and radio, by the Department for the financial years since 1979 are in the table.

Year	*Advertising £k*
1979-80	91·6
1980-81	8·9
1981-82	86·9
1982-83	6·0
1983-84	9·6
1984-85	18·5
1985-86	14·8
1986-87	532·0
1987-88	280·0
1988-89	515·0
1989-90	249·8
1990-91	2,604·0
1991-92	3,037·9
1992-93	1,086·4

It would involve disproportionate costs to break down into individual months the advertising campaigns run by the Department from January to December 1993. Advertising costs are not billed when the adverts actually appear. Details of the campaigns run in the calendar year 1993 are as follows:

Campaign	*Date*	*Costs £k*
GM schools	February to March	200·0
Testing in schools	April to May	449·0
Further and high education charters	September to October	486·0
	Total	1,135·0

Press Releases

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many press releases his Department has issued in each year since 1979.

Mr. Boswell: The number of press notices issued by the Department in each year since 1979 are as follows:

	Number
1979	124
1980	209
1981	201
1982	311

	Number
1983	434
1984	218
1985	333
1986	348
1987	392
1988	418
1989	408
1990	406
1991	444
1992	425
1993	[1]423

[1] To 14 December.

Henry VIII Clauses

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many Henry VIII clauses have been contained in legislation from the Department of Education since 1979; and if he will list the relevant clause and Act in each case.

Mr. Boswell: The following provisions in Education Acts enacted since 1979 empower the Secretary of State to amend the Act in which they are contained:

	Section
Education (No. 2) Act 1986:	Section 30(5) and paragraph 5 of Schedule 3;
Education Reform Act 1988:	sections 3(4)(a), 41, 43(2)(a), 52(7)(a), 76(14) and 146(1) and paragraph 4 of Schedule 9; and
Education Act 1993:	section 41(10) and paragraph 1(4) of Schedule 3.

Administration

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total expenditure by his Department on administration in 1992-93; what is the estimated outturn for expenditure by his Department on administration for 1993-94 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms in, 1992-93 prices; and what is his estimate for expenditure on administration by his Department for 1994-95 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1992-93 prices.

Mr. Boswell: The information requested is as follows:

i. The final outturn for the net recurrent costs of running the department in 1992-93 is £103·275 million.
ii. The estimated outturn for 1993-94 is £89·575 million.
iii. The Department's planned running costs expenditure for 1994-95 is £89 million.

The GDP deflators required to calculate real terms figures are shown on page 121 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95", HC 31, copies of which are available in the Library.

It should be noted that the 1992-93 figures includes recurrent expenditure of £15·347 million by the office of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools.

Secretary of State's Powers

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many powers were conferred upon the holder of his post by *(a)* the Education Reform Act 1988, *(b)* the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and *(c)* the Education Act 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: These Acts confer on the Secretary of State a number of powers. Examples are powers to give directions—for example, the power under section 34(1) of the 1988 Act by order to direct the date by which a scheme of local management is to be submitted—and powers of approval—for example, of proposal for the establishment of a new grant-maintained school under section 51 of the 1993 Act. The legislation also contains many examples of powers to prescribe forms or information to be contained in notices, or periods in which duties are to be performed. To identify all the powers in the legislation referred to in the question could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Student Income Survey

Mr. Lord: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when the results of the recent survey of student income and expenditure conducted by Research Services Ltd. will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: Research Services Ltd. will be publishing the survey report today. I am placing copies in the Library.

The survey is an important contribution to the information available about students' financial circumstances since the introduction of student loans. Other recent surveys in this area have been based on small, unrepresentative samples and often less than rigorous questionnaires. The survey reported on today is the most extensive of its sort since the last one in the series in academic year 1988-89.

It confirms, as expected, that public support for students under 26 who have taken out Government-subsidised loans has increased since the last survey was conducted in 1988-89. Their income from grant, loan, access funds and benefits rose by about a third in real terms as compared with grant and benefits in 1988-89.

At the same time, the report records the reduced financial burden on parents, whose contribution to younger students' income has on average fallen by about a fifth in real terms since 1988-89. On average, parents have continued to pay in full the contribution expected of them, with most paying more and only about a third paying less.

The Government particularly welcome the survey's finding that a higher proportion of students from lower social groups are entering higher education. The fears of those who said that the introduction of loans would deter these groups have not been realised.

A system of loans for maintenance rates is based on the recognition that everyone's spending needs are different. The accelerated switch from grant to loan which my right hon. Friend announced on 30 November will enhance still further the flexibility of our system of student support.

School Minibuses (Safety Belts)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he proposes to make compulsory the fitting of safety belts to all seated positions in minibuses owned or used by schools.

Mr. Key: I have been asked to reply.

We are currently carrying out a review of the full technical and cost implications of seat belts in these vehicles.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police, Wales

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the resources available to the police forces in Wales to enable them to maintain an appropriate level of policing over the Christmas period.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is for the chief officer of each force to assess his operational requirements at any time, and to provide the appropriate level of policing.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the possibility of potential inadequacy of police resources in Wales over the Christmas period.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have received one representation. This relates to police staffing levels in the south Wales police area over the Christmas bank holiday period.

Safer Cities Initiative

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to annnounce which local authorities will receive resources under the safer cities initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to make an announcement shortly.

Racism and Immigrants

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the specific actions his Department has taken to combat racism in *(a)* Tower Hamlets and *(b)* the United Kingdom;

(2) what action his Department has taken to encourage a positive public perception of immigrants.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I will write to the hon. Member.

Entry Refusals

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many appeals against refusal of entry to visitors were made in the last year in which appeals were accepted; and how many were successful.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information on the outcome of appeals against exclusion and against refusal of entry clearance for temporary purposes is given in Table 8.1 of Home Office Command Paper "Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 1992", Cm 2368, a copy of which is in the Library.

Immigration Complaints Audit Committee

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the three members he has appointed to the new immigration and nationality department complaints audit committee are members of the Conservative party.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The members of the IND complaints audit committee were appointed on the basis of the experience and expertise they would bring to the task. Party political affiliation, or the absence of it, played no part in their selection.

As a matter of public record, one of the members is a Conservative member of a borough council. I have no knowledge of the political affiliations, if any, of the other two members.

Drug Misuse

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in bringing forward proposals to ensure that the action to prevent drug misuse is co-ordinated effectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The fight against drugs is one of the Government's priorities. We remain committed to tackling every aspect of the drugs problem and are actively addressing issues across a range of policy areas which are the responsibility of a number of Government Departments. We need, however, to review our strategy to ensure that the policies we are pursuing are correctly identified and are co-ordinated effectively.

The Secretary of State for Health and I have therefore decided—with the support of our colleagues—to set up a new central drugs co-ordination unit. The unit will have two major tasks. First, it will ensure that departmental policies are planned, developed and implemented in England within a clear strategic framework. Second, the unit will take the lead in devising an effective basis for local co-ordination of action to tackle the drugs problem, which will add significantly to the value of much excellent work already being carried out locally in the public, private and voluntary sectors. The unit's immediate task is to review the strategy on drugs published in 1989 and make recommendations for its improvement.

The unit will be attached to the Privy Council Office, reporting to the Lord President of the Council, who chairs the Cabinet committee on drugs issues. Individual Government Departments will remain responsible for their policies which impact on the drugs problem and will work closely with the unit.

In Scotland, the arrangements for co-ordination are among the issues being addressed by the drugs task force led by my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office. The Secretary of State for Wales will shortly announce the arrangements which will apply in Wales.

Film Violence

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider introducing further restrictions on the depiction of violence in films and videos.

Mr. Maclean: We already have a well-established and rigorous system of video classification exercised by the British Board of Film Classification under the Video Recordings Act 1984 and 1993. In practice the BBFC exercises a similar role in relation to cinema films, although the legal responsibility under the Cinemas Act 1985 lies with local authorities.

The BBFC's approach to the classification of films and videos is discussed in its annual report for 1992, a copy of which is available in the Library. This makes it clear that the BBFC takes its responsibilities very seriously, and that it is particularly concerned about the depiction of violence. The BBFC is required to have special regard to the fact that videos will be viewed in the home; consequently films are more restrictively classified on video than for the cinema, and some cinema films may not be regarded as suitable for release on video in any version. The BBFC, with others, has commissioned research into the viewing habits of young offenders in order to inform its future classification policy, and I understand that the results of this research are expected to be published early next year.

The Government are not complacent about this issue, and we keep the present controls under regular review. Nevertheless, as I explained in my reply to the hon. Member on 7 December, *Official Report*, column *163*, the law can go only so far and the final responsibility for what is seen must inevitably rest in the home.

Charities

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many charities are currently registered in the united Kingdom; and how many of them hold funds in excess of £5 million.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At the end of November 1993, there were 169,829 charities on the register kept by the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales.

No reliable figure exists for the number of charities which hold funds or other assets worth £5 million or more. There are, however, at least 345 registered charities in England and Wales with an annual income of £5 million or more in their last financial year.

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to altering the guidelines to ensure that charities dispose of their funds in excess of maintaining reasonable resources.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This is a matter for the Charity Commissioners. I understand that the commissioners are concerned about the high level of accumulations of income of some charities and are currently considering the key policy issues that arise from this. The commissioners will complete their examination of the matter in the new year and are planning to issue formal guidance to charities shortly after that.

Departmental Offices (Heating Bills)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, by location, the annual fuel heating bills for each of his Department's offices for the last four years, and for this year to date.

Mr. Howard: I will write to the hon. Member.

Operation Cheetah

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many man hours have been used in Operation Cheetah at the latest date.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Merseyside police estimate that, since April 1990, approximately 22,000 man days have been devoted to Operation Cheetah.

Combat 18

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will consider launching an investigation into the activities of the group Combat 18.

Mr. Charles Wardle: If anyone has information that an individual or group is engaged in any kind of criminal activity he or she should pass it to the police. It is part of the normal responsibility of the police to keep an eye on all organisations that might pose a threat to public order.

Prisoners (Compensation Payments)

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners or ex-prisoners instituted legal action in relation to their imprisonment against the Home Office in 1992; and how many of these cases were settled out of court or were found against the Home Office;

(2) on how many occasions prisoners or ex-prisoners were paid compensation or ex-gratia payment for other than losses of personal property in 1992; and what is the total of that compensation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for replies to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Peter Luff, dated 16 December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent questions about litigation and compensation payments to prisoners and ex-prisoners.

I have assumed for the purpose of this reply that your questions relate to litigation and compensation payments connected to time spent in prison custody, rather than wrongful conviction, which of course falls outside my sphere of responsibility.

Prison Service records show 130 pieces of legal action against the department lodged by prisoners or ex-prisoners in 1992. Of these 13 have been settled out of court or found against the Home Office; two have been withdrawn or struck out and the remaining 115 appear as outstanding (although there may be some delay in the recording of resolved cases). The compensation (including ex-gratia payments) paid to prisoners and ex-prisoners in 1992, other than for loss of property, was as follows:

Injuries at work	£265,813
Excessive detention	£22,718
Other claims[1]	£123,114
Total	£411,645

[1] Including personal injury outside work.

Figures for the number of individual claims are not recorded and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Wymott Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what educational facilities are available to prisoners currently housed at Wymott prison;

(2) what work facilities are available to prisoners currently housed at Wymott prison;

(3) what training facilities are available to prisoners currently housed at Wymott prison;

(4) what exercise facilities outside the cell block area are available to prisoners currently housed at Wymott prison;

(5) what progress is being made in the refurbishment of Wymott prison following the recent riots; what hours and days of the week are the contractors on site; and what proportion of the building is now habitable.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent questions about prisoners facilities and the progress of refurbishment at Wymott Prison.

There are facilities for forty full-time education places during the week within the education department, with a further forty prisoners participating in part-time evening education within the Houseblock.

A range of work is available now and includes tailoring, weaving, engineering and laundry. There are enough places for the number of prisoners held at Wymott. Further work places will be available in the New Year as the population rises.

In addition to the training provided through education and work, a number of accredited NVQ and formal Vocational Training Courses (VTCs) will be introduced over coming months.

The important work with prisoners to help them address offending behavour will commence in the New Year. This will include delivery of the core sex offender programme, for which staff are being trained as we promised when it was decided to move sex offenders from Risley to Wymott.

There are ample outdoor areas for fresh-air exercise, together with a fully equipped gymnasium.

Of the four house blocks, 'B' House is already fully occupied while refurbishment of 'A' House is on line for completion by 23 December and ready for occupation in mid-January 1994. The two remaining house blocks are to be demolished and re-built with stronger, cellular accommodation which will not be available for occupancy for about two years. Contractors are working on site for eleven hours a day, seven days a week.

Sheehy Inquiry

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will publish the information provided to the Sheehy inquiry on the number of policemen injured on duty;

(2) if he will publish the information provided to the Sheehy inquiry on the probability of death in service for police officers and the life expectations of those retiring at age 50 and 60 years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on these subjects was provided to the inquiry from a number of different sources. That provided by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary for England and Wales on the number of police officers assaulted on duty and by the Government Actuary's Department relating to the assumed probability of death in service for police officers and assumed life expectancy of those retiring is shown in the tables:

Specimen rates given to the Sheehy inquiry for the assumed probability of deaths in service at the ages specified

Serving officers

Age nearest	*Males*	*Females*
20	0·0007	0·0002
25	0·0006	0·0003
30	0·0004	0·0003
35	0·0005	0·0004
40	0·0008	0·0006
45	0·0013	0·0009
50	0·0023	0·0013
55	0·0038	0·0021

Retired officers: assumed expectation of life on normal retirement

Years

Normal retirement age	*Males*	*Females*
50	28·3	—
60	19·8	—

Police officers assaulted on duty

1992

Forces	*Officers assaulted*				*Fatal assaults*	*Serious assaults*	*Minor assaults*	*Other assaults*
	Aged 18 to 20	*Aged 21 to 25*	*Aged 26 to 30*	*Aged over 30*				
Avon and Somerset	1	110	130	244	0	34	450	26
Bedfordshire	0	37	55	60	0	5	43	125
Cambridge	0	28	39	49	0	4	119	10
Cheshire	7	207	222	279	0	23	179	513
City of London	1	5	6	0	0	0	8	4
Cleveland	2	35	53	93	0	14	107	84
Cumbria	5	22	33	70	0	9	129	6
Derbyshire	0	58	103	156	0	21	213	83
Devon and Cornwall	1	48	96	166	0	16	108	246
Dorset	2	17	32	87	0	26	110	2
Durham	2	43	77	105	0	7	35	185
Dyfed-Powys	3	11	23	39	0	11	78	1
Essex	11	66	50	82	0	10	110	89
Gloucestershire	2	28	37	78	0	17	126	2
Greater Manchester	0	167	431	411	0	83	458	468
Gwent	5	72	88	124	0	10	14	265
Hampshire	2	54	113	219	0	10	94	284
Hertfordshire	4	36	46	47	0	3	35	100
Humberside	1	30	42	144	0	7	96	130
Kent	4	52	67	84	0	13	47	147
Lancashire	0	105	130	201	0	14	118	334
Leicestershire	3	23	46	78	0	8	45	111
Lincolnshire	0	12	20	74	0	6	51	57
Merseyside	3	134	419	463	0	59	218	762
Norfolk	11	39	54	119	0	7	74	177

Forces	Officers assaulted				Fatal assaults	Serious assaults	Minor assaults	Other assaults
	Aged 18 to 20	Aged 21 to 25	Aged 26 to 30	Aged over 30				
North Wales	0	19	33	89	0	8	124	142
North Yorkshire	3	30	38	69	0	6	134	0
Northamptonshire	2	31	32	71	0	12	124	0
Northumbria	0	75	139	218	0	68	430	6
Nottinghamshire	4	85	107	170	0	13	268	126
South Wales	3	118	172	290	0	41	661	47
South Yorkshire	1	43	70	83	0	20	83	94
Staffordshire	20	140	110	131	0	8	358	35
Suffolk	0	24	39	69	0	6	90	74
Surrey	2	73	72	92	0	12	226	1
Sussex	8	56	81	165	0	18	311	33
Thames Valley	2	89	108	175	0	13	99	262
Warwickshire	2	34	34	59	0	8	64	57
West Mercia	1	33	66	141	0	10	126	168
West Midlands	23	362	514	746	0	110	680	855
West Yorkshire	7	151	210	371	0	58	373	346
Wiltshire	8	57	56	73	0	8	98	88
Provincial Total	156	2,859	4,293	6,495	0	836	7,314	6,545
Metropolitan Police	29	289	130	98	0	140	1,003	2,270
England and Wales Total	185	3,148	4,423	6,593	0	976	8,317	8,815

Prisoners (Release)

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it obligatory for the prison authorities to give prior notification to the police and to the victims of the crime of the release of a prisoner convicted of assault.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Under the early release arrangements introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 1991, the Prison Service already provides the police with prior notice of the release dates of all offenders, irrespective of the offence committed. I do not believe that it would be practicable to require the Prison Service to inform the victim or the victim's family in every instance that an offender, or particular class of offender, is due to be released. However, the Probation Service national standards for the supervision of offenders in the community which came into effect at the same time as the early release arrangements, require that in particularly sensitive cases the probation officer should, when completing a pre-discharge or parole assessment report, address the whereabouts, attitude towards release and concerns of the victim or the victim's family.

Central European Time

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he now intends to bring forward his proposals for the adoption of central European time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) on 4 November 1933, *Official Report,* column *363.*

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration his Department has given to the likely effect on rates of crime against the person of a move to central European time.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The 1989 Green Paper "Summer Time—A Consultation Document", CM22, considered that definite conclusions about the possible effect of a move to central European time on crime in general, or on particular offences, are difficult to draw.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate his Department has made of the cost to the public exchequer of a move to central European time.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 15 January 1993, at column *828.*

Summer Time

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been his Department's response to the proposed seventh directive on summer time arrangements in the European Community.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government have made clear in negotiations on the draft seventh directive that its terms are acceptable, while proposing that, on subsidiarity grounds, summer time start and end dates would better be the subject of a recommendation than of Community legislation.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which of the appointments made to public bodies by his Department since April 1992 have been advertised.

Mr. Howard: Since April 1992, the appointments of chief executive of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Data Protection Registrar have been advertised.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his Department's policy is regarding the use of executive search consultants in making appointments to public bodies; and if he will *(a)* list the appointments where such consultants have been used and *(b)* list the cost in each case since April 1992.

Mr. Howard: Executive search consultants are used in making appointments to public bodies where it is thought that they will be able to supplement usefully the field of applicants.

Since April 1992, consultants have been used for the post of chief executive of the Commission for Racial Equality and in the current competition for the post of Data Protection Registrar.

For reasons of commercial confidentiality it is not our practice to disclose individual contract values. However, the combined value of the two contracts was £32,500.

"Voluntary Action"

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards the proposals in the report, "Voluntary Action".

Mr. Peter Lloyd: "Voluntary Action" was written by Barry Knight of the Centre for Research and Innovation in Social Policy and Practice: the views in the report are those of the author. The Government consider the report to be a worthwhile contribution to the continuing debate on charities and the voluntary sector, but do not accept the report's proposals to end charitable status, tax concessions for charitable giving or to abolish the Charity Commission. The Government also consider that the proposal to split the voluntary sector into "first force" and "third sector" is too simple and mechanistic.

Police

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the police establishment plus supernumeraries for each month of 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) on 24 November, at columns *55-56*. Additional figures for the period September to November are given in the table. I will write to the hon. Member when complete figures for December are available.

	September		*October*		*November*	
	Establishment	*Super-numerary posts*	*Establishment*	*Super-numerary posts*	*Establishment*	*Super-numerary posts*
Avon and Somerset	3,087	3	3,087	3	3,087	3
Bedfordshire	1,178	0	1,178	0	1,178	0
Cambridgeshire	1,241	38	1,241	38	1,241	38
Cheshire	1,920	2	1,920	2	1,920	2
City of London	798	90	798	105	798	105
Cleveland	1,502	0	1,502	0	1,502	0
Cumbria	1,187	1	1,187	1	1,187	1
Derbyshire	1,850	0	1,850	0	1,850	0
Devon and Cornwall	2,928	4	2,928	4	2,928	4
Dorset	1,302	1	1,302	1	1,302	1
Durham	1,389	1	1,389	1	1,389	1
Dyfed Powys	969	1	969	1	969	1
Essex	2,950	0	2,950	0	2,950	0
Gloucestershire	1,184	0	1,184	0	1,184	0
Greater Manchester	7,077	0	7,077	0	7,077	0
Gwent	1,010	2	1,010	2	1,010	2
Hampshire	3,269	0	3,269	0	3,269	0
Hertfordshire	1,684	0	1,684	0	1,684	0
Humberside	2,034	0	2,034	0	2,034	0
Kent	3,136	37	3,136	37	3,136	37
Lancashire	3,229	3	3,229	3	3,229	3
Leicestershire	1,853	1	1,853	1	1,853	1
Lincolnshire	1,206	0	1,206	0	1,206	0
Merseyside	4,706	3	4,706	3	4,706	3
Metropolitan Police	27,839	0	27,839	0	27,839	0
Norfolk	1,446	1	1,446	1	1,446	1
North Wales	1,369	2	1,369	2	1,369	2
North Yorkshire	1,418	0	1,418	0	1,418	0
Northamptonshire	1,190	1	1,190	1	1,190	1
Northumbria	3,613	0	3,613	0	3,163	0
Nottinghamshire	2,344	13	2,344	13	2,344	13
South Wales	3,168	3	3,168	3	3,168	3
South Yorkshire	3,031	0	3,031	0	3,031	0
Staffordshire	2,215	1	2,215	1	2,215	1
Suffolk	1,233	1	1,233	1	1,233	1
Surrey	1,673	17	1,673	17	1,673	17
Sussex	3,014	1	3,014	1	3,014	1
Thames Valley	3,812	71	3,812	71	3,812	71
Warwickshire	1,020	25	1,020	25	1,020	25
West Mercia	2,053	2	2,053	2	2,053	2
West Midlands	6,977	0	6,977	0	6,977	0
West Yorkshire	5,295	2	5,295	2	5,295	2
Wiltshire	1,181	108	1,181	108	1,181	018
Total	126,580	435	126,580	450	126,580	450

Art Theft

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to enable police forces to improve the detection of art theft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The investigation of art theft is entirely a matter for individual chief officers of police. Some police forces have already taken steps to improve the effectiveness of their operations against art theft. The establishment of the artefact classification and indentification system by the Metropolitan police is one example to which I brought the hon. Member's attention on 7 July.

I cannot stress too greatly the important role members of the public play in preventing this type of crime by marking and keeping details and photographs of their valuable possessions.

Press Releases

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many press releases his Department has issued in each year since 1979.

Mr. Howard: The number of news releases issued by the Home Office for each full calendar year since 1979 is:

	Number
1979	250
1980	249
1981	237
1982	207
1983	249
1984	327
1985	346
1986	406
1987	384
1988	476
1989	500
1990	475
1991	510
1992	348

Immigration Advisory Service

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are *(a)* the names, *(b)* the occupations and *(c)* the salaries of the trustees of the organisation formerly called UKIAS.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The trustees of the Immigration Appeals Advisory Service are Mr. Humfrey Malins, Chairman, Dr. M. S. Akram, Mr. Alf Dubs, Ms Rachel Pickavance and Dr. Z. U. Khan. I understand that trustees receive no remuneration for their services. The hon. Member may wish to address his request for information about the occupations of trustees direct to the Service, which, as I said in a reply to him on 10 December, *Official Report,* column *418,* is an independent body.

Prison, Birmingham

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what present proposals he has to build a new prison in Birmingham.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Robin Corbett, dated 16 December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about any proposals the Prison Service has to build a new prison in Birmingham.

Although the Prison Service is actively seeking sites for new prisons, at present there are no specific plans to build a new prison in Birmingham. Any such sites must be near to the locality from which prisoners come in order to meet our commitments set out in the White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice". At present, there are insufficient prison places available in the West Midlands area to house all the prisoners who come from that area.

Hunters

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what effect his proposals for an offence of aggravated trespass would have on hunters entering land belonging to people who have not given them permission to do so.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The proposed new offence will apply to all trespassers, including hunters, who disrupt, or seek to disrupt, a lawful activity on land.

Administration

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total expenditure by his Department on administration in 1992-93; what is the estimated outturn for expenditure by his Department on administration for 1993-94 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms in, 1992-93 prices; and what is his estimate for expenditure on administration by his Department for 1994-95 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1992-93 prices.

Mr. Howard: The final outturn for the recurrent costs of running the Department in 1992-93 is £1,421 million. The estimated outturn for 1993-94 is £1,642 million—£1,590 million at 1992-93 prices. These figures include the costs of immigration service staff and of Prison Service grades. The planned running costs expenditure for 1994-95 will be published in the Home Office annual report 1994 and in the unified Budget supplement.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about Mr. Graham Wyn Jones, Assistant Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

Mr. Howard: Following a review by Mr. Jeremy Gompertz QC of the evidence relating to Mr. Wyn Jones's conduct, the then Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informed my predecessor in October 1992 that he regarded Mr. Wyn Jones's behaviour as reprehensible and wholly inconsistent with what was expected of someone holding the office of Assistant Commissioner.

The Permanent Under-Secretary of State of the Home Department heard representations from Mr. Wyn Jones in January 1993.

My predecessor subsequently concluded that Her Majesty the Queen should be advised that Mr. Wyn Jones should no longer be regarded as fit to hold his office. I delayed putting such advice to Her Majesty so that Mr. Wyn Jones should have an opportunity to seek leave to apply for judicial review. This he did, but on 2 December 1993 the Divisional Court refused him leave.

I accordingly advised Her Majesty the Queen that Mr. Wyn Jones must be regarded as unfit to continue to hold office as an Assistant Commissioner and Her Majesty has now withdrawn his warrant of appointment. Mr. Wyn Jones has been removed from office.

Court Escort Service

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in selecting a contractor to operate the court escort service in the Metropolitan police district.

Mr. Howard: On 16 February, my predecessor announced an intention to invite tenders for the provision of the court escort and custody service for the Metropolitan police district, under the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

After carefully considering the proposals submitted, the Prisons Board has decided to award the contract to Securicor Custodial Services Ltd. A contract will be signed before the end of the year.

The new service will come into operation in five phases starting in July 1994, using staff who are required by statute and under the contract to be properly trained and vetted. It will release prison and police officers to concentrate on duties more appropriate to their particular skills and duties.

Travel Documents

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes there have been in the policy and practice on the issue of Home Office travel documents.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Officials have written to the United Kingdom representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and to other interested organisations setting out changes which are to be introduced on 1 January 1994. The new arrangements clarify our policy and practice in the issue of Home Office travel documents and the charges we make for them. I have placed a copy of the letter in the Library.

Parish Constables

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress is being made on the parish constable initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Commitments have been received from police forces and communities to 38 schemes. Twenty of these schemes will be evaluated by the Home Office.

I am greatly encouraged by the response to this initiative, which has been very positive. Communities and police forces all over the country are engaged in a constructive process of consultation. I expect to be in a position to give an account of progress on a force by force basis early in the spring.

Hit and Run Accidents

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by police authority for the last four years, and for this year to date, the number of hit and run vehicle accidents involving pedestrians that have been reported; how many of the accidents were caused by stolen vehicles; and how many resulted in the death of the pedestrian.

Mr. Key: I have been asked to reply.

The number of hit and run accidents involving pedestrians and the number of hit and run accidents involving pedestrian fatalities for the last four years for each police authority are given in the tables. Data for 1993 are not yet available. Information on stolen vehicles involved in injury accidents is not available.

Hit and run accidents involving pedestrians: 1989 to 1992

	Year of Accident			
Police Force	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Metropolitan Police	1,578	1,440	1,358	1,255
Cumbria	45	38	38	32
Lancashire	152	166	172	181
Merseyside	233	205	220	232
Greater Manchester	512	425	445	442
Cheshire	97	98	86	80
Northumbria	178	187	170	162
Durham	51	75	67	60
North Yorkshire	79	71	56	40
West Yorkshire	191	231	259	257
South Yorkshire	153	143	133	139
Humberside	89	117	91	89
Cleveland	95	102	93	69
West Midlands	364	411	424	380
Staffordshire	93	108	87	89
West Mercia	82	79	91	62
Warwickshire	35	28	33	36
Derbyshire	85	89	84	85
Nottinghamshire	154	138	123	113
Lincolnshire	33	41	28	40
Leicestershire	85	68	85	89
Northamptonshire	46	40	34	46
Cambridgeshire	56	47	45	59
Norfolk	74	66	63	49
Suffolk	43	44	28	26
Bedfordshire	53	49	27	41
Hertfordshire	68	75	49	58
Essex	121	112	108	115
Thames Valley	180	144	114	119
Hampshire	137	143	138	144

Police Force		Year of Accident		
	1989	1990	1991	1992
Surrey	73	83	70	56
Kent	132	153	152	120
Sussex	120	135	126	113
Devon and Cornwall	130	120	129	134
Avon and Somerset	129	75	99	82
Gloucestershire	44	31	41	41
Wiltshire	37	43	44	39
Dorset	56	60	42	46
North Wales	52	74	65	59
Gwent	26	14	45	29
South Wales	234	209	185	171
Dyfed-Powys	26	29	48	35
Northern	8	7	7	9
Grampian	44	35	56	53
Tayside	23	23	20	17
Fife	20	14	14	17
Lothian and Borders	100	104	86	112
Central	12	19	17	17
Strathclyde	195	240	220	210
Dumfries and Galloway	10	12	8	5
TOTAL	6,633	6,460	6,223	5,954

Hit and run accidents involving pedestrian fatalities: 1989 to 1992

Police force		Year of accident		
	1989	1990	1991	1992
Metropolitan Police	14	14	16	19
Cumbria	1	2	1	0
Lancashire	0	2	2	3
Merseyside	4	6	8	2
Greater Manchester	7	16	15	8
Cheshire	3	1	0	0
Northumbria	2	5	6	6
Durham	3	3	3	0
North Yorkshire	2	1	0	0
West Yorkshire	3	5	4	3
South Yorkshire	2	4	4	5
Humberside	0	0	0	1
Cleveland	0	2	1	0
West Midlands	6	6	8	6
Staffordshire	1	0	0	0
West Mercia	0	0	2	0
Warwickshire	2	0	0	0
Derbyshire	0	1	2	2
Nottinghamshire	1	2	2	1
Lincolnshire	0	0	0	0
Leicestershire	1	1	1	0
Northamptonshire	3	0	0	0
Cambridgeshire	1	1	0	0
Norfolk	2	2	0	1
Suffolk	0	1	0	0
Bedfordshire	0	1	2	0
Hertfordshire	1	1	1	3
Essex	2	3	1	0
Thames Valley	4	2	1	1
Hampshire	2	5	0	3
Surrey	0	2	0	0
Kent	4	4	3	2
Sussex	3	2	1	0
Devon and Cornwall	1	0	2	2
Avon and Somerset	2	3	5	4
Gloucestershire	1	0	1	1
Wiltshire	0	0	1	0
Dorset	0	1	1	1
North Wales	2	0	0	1
Gwent	0	0	1	0
South Wales	2	1	3	6
Dyfed-Powys	0	0	1	1
Northern	0	0	1	0
Grampian	1	0	0	1
Tayside	0	1	0	0
Fife	0	0	0	0
Lothian and Borders	2	4	1	1
Central	0	1	0	0
Strathclyde	3	3	4	6
Dumfries and Galloway	0	0	0	0
Total	88	109	105	90

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the employment status of the Under-Secretary General of the department of humanitarian affairs at the United Nations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Under-Secretary General of the United Nations department of humanitarian affairs is appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General on a fixed term contract for one year, which may be renewed by mutual agreement.

United Nations Emergency Intervention

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what policy proposals he has to improve the co-ordination of United Nations activities in emergency intervention situations;

(2) what proposals he has for changing the role of the department of humanitarian affairs at the United Nations;

(3) what assessment he has made of the performance of the department of humanitarian affairs at the United Nations.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The views of Her Majesty's Government on the improvement of the co-ordination of United Nations emergency relief and the performance to date and future role of the United Nations department of humanitarian affairs are set out in the address of my noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development to the United Nations General Assembly of 19 November 1993, a copy of which has been placed in both the Libraries of the House.

Aid

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how British aid is helping poverty reduction in developing countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British aid programme, in collaboration with the World Bank and other donors, is supporting economic reform programmes in developing countries, which will set the policy framework for sustainable growth and create jobs. At the same time the Overseas Development Administration is assisting recipient governments to define and carry out their own poverty reduction strategies, to ensure that the poor benefit from economic growth. We are also providing direct assistance to the poor in developing countries, to enhance their livelihood security, increase their incomes, and improve their access to basic social services.

Non-governmental Organisations

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list payments made to each non-governmental organisation under the joint funding scheme in the last financial year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Details of all ODA grants made to United Kingdom non-governmental organisations under the joint funding scheme, for the financial year 1992-93, are set out in the table.

ODA joint funding scheme grants to NGOs 1992-93
Amount of grant awarded in financial year 1992-93

	£
ACORD	625,066
ActionAid	992,749
Action Health 2000	27,541
ADD	166,621
ADRA	9,213
Africa Now	69,283
Africa Resource Trust	66,118
Aga Khan Foundation	459,302
AHRTAG	280,846
Alternative for India Development	65,351
AMREF	194,642
APT Design and Development	153,031
APTT Trust-United Kingdom	4,163
British Nepal Medical Trust	27,260
British Red Cross Society	53,550
Busoga Trust	50,000
CAFOD	1,321,000
Cambodia Trust	160,000
CARE Britain	1,339,687
Catholic Institute for International Relations	193,825
Childhope	34,750
Christian Aid	2,231,000
Christian Outreach	44,771
Christians Abroad	5,112
CODA International Training (CIT)	58,022
Commonwealth Human Ecology Council	13,601
Commonwealth Trade Union Council	167,567
Concern	997,569
Conservation Foundation	74,244
Cooperation For Development	394,325
Cusichaca Project Trust	33,551
Duke of Edinburgh Award	39,523
Durham-Lesotho Link	40,692
Feed The Minds	14,638
Find Your Feet	10,370
Food For The Hungry	7,820
Friends of Conservation	63,179
Friends of Urambo and Mwanhala	8,791
Gaia Foundation	1,306
Gordon Barclay Vietnam Fund	5,481
Halo Trust	188,900
Harvest Help	34,423
Health Aid Moyo	84,180
Health Unlimited	426,935
Hedley Roberts Trust	13,477
Help The Aged	199,014
Henry Doubleday Research Association	17,521
Homeless International	90,280
ICBP	76,940
Impact Foundation	8,818
India Development Group	39,375
Institute of Development Studies	140
International Committee for Andean Aid	21,769
Intercare	43,178
Intermediate Technology Development	495,856
International Agricultural Training	27,240
International Children's Trust	1,717
International Christian Relief	102,349
Lasallian Projects	6,993
Leonard Cheshire Foundation	4,350
Leprosy Mission	12,575
Living Earth	178,100
Medical Aid for Palestinians	46,530
Money for Madagascar	20,649
MSI	993,902
National Children's Home	66,767
New Age Access	9,800
Ockenden Venture	36,665
One World Action	11,289
OXFAM	4,207,651
Panos Institute	13,550
Plan International	622,309
Population Concern	304,815
Project Mala	69,317
Richmond Fellowship International	33,566
Rio Maza	21,179
Royal Commonwealth Society	231,006
Ryder-Cheshire Foundation	11,441
SALTLIC	13,247
Save The Children Fund	3,531,000
SCIAF	131,898
Scripture Union	36,089
Send A Cow	39,417
Skillshare Africa	150,132
SOS Sahel	206,930
South African Townships Health Fund	80,000
SPICMA	24,179
St. John Ambulance	9,738
Tanzania Development Trust	191
Tear Fund	75,800
Toch-H	11,024
Traidcraft Exchange	130,739
TRAX Programme Support	9,603
Tropical Health and Education Trust	15,446
TUIREG	14,709
Uganda Society for Disabled Children	173,909
United Kingdom Jewish Aid	95,000
UKFSP	125,297
University of Warwick	21,700
Urban Aid	62,477
VetAid	47,815
Village Service Trust	8,501
Vision Aid Overseas	26,149
VSO	65,000
Water Aid	772,325
Womankind	120,717
World University Service	176,642
World Vision	304,450
Worldwide Fund for Nature	1,510,000
Youth With A Mission	48,411
Y-Care International	52,856
Zimbabwe Trust	552,080
Zoological Society of London	40,000
Total	27,963,597

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Private Contractors

Mr. Cox: To ask the Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee if he will list the work within the House that is now undertaken by private contractors.

Mr. Channon: Private contractors are used extensively in the provision of services to the House. The Parliamentary Works Directorate makes use of contractors and consultants for works projects funded by subheads A1, A2, and A3 of the vote for works services; and Departments of the House commission consultants and contractors to provide administrative or technical support in such fields as recruitment, training, catering and information technology. Details are a matter for the respective heads of Department.

National Audit Office

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission how many reports have been prepared by Clark Whitehill into the value for money achieved by the National Audit Office; what recommendations it has made for improvements; which of its reports he will make publicly available; if he will give his reasons in respect of those he will not place in the public domain; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Peter Hordern: The Public Accounts Commission appointed Clark Whitehill as external auditors of the National Audit Office on 1 April 1990 for a period of up to five years. At the request of the Commission they have so far produced two value for money reports on the National Audit Office.

In November 1991, Clark Whitehill reported on the National Audit Office's environmental policy, monitoring and reporting. They recommended that the NAO adopt an environmental policy statement, set environmental targets and objectives, and improve monitoring of environmental legislation and European Community activities. The Comptroller and Auditor General took prompt action in response to all recommendations.

In 1993 Clark Whitehill reviewed the National Audit Office's certification audit methods. They reported to the Commission in June 1993, and concluded that NAO methods are comparable to best practice in the auditing profession and result in efficient audits of an acceptable quality. Again, the Comptroller and Auditor General has taken action to implement the recommendations, and he reported details of progress to the Commission earlier this month. He will be reporting again in 1994.

I have arranged for copies of both reports to be placed in the Library.

Public Accounts Commission

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission (1) what plans he has to centralise the functions of the Audit Office by relocating the employment and training division from Sheffield to London;

(2) what estimate he has made for the cost of relocating the employment and training division of the Audit Office from Sheffield to London; and what estimates have been made of the travelling expenses that would arise from such a relocation.

Sir Peter Hordern: Decisions on the administration and organisation of the NAO are a matter for the Comptroller and Auditor General to take within his budget, which is considered by the Public Accounts Commission on behalf of the House.

I understand that the NAO has 15 staff in Sheffield who undertake the audit of the Department of Employment, the Employment Services Agency and a number of non-departmental public bodies. This work is carried out at various locations across the country but only 4 per cent. has to be done in Sheffield.

As part of a continuing appraisal of the scope for improving efficiency in its audit, the NAO has decided to reorganise the handling of the work carried out from its Sheffield office. The NAO has estimated that it will achieve a net saving of £1 million over 10 years by arranging for some of the work to be undertaken by private sector accountancy firms located where the work needs to be done and by transferring responsibility for other work to its headquarters in London.

PRIME MINISTER

Homeless People

Q10. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister when he next expects to meet representatives of London's homeless people.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so at present. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction frequently meets staff of voluntary sector bodies working with homeless people in central London; and he regularly visits projects managed by these agencies.

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the names and job descriptions of each special ministerial adviser employed in his Department showing any particular outputs for which each adviser is responsible.

The Prime Minister: My special advisers are Sir Rodric Braithwaite KCMG, Mrs. Sarah Hogg, Mr. Nicholas True CBE, Mr. Damian Green, Lord Poole and Mrs. Katherine Ramsay. Their duties vary.

Norwegian and German Prime Ministers

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 2 December, *Official Report*, column 687, if he will give more specific details on the range of issues he discussed with his Norwegian and German counterparts.

The Prime Minister: My discussions with Prime Minister Brundtland of Norway on 16 November covered the European Community, Norwegian accession and Norway's whaling policy. In my talks with Chancellor Kohl on 25 November, we discussed problems of unemployment; growth and competitiveness within the EC; enlargement; subsidiarity and the fight against terrorism; drug trafficking and organised crime; GATT; the forthcoming NATO summit and other foreign policy issues, including Bosnia.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 16 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House. I shall be having further meetings later today.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if it is Her Majesty's Government's policy to ratify the chemical weapons convention before the convention enters into force.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom played an active role in the negotiations leading to the opening for signature of the chemical weapons convention and continues to play an active role in the preparatory commission in The Hague, which is working towards the establishment of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The United Kingdom signed the Convention in January 1993 and we intend to ratify the chemical weapons convention at the earliest possible opportunity.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if he intends to put in place the necessary legislation to enable the United Kingdom to fulfil its obligation under the chemical weapons covention in time for Her Majesty's Government to ratify the convention by 18 July 1994.

The Prime Minister: We intend to introduce implementing legislation for the convention as soon as parliamentary time permits.

Press Releases

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister how many press releases his office has issued in each year since 1979.

The Prime Minister: Since I took office in 1990, some 200 press releases have been issued each year. Figures for previous years would be obtainable only at disproportionate costs.

EC Infrastructure Programmes

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Prime Minister if he will set out *(a)* the treaty powers and *(b)* other powers granted to the European Commission with regard to infrastructure programmes.

The Prime Minister: Titles XII—trans-European networks—and XIV—economic and social cohesion—of part 3 of the EC treaty, as amended by the treaty on European Union, are those principally concerned with infrastructure. The regulations governing the structural and cohesion funds—EC2080-2085/93 and EC792/93—set out the role of the Commission in this field. Articles 198d-e of the treaty refer to the European investment bank which lends to investment projects, the greater proportion of which are infrastructure improvements.

EC Official Languages

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to seek a reduction in the number of official languages in the European Community.

The Prime Minister: We have no plans to seek a reduction in the number of official languages of the European Community. It is right that legislation and judgments which apply in each member state should be officially available in the language of the citizens of that country.

European Commission

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Prime Minister what is his policy regarding the number of Commissioners appropriate to an EC expanded by the four applicant countries; and by what measures he seeks to achieve such a quantity.

The Prime Minister: At the Brussels European Council on 10 and 11 December, all member states agreed that the EFTA applicants should be given one Commissioner each, with the question of the number of Commissioners to be reviewed at the 1996 intergovernmental conference. We have made clear our view that it would not be in the best interests, either of the Commission or of the Community as a whole, to maintain the present arrangements governing the number of Commissioners as the European Union continues to enlarge.

Capital Markets

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the Presidency conclusions as to how the capital markets can be made more efficient in order to encourage a flow of savings into productive job-creating investments.

The Prime Minister: Implementation of a number of directives relating to banking and financial services should facilitate the development of efficient capital markets within the Community. Member states also need to ensure that domestic capital markets encourage the flow of savings into productive job-creating investments. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, recently announced that the Treasury is currently reviewing this area. The Economic Secretary is examining the role of banks and other financial institutions in channelling finance to industry. The Financial Secretary is examining the impact of tax and other Government policies on savings and the flow of funds through the economy. These reviews will make an important contribution to ensuring that policies in this area enhance our economic performance.

Subsidiarity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the EC directives which the Government have proposed so far should be abolished, modified or replaced on the ground of subsidiarity, setting out what has happened so far in each case.

The Prime Minister: In Community discussions about putting the principle of subsidiarity into effect, the Government have put forward a large number of suggestions for the amendment, repeal or withdrawal of existing or proposed legislation. The Commission's report to the European Council last week reflected many of our suggestions and, following the European Council's endorsement, action will now begin in Brussels to put the report's recommendations into effect. A copy of the Commission's report has been made available to the House.

New Jobs

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Prime Minister what opportunities are available to the European Commission for the discovery of a source of new jobs which are not also available to national Governments.

The Prime Minister: As the Government stated in their contribution to the Commission's white paper, the Community's central aim must be the creation of conditions for enterprise, innovation and investment to generate wealth and employment. To achieve this the Government recommended that the Commission should ensure that the single market works effectively, that the principle of subsidiarity is put into effect and that it should undertake an audit of community legislation to remove barriers to employment. All these proposals were reflected in the conclusions of the European Council.

National Regulations

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the conclusions of the European Council on the request to the European Commission to audit national regulations.

The Prime Minister: The European Council in Brussels on 10 and 11 December adpoted a short-to-medium-term action plan to reinforce the competitiveness of the European economy, which the Council will monitor. The Council recognised the importance of a large European export-oriented market and proposed a number of measures to exploit this major asset.

The Council recognised that legislation must be simplified and reduced in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, and that consistency between national and Community legislation must be ensured. The Council requested the Commission to examine ways of creating a more favourable business environment for small and medium-sized enterprises for example, by providing for an audit of Community and national regulations in terms of their consequences for employment. Any review of national regulation will respect the competences of Community and member states and the principle of subsidiarity.

The Government have nearly completed a comprehensive review of 3,500 regulations which impact on United Kingdom business to ensure that they do not impede our potential for wealth and job creation. We welcome similar efforts at the Community level and at member state level systematically to review legislation which impairs the competitiveness of European industries and Europe's potential for economic growth and employment.

EC Voting Procedures

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Prime Minister what powers he has to prevent any dilution of the blocking minority under qualified majority voting procedures; and to what extent such powers are constrained by the presidency conclusions.

The Prime Minister: Any change to the qualified majority voting procedures must be agreed by all member states. The question of the blocking minority threshold in an enlarged Community was not resolved at the European Council held in Brussels on 10 and 11 December.

European Investment Bank

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Prime Minister to what extent additional loans from the European investment bank will be underwritten by other EC institutions.

The Prime Minister: The European investment bank is required by its statute to lend only if it has a guarantee from a member state or other adequate guarantees, such as from a commercial bank. It is not the practice, nor is it intended, for Community institutions to guarantee EIB loans within the European Community.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Car Boot Sales

Mr. French: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence she has of farmers having used fields subject to set-aside payments for car boot sales.

Mr. Jack: Car boot sales can be held on land set aside under the non-agricultural use option of the voluntary five year set-aside scheme; payments under this option are reduced to reflect the fact that the farmer may be earning some income from the land. In certain, strictly defined circumstances, car boot sales may also be permitted on some other land set aside under the five year scheme and the arable area payments scheme. In all cases, it is the farmer's responsibility to obtain any planning permission that may be required.

The information which we have about the numbers of car boot sales on set-aside land is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Forestry Commission

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to sell off any woods owned by the Forestry Commission in East Anglia under the current disposal programme.

Mr. Jack: The Forestry Commission has no forest land on the market at present in Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire or Essex.

Cetaceans

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures she intends to introduce to implement article 12(4) of the EC habitats and species directive (92/43/EEC) which requires member states to ensure that incidental capture and killing of dolphins, whales and other cetaceans in fishing gear does not endanger the population of those species.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 26 October, *Official Report*, column 567.

Sea Birds

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures she intends to introduce to monitor the incidental entanglement of sea birds in fishing gear and to ensure that populations of those sea birds do not become endangered.

Mr. Jack: The sea fisheries inspectorate is instructed to report immediately any major incidents of sea birds being caught in fishing gear. They also make an annual report. There is no evidence to suggest that cases of entrapment, which are rare, are currently threatening the survival of any species of sea bird.

Forestry, Hillsborough

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to sell any of the Forestry Commission woods in the constituency of Sheffield, Hillsborough under the current disposal programme.

Mr. Jack: The Forestry Commission has no forest land on the market at present in the hon. Member's constituency.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what her Department's policy is regarding the use of executive search consultants in making appointments to public bodies; and if she will *(a)* list the appointments where such consultants have been used and *(b)* list the cost in each case since April 1992;

(2) which of the appointments made to public bodies by her Department since April 1992 have been advertised.

Mr. Jack: Executive search consultants are occasionally used to find candidates for full-time executive appointments or other major appointments. Since April 1992, no consultants have been used for this purpose, and none of the public body posts, for which this Department has responsibility, has been advertised.

Sheep Annual Premium

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to release grant and aid payments to those sheep farmers who have not yet received their sheep annual premium; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Payment of the first and second advance of premium under the 1993 sheep annual premium scheme in the United Kingdom has already been made in respect of 82 per cent. of the claims received. Outstanding advance payments will be made to producers as soon as we are satisfied that the claims meet the requirements of the scheme.

Press Releases

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many press releases her Department has issued in each year since 1979.

Mr. Jack: The number of press releases issued by MAFF over recent years is as follows.

	Number
1980	488
1981	439
1982	482
1983	400
1984	458
1985	380
1986	357
1987	403
1988	526
1989	568
1990	515
1991	582
1992	532
[1]1993	506

[1] Up to December 14 1993.

Figures for 1979 are not available.

One-Net Rule

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what decision she has reached following her consultation exercise on the application of the one-net rule.

Mr. Jack: We had hoped that the EC would agree on a Community wide rule that only one type of net should be carried on a fishing trip. This would have been a useful measure to support enforcement of technical conservation rules. Unfortunately, no agreement has been reached in the EC on this issue. We therefore consulted the industry on the way forward.

A range of views was put to us, but a significant proportion of the United Kingdom industry believed that we should not continue unilaterally to apply a one-net rule in the United Kingdom, and should discontinue it unless and until an EC-wide measure was introduced.

We have decided to accept that view: it would not be reasonable for our industry to be more tightly regulated in this regard than its competitors from other EC countries fishing in the same waters.

The one-net rule will therefore end on 31 December 1993.

Lambs

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action she proposes to take to improve the protection of orphan lambs in markets.

Mr. Soames: A new order has been made under the Animal Health Act 1981 which gives additional protection to young lambs and goat kids at livestock markets. From 1 January 1994, the amount of time unaccompanied lambs and goat kids under four weeks of age can spend in a livestock market will be limited to four hours. While at the market they must be housed in solid sided draught free pens and provided with dry bedding. A further provision to ban lambs and goat kids from markets if they have an unhealed navel will come into force on 1 January 1995.

The Welfare of Animals at Markets Order 1990 already lays down certain other provisions to protect unaccompanied lambs under four weeks of age at markets. This legislation specifies that these animals must be housed under cover in bedded accommodation, and also precludes sick lambs from being exposed for sale. These provisions also apply to goat kids.

Bananas

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action she is taking to prevent the smuggling of dollar bananas into the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* Controls of imports of bananas apply at the first point of entry into the Community. Licences are required for all imports from third countries. In the single European market, once bananas have been cleared into free circulation anywhere in the Community they may be traded freely. National controls on the entry of dollar bananas already entered into free circulation by another member state are not permitted.

Farming Debts

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information she has on the level of indebtedness among *(a)* specialist sheep farmers and *(b)* mixed cattle and sheep farmers in the (i) severely disadvantaged areas and (ii) disadvantaged areas for each year since 1984.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 15 December 1993]:* The farm business survey provides data on indebtedness from a sample of farm businesses in England. Results for the new farm classification are available only from 1986-87 onwards. The table shows the average level of total liabilities per farm and expresses this as a proportion of average total assets.

Average indebtedness of specialist sheep and mixed cattle and sheep farms wholly or mainly in the Less Favoured Areas in England[1]

Accounting year[4]	SDA specialist sheep farms[2] Total external liabilities (£ thousands per farm)	SDA specialist sheep farms[2] External liabilities as a percentage of total assets (Per cent.)	SDA mixed cattle and sheep farms[2] Total external liabilities (£ thousands per farm)	SDA mixed cattle and sheep farms[2] External liabilities as a percentage of total assets (Per cent.)	DA cattle and sheep farms[3] Total external liabilities (£ thousands per farm)	DA cattle and sheep farms[3] External liabilities as a percentage of total assets (Per cent.)
1986-87	28·7	14·0	36·0	14·0	36·9	16·0
1987-88	28·3	15·0	35·3	13·0	35·8	16·0
1988-89	28·5	14·0	36·2	13·0	30·1	13·0
1989-90	32·9	15·0	43·6	13·0	34·8	13·0
1990-91	28·4	14·0	48·1	15·0	21·3	8·0
1991-92	24·5	12·0	43·3	14·0	20·4	8·0
1992-93 (provisional)	28·6	14·0	39·0	12·0	30·7	10·0

[1] All data based on closing valuations.

[2] SDA farms must have at least half of their area in the LFA and at least half of that in the SDA.

[3] DA farms must have at least half of their area in the LFA and more than half of that in the DA.

[4] Ending on average in mid-February.

Farm Workers

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many full-time hired farm workers are employed on farm holdings in the less-favoured areas; and if she will provide a breakdown by county according to the most recent figures for each year since 1982.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 15 December 1993]:* The number of full-time hired farm workers employed on farm holdings in the less favoured areas by county in each year since 1982 is shown in the table.

Regular full-time hired workers on holdings[1] *in less favoured areas*[2] *in England at June each year by county*

County[3]	1982	1983	1984	1985	[4]1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Bedfordshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Berkshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Buckinghamshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cleveland	6	6	5	6	107	99	84	78	79	73	66
Cambridgeshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cheshire	12	19	13	19	21	21	19	18	20	19	16
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	33	37	38	38	264	255	238	218	211	194	186
Cumbria	507	510	475	448	627	584	599	562	542	536	506
Derbyshire	171	150	136	117	198	184	167	181	177	158	158
Devon	179	164	159	145	385	408	445	420	393	402	393
Dorset	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Durham	171	157	150	145	331	261	281	268	242	238	247
Essex	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gloucestershire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hampshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Isle of Wight	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hereford and Worcester	77	55	56	57	85	86	69	64	57	55	65
Hertfordshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kent	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lancashire	132	119	109	98	291	269	250	244	226	228	222
Leicestershire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lincolnshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Merseyside	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Greater London (E)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Greater London (SE)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Norfolk	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

County[3]	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	[4]*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Northamptonshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northumberland and Tyne and Wear	648	645	622	586	1,070	994	919	879	809	738	694
Nottinghamshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oxfordshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Avon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shropshire	202	193	191	184	252	237	220	205	192	189	181
Somerset	142	134	110	103	139	117	109	104	94	81	76
Staffordshire	28	32	23	23	126	114	102	101	99	86	95
Suffolk	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Surrey	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
East Sussex	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Sussex	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Warwickshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Greater Manchester	15	20	21	30	31	25	19	23	36	42	32
Wiltshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Midlands	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Yorkshire	18	7	7	6	40	34	44	43	34	39	34
North Yorkshire	464	418	406	393	549	554	534	496	478	484	440
West Yorkshire	128	97	107	116	194	202	192	188	258	197	206
Humberside	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
England	2,933	2,763	2,628	2,514	4,710	4,444	4,291	4,092	3,947	3,759	3,617

Source: June census of agriculture and horticulture each year.

1. Minor holdings are excluded.
2. Workers on holdings with either all or part of their land in the less favoured areas have been included.
3. Some counties have been merged to preserve confidentiality.
4. A re-definition of the LFA occurred in 1986.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the number of producers entitled to hill livestock compensatory allowances by county and local authority subdivisions, distinguishing between those located in severely disadvantaged areas and disadvantaged areas.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 15 December 1993]*: The table shows the most up to date information available on the number of claims paid under the 1993 hill livestock compensatory allowance scheme from producing farming eligible land wholly within the severely disadvantaged area —SDA—or the disadvantaged area—DA—or on mixed land—SDA combined with DA land. There are also about 4,000 holdings in the United Kingdom which consist of SDA or DA land plus other land. Most of the claims expected for the 1993 scheme have by now been received.

	SDA	*DA*	*Mixed*
England			
Cheshire	97	26	38
Cleveland	5	13	4
Cornwall	53	508	118
Cumbria	1,477	368	852
Derbyshire	591	166	146
Devon	713	629	115
Durham	448	132	107
Greater Manchester	110	67	32
Hereford and Worcestershire	180	121	100
Lancashire	409	425	286
Northumberland	582	139	248
North Yorkshire	932	396	701
Scilly Isles	7	Nil	Nil
Shropshire	365	118	229
Somerset	234	25	36
South Yorkshire	44	56	32
Staffordshire	204	243	93
Tyne and Wear	Nil	11	Nil
West Yorkshire	549	114	98
Wales			
Gwynedd	1,179	744	542
South Glamorgan	4	1	1
Mid Glamorgan	336	39	63
West Glamorgan	161	84	50
Gwent	270	278	59
Dyfed	1,272	1,854	769
Powys	2,840	281	701
Clwyd	909	85	345
Northern Ireland			
Antrim	1,184	1,212	612
Armagh	623	1,346	376
Down	724	835	683
Fermanagh	3,070	82	114
Londonderry	1,222	735	502
Tyrone	2,550	1,568	854

Scotland[1]

	SDA & Mixed	*DA*
Aberdeen	756	177
Angus	143	13
Argyll	1,042	Nil
Ayr	726	103
Banff	378	47
Berwick	142	15
Bute	42	4
Bute Arran	86	Nil
Caithness	729	Nil
Clackmannan	14	Nil
Dumfries	685	15
Dunbarton	88	14
Fife	103	7
Inverness	2,516	3
Kincardine	154	16
Kinross	45	4
Kirkcudbright	557	2
Lanark	582	58
Lothian, East	38	4
Lothian, Mid	115	Nil
Lothian, West	53	4
Moray	157	4
Nairn	55	2
Orkney	906	Nil
Peebles	180	4
Perth	573	22

	SDA & Mixed	*DA*
Renfrew	170	3
Ross	2,458	20
Roxburgh	280	11
Selkirk	115	Nil
Stirling	208	16
Sutherland	715	Nil
Wigtown	413	30
Zetland	1,530	Nil

[1] For statistical purposes, claims in Scotland are classified as relating to Severely Disadvantaged and mixed land if they cover any severely disadvantaged land.

HEALTH

GP Services

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average level of funding per capita allocated by each regional health authority to district health authorities in 1993-94 for purchasing the range of services covered by the fund-holding scheme on behalf of patients in non-fund-holding general practitioner practices.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Mental Health

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of each regional health authority's total expenditure is spent on activities relating to mental health.

Mr. Bowis: The table shows for 1991-92, the latest date for which complete information is available, the amount spent on purchasing mental illness services as a proportion of total expenditure on health services purchased.

Region	*Mental illness expenditure* £	*Total expenditure* £	*Per cent. of total* £
Northern	151,378,056	1,073,970,006	14·00
Yorkshire	144,658,241	1,230,231,970	11·75
Trent	180,272,375	1,541,372,674	11·69
East Anglian	94,477,404	638,876,984	14·78
North West Thames	184,718,170	1,378,278,559	13·40
North East Thames	198,692,023	1,461,683,860	13·59
South East Thames	167,543,458	1,394,960,544	12·00
South West Thames	175,275,593	1,176,983,444	14·89
Wessex	101,116,358	860,078,849	11·75
Oxford	88,973,153	759,287,989	11·71
South Western	119,137,120	1,099,303,848	10·83
West Midlands	182,282,830	1,559,521,546	11·68
Mersey	116,670,000	888,269,765	13·13
North Western	180,776,909	1,475,731,484	12·24
TOTAL	2,085,971,690	16,538,551,522	12·61

Notes:

1. This information is available on a DHA purchaser basis from the financial returns completed by health authorities.
2. Mental illness includes elderly mentally ill, speciality functions—mental illness, child and adolescent psychiatry, forensic psychiatry, psychotherapy, old age psychiatry; Services include community mental illness services, single speciality hospitals and units on district general hospitals sites.

Nurses

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what qualifications a nurse would be expected to have in order to carry out *(a)* immunisations, *(b)* vaccinations and *(c)* home assessments of elderly people.

Mr. Sackville: These activities may be carried out independently by a first level registered nurse with additional and appropriate training, or by a first or second level nurse under the direction of a qualified medical or nursing practitioner.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, for the last four years, the number of *(a)* practice nurses and *(b)* community nurses.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Practice nurses as at 1 October each year
England

Whole-time equivalents

Year	*Number*
1989	4,630
1990	7,740
1991	8,780
1992	9,120

Note: Figures are independently rounded to the nearest 10 whole-time equivalents.

Community nurses by speciality as at 30 September each year
England

Whole-time equivalents

Year	*Number*
1989	39,790
1990	41,240
1991	40,650
1992	40,750

Note: Figures are independently rounded to the nearest 10 whole-time equivalents.

Prescription Costs

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the cost of a prescription to a pregnant mother in each member country of the European Community;

(2) what is the cost of a prescription to an old-age pensioner in each member country of the European Community.

Dr. Mawhinney: The latest available information is shown in the table.

Cost of a prescription in European Community member states

	Pensioner	*Maternity*
Belgium	Free for certain specified illnesses.	Free for certain specified illnesses.
	15 per cent. of cost up to a limit of 200 Belgian francs for certain drugs.	25 per cent. of cost up to a limit of 300 Belgian francs for certain drugs.
	25 per cent. of cost up to a limit of 300 Belgian francs for other drugs.	50 per cent. of cost up to a limit of 500 Belgian francs for other drugs.
Denmark	Free for insulin.	Free.
	25 per cent. of cost of certain drugs.	25 per cent. of cost.
	50 per cent. of cost of other drugs.	50 per cent. of cost.
France	Free for certain specified illnesses.	Free.
	35 per cent. of cost of certain drugs.	
	65 per cent. of other drugs.	
Germany	15 per cent. of cost of cheaper drugs.	Free.
	For more expensive drugs free up to a specified limit but full cost between the limit and the retail price.	
Greece.	Free for certain specified illnesses.	Free.
	25 per cent. of drug cost.	25 per cent. of cost.
Ireland	Free for certain specified illnesses.	Free.
	Free for those on low income.	Free.
	Full price of drug up to £360 pa (Irish Punt).	Full price.
Italy	Free for certain specified illnesses.	Free.
	Free for life-saving prescribed drugs.	Free.
	Free for those on low incomes.	Free.
	2,000 Lire per item below income ceiling.	2,000 Lire.
	First 40,000 Lire of prescription cost in full plus 10 per cent. of any additional cost if above income ceiling.	First 40,000 Lire plus 10 per cent. of cost.
Luxembourg	Free for certain prescribed drugs.	Free.
	20 per cent. of the drug cost.	
Netherlands	Free.	Free.
	Contribution for more expensive drugs.	Contribution.
Portugal	Free for certain specified illnesses.	Free.
	15 per cent. for certain drugs for those on low incomes.	15 per cent.
	45 per cent. for other drugs for those on low incomes.	45 per cent.
	20 per cent. for certain drugs.	20 per cent.
	50 per cent. for other drugs.	50 per cent.
Spain	Free.	40 per cent. of drug cost.
United Kingdom	Free.	Free.

Blood Donors

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 2 December, *Official Report*, columns *706-7*, what assessment she has made of the problems with standards in other countries, most recently Germany; and if she will now institute a ban on imports of blood and blood products from countries which use paid donors.

Mr. Sackville: Under the Medicines Act 1968 every company which manufactures blood products for marketing in the United Kingdom is inspected and licensed and individual products are licensed for safety, quality and efficacy. Blood or plasma collected overseas for processing into blood products which are to be imported into the United Kingdom under United Kingdom product licence is subjected to the rigorous screening tests that are required by our licensing authority. Furthermore all plasma pools from which any blood product released in this country is produced are tested for viral markers by the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control. No blood is imported and in the light of these safeguards we do not propose to ban imports of blood products.

Hospitals (Use)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which view will prevail where there is a fundamental difference of opinion between health and industry purchasers and fund-holding general practitioners about the use of a particular hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: General practitioner fund-holders have the freedom to purchase the best possible care for their patients from whichever hospital they judge best. They are however required to share their broad purchasing intentions with district health authorities in advance to enable provider units to plan effectively.

Charing Cross Hospital

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of whether Charing Cross hospital, as it is presently equipped and staffed, will be able to meet the requirements as the focal point of all west London cancer services; and what extra expenditure will be required in order for it to do so.

Dr. Mawhinney: No specific studies of the capacity of the Charing Cross site for cancer services have been carried out. However, the Hammersmith/Charing Cross relocation group is studying the possible relocation of all the services of the Hammersmith and Charing Cross (including cancer services) on to one site.

Royal Marsden Hospital

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations she has received from the international medical community in connection with the future of the Royal Marsden hospital; and if she will list them.

Dr. Mawhinney: Representations were received from the following.

International Medical Community Representations in Connection with the Royal Marsden

Sophie D. Fossa
Professor Harry Bartelink, MD, PhD
Assistant Professor Simon Powell, MRCP, FRCR, PhD
Professor V. Craig Jordan, PhD, DSc
Director of Institute of Oncology, Slovenia
Barrie D. Evans, MD, MRCP, FRACP, BDS
A. H. G. Paterson, MD
Soo Khee Chee
Dr. Khoo Tan Hoon Seng, MB, BS, FRCR
Dr. Joseph T. S. Wee, MB, BS, FRCR
Dr. Chua Eu Tiong
Dr. Thida San
Dr. Kam Weng Fong, FRCR
Dr. Tsoa Shiu Ying
Dr. Chua Eu Jin
Dr. Kim Shang Lee, FRCR
Hong Ga Sze
A. W. Thomas, BSc, MTech, FBCS
Richard G. Margolese, MD, FRCS
Professor Victor Ling
Professor Karen Antman, MD
Professor Robert C. Hickey, MD

Teenage Advertising

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the effect of cigarette advertising upon teenage take-up of smoking.

Mr. Sackville: The Government believe that tobacco advertising does have an effect on consumption. This is why successive Governments over the last 22 years have controlled tobacco advertising by a system of voluntary agreements. The Government have not made any estimate of the effect of tobacco advertising on teenagers compared to the effect on the population as a whole.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by region and by date of closure all former NHS hospitals closed since 1986 and their current use.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Animal Diseases

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what action she proposes to monitor the re-emergence in the United Kingdom of previously eliminated diseases, following the free movement of animals;

(2) if she will hold immediate talks with the Minister of Agriculture about methods of preventing the re-emergence of brucellosis in rural constituencies.

Mr. Sackville: Though brucellosis in humans is not a statutorily notifiable disease, there is a laboratory reporting system which receives between 10 and 30 reports each year. The Department works closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on all aspects of brucellosis and other diseases which can be transmitted from animals to humans including their prevention. This liaison takes full account of all developments including the free movement of animals.

Medical Records

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals charge other hospitals for X-rays and other medical records for patients who transfer between hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many complaints have been filed under the clinical complaints procedure against hospitals neglecting to pass on to third parties medical records of patients treated by them.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Dental Services, Wandsworth

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists working in the London borough of Wandsworth provide full NHS dental services at the latest convenient date.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Hypnotherapy

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce measures to regulate hypnotherapists and related practitioners.

Mr. Sackville: None. We welcome, however, the efforts of reputable training institutes in hypnotherapy, as in other areas of complementary therapy, to develope standards of training, voluntary registration and certification of hypnotherapists.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many private residential care homes were inspected in the Greater London area in each of the last three years.

Mr. Bowis: The inspection of private and voluntary residential care homes is the responsibility of local authorities under the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Clinical Complaints Procedure

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the operation of the clinical complaints procedure.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 13 June at columns *552-53* the setting up of a review of the national health service complaints procedures. All aspects of national health service complaints procedures, including the clinical complaints procedure, are being examined and a report is expected in the new year.

Credit Approvals

Mr. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what credit approvals she is making available for personal social services for 1994-95.

Mr. Bowis: Basic credit approvals of £114·2 million and supplementary credit approvals (SCAs) of £26·1 million will be available for the personal social services for 1994-95. The total of £140·3 million is an increase of 2·0 per cent. in real terms on 1993-94. SCAs will again be available for information technology for community care (£12·2 million), mental illness (£10·9 million) and AIDS/HIV services (£3 million). Annual capital guidelines will be £121·2 million.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Trend: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many expressions of interest she has approved for the fifth wave of NHS trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have given permission to eight units to prepare National Health Service trust applications in the fifth wave. They are as listed. Further expressions of interest are expected. This wave of NHS trusts will mean that the separation of organisations responsible for the purchasing and providing of hospital and community health services could be virtually complete from April 1995.

The expressions of interest are as follows:

West Midlands regional health authority
Solihull Hospital (withdrew application in the fourth wave);
Wolverhampton Primary Healthcare;
South Birmingham Acute;

Trent regional health authority
Fosse Health (Glenfrith Unit);

South West Thames regional health authority
Pathfinder (Wandsworth Mental Health);

North East Thames regional health authority
Essex and Herts Community;
Essex and Herts Acute;
Homerton.

A complete list of those directly managed units not awaiting decisions in the fourth wave has been placed in the Library. This list updates information my hon. Friend the Minister for Health gave the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 16 June 1993 at columns *617-18*.

NHS Supplies Authority

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the NHS Supplies Agency has achieved since it was set up; and what savings it has achieved for the national health service.

Mr. Sackville: Since it was established, the National Health Service Supplies Authority has brought together over 70 separate local supplies organisations, providing better value for money for its NHS customers.

Better buying has already achieved savings of £60 million, and a further £25 million of savings are targeted by March 1994.

Operating costs have been reduced by about £15 million through a 10 per cent. reduction in staffing, closure of unnecessary stores, and rationalisation of information technology and other services. Service efficiency has improved in terms of faster order responses and stock turnover, and better financial and management control.

These improvements mean that more resources are now available for patient care.

Support Tights

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will add support tights to items available on prescription.

Dr. Mawhinney: No. General practitioners are already able to prescribe a suitable range of compression hosiery.

Asthma

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths from asthma occurred in each district health authority in England, and in total, in the latest available year.

Mr. Sackville: This information will be placed in the Library.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria are used in the selection of the chair and the executive members of *(a)* NHS trusts, *(b)* regional health authorities, *(c)* district health authorities and *(d)* family health authorities in respect of relevant experience and qualifications; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Chairmen of health authorities and national health service trusts are appointed for their personal qualities, knowledge and skills and for the contribution they can bring to the strategic leadership of their authority or trust. The selection of executive members of health authorities and executive directors of trusts is a matter for each individual health body.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the minimum and maximum numbers of possible board members of *(a)* regional health authorities, *(b)* district health authorities, *(c)* family health service authorities and *(d)* NHS trusts; what guidelines she has issued concerning the composition of these boards; and what specific guidance has been given on how many members should be (i) from ethnic minorities, (ii) women, (iii) from the local business sector, (iv) from local authorities and (v) from trade unions.

Dr. Mawhinney: The maximum number of board members of regional health authorities, district health authorities, family health services authorities and national health service trusts is eleven. The composition of NHS authorities and trusts is laid down in the Regional and District Health Authorities (Membership and Procedure) Regulations 1990, the Family Health Services Authorities (Membership and Procedure) Regulations 1990, and the NHS Trusts (Membership and Procedure) Regulations 1990. These requirements are summarised in guidance issued to authorities and trusts.

Chairmen of regional health authorities have been asked to make efforts to increase the proportion of women appointed as chairmen and non-executive members of NHS authorities and trusts under the Opportunity 2000 programme. Ministers have also reminded RHA chairmen that they are committed to appointing able people from ethnic minorities as chairmen and non-executive members of NHS authorities and trusts. There is no specific guidance on the number of appointments from particular groups.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what her Department's policy is regarding the use of executive search consultants in making appointments to public bodies; and if she will *(a)* list the appointments where such consultants have been used and *(b)* list the cost in each case since April 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: The names of suitable candidates for appointment as chairmen and non-executive members of health authorities and national health service trusts come from a variety of sources. These may include nominations resulting from the use by regional health authorities of executive search consultants. Those who are appointed to health authority or trust boards are appointed for their personal skills and qualities. No details are available centrally on the use of consultants for such appointments.

The use of executive search consultants for appointment to executive, advisory and tribunal non-departmental public bodies is an option but to date we have not used any such services. The Department's aim is to appoint people from a broad range of different backgrounds. Many professional and voluntary bodies are consulted when appointments are made to public bodies.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the total numbers of chairpersons and non-executive board members of *(a)* regional health authorities, *(b)* district health authorities, *(c)* family health service authorities and *(d)* national health service trusts in England.

Dr. Mawhinney: The numbers of chairmen and the maximum number of non-executive members of health authorities and national health service trusts are shown in the table. Fourth wave NHS trusts are not included in these figures.

Body	*Number of chairmen posts*	*Number of non-executive members/directors posts*
Regional health authorities	14	70
District health authorities	141	705
Family health services authorities	90	810
NHS trusts	292	1,440

Evening Daylight

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies she has undertaken as to the likely improvements in the nation's health which would be afforded by an extra hour's evening daylight for outdoor sport and recreation.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Press Releases

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many press releases her Department has issued in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: Information for the years 1979 to 1988 is not available.

The number of press releases issued from 1989 are as follows:

Year	*Number*
1989	575
1990	632
1991	638
1992	471
[1]1993	651

[1] To 13 December.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the cost of advertising by her Department has been for each year since 1979 and for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Sackville: Information for the years 1979-80 to 1984-85 is not available. Annual spend for the financial years 1985-86 to 1992-93 is:

	£ million
1985-86	3·106
1986-87	7·969
1987-88	6·494
1988-89	3·724
1989-90	7·280
1990-91	4·797
1991-92	8·058
1992-93	5·053

Spend to date for 1993-94 is £885,000, a monthly breakdown is not available.

Past campaigns have included drug and solvent misuse, organ donation, health of the nation, patients charter and blood donor recruitment.

Patient Complaints

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will update the table provided on 4 November, *Official Report*, column *459*, on patient complaints, to include 1992-93 figures.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not yet available centrally.

Sickness Absence

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the average estimated cost of one day's sickness absence within the national health service;

(2) what was the total number of days sickness absence within the national health service for *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1991-92.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Cornwall Community Healthcare Trust

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if her Department will bear the cost of defending the unfair dismissal case brought by the former chairman of the Cornwall Community healthcare trust, Admiral Sir Godfrey Milton-Thompson, and of the ex gratia settlement to him.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have already done so.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if her Department will defend any action brought by the former chairman of the Cornwall community healthcare trust, Mrs. Abigail Kirby-Harris, and will be prepared to entertain any claim made by her.

Dr. Mawhinney: No action has been filed against the Department by Mrs. Abigail Kirby-Harris. We see no reason why it should be.

Administration

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total expenditure by her Department on administration in 1992-93; what is the estimated outturn for expenditure by her Department on administration for 1993-94 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms in 1992-93 prices; and what is her estimate for expenditure on administration by her Department for 1994-95 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1992-93 prices.

Mr. Sackville: Figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94 are shown in the table.

	1992-93 £ million	*1993-94 £ million*
Cash	276	265
At 1992-93 prices	276	257

Planned expenditure for 1994-95 will be published in the unified Budget supplement.

Sick Pay

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much the changes in the Budget on sick pay will cost the national health service for its own staff.

Dr. Mawhinney: A precise estimate of the effect of this change has not been made. The £1·6 billion the Government have given the national health service over original plans for 1993-94 allows for an overall assessment of the effect of this and other cost pressures on the health service. It is not helpful to identify specific sums for individual pressures the size of which will vary from hospital to hospital. Provided pay rises are earned through increased efficiency the hospital and community health service will be able to treat around 4 per cent. more patients next year.

ENVIRONMENT

Council Tax

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is *(a)* the number of appeals against council tax property banding, *(b)* the number rejected and *(c)* the number submitted subsequently to the appeals tribunal and the number of those granted.

Mr. Baldry: As regards the first part of his question, I refer the hon. Member to the answer my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Planning gave to the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) on 15 December 1993.

As regards the remainder, proposals from taxpayers for amendment of bandings are transmitted to valuation tribunals at the end of six months, unless in the meantime they have been withdrawn or agreement has been reached in discussions between the Valuation Office Agency and the taxpayer. The Valuation Office Agency will however continue such discussions even after transmission to the valuation tribunal with the aim of achieving a satisfactory settlement. Only where this proves impossible is a case heard by a valuation tribunal.

By 30 November 1993, 500,210 proposals had been transmitted in this way to valuation tribunal offices, and 62 had been the subject of a tribunal hearing. Information on the decisions of individual tribunals is not collected centrally.

Environmental Protection (Grants)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what regional aid grants for protection and data collection on the environment have been awarded in the current year by the European Commission to county, district or metropolitan local authorities in 1993.

Mr. Baldry: Funds are available from the European Community for protection and data collection on the environment. However, the information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Offices (Heating Bills)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by location the annual fuel heating bills for each of his Department's offices for the last four years, and for this year to date.

Mr. Gummer: My Department spent the following amounts on heating fuel during the financial years indicated:

	Gas £	*Oil* [illegible]	*Total £*
1990-91	221,896	409,261	631,157
1991-92	267,651	298,658	566,309
1992-93	354,897	168,736	523,633

These figures exclude expenditure on the royal parks and palaces which transferred from my Department in 1992.

Total figures for 1989-90 and individual figures for offices since 1990-91 to date can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Sellafield (Emissions)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment at what stage Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution was informed of the revised figures for plutonium emissions from Sellafield prepared by British Nuclear Fuels' corporate environmental adviser; what action Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution intends to take in the light of these revised figures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (HMIP) received a copy of the expert evidence prepared by Professor Stephen Jones of BNFL on 9 November 1992. This reassessment of historical discharges has no impact on current operations at Sellafield and HMIP will not be taking any action in the light of this information.

Habitats

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his plans for implementation of the EC habitats and species directive will give protection to important wildlife sites additional to that provided under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mr. Yeo: All land-based sites designated as special areas of conservation under the EC habitats directive will have already been designated as SSSIs and subject to the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Additional measures required to meet the site protection requirements of the EC habitats directive, including those required for conservation of the marine environment, are set out in the Government's public consultation paper, a copy of which is in the House Library.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column 189, whether he has committed his Department to regular meetings with the statutory nature conservation bodies specifically on the transposition of the EC habitats and species directive since 16 November.

Mr. Yeo: My Department is in continual contact with the statutory nature conservation agencies about the EC habitats directive. Regular meetings and frequent ad hoc contacts will continue as work on transposition proceeds.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he intends to implement those parts of the EC habitats directive relating to favourable conservation status outside protected areas such as sites of special scientific interest.

Mr. Yeo: We already have in place a number of policies and programmes to promote the conservation of wildlife in the wider countryside, for example, environmentally sensitive areas, countryside stewardship, species recovery programmes, forestry policies. These will be taken forward in the context of the biodiversity action plan to be published in January after the House returns.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will appoint a lead agency in each country to oversee the implementation of the EC habitats and species directive.

Mr. Yeo: The Government are responsible for implementation of the EC habitats directive, advised by the relevant country Nature Conservation Agency (English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage, or the Countryside Council for Wales). Amendments to the powers and duties of Government, the nature conservation agencies and other bodies thought necessary to secure full implementation of the directive, were set out in the Government's recent public consultation paper, the responses to which are being considered. A copy of the consultation paper has been deposited in the House Library.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action is being taken to safeguard threatened peatbogs under the EC habitats and species directive.

Mr. Yeo: A number of peatland habitat types are listed on annex I of the EC habitats directive, signifying that they are habitat types of Community interest whose conservation requires the designation of special areas of conservation (SACs).

The Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the country nature conservation agencies are currently working on their advice on the national list of sites to be submitted to the Commission by June 1995. It is too early to name sites likely to appear on this list, but peatland sites will be included in accordance with the directive's criteria.

As stated in the consultation paper issued on 4 October, the Government is committed to introducing regulations to implement the directive, including the site protection requirements of article 6.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the revenue support grant paid over annually to metropolitan councils to support public transport projects in passenger transport authorities areas since 1989.

Mr. Baldry: Revenue support grant is paid to local authorities to help meet general revenue expenditure. It is based on an assessment of each authority's overall need to spend in order to provide a standard level of service known as the standard spending assessment or SSA. It is distributed so that, if all authorities were to spend at the level of their SSA, they could set broadly the same level of council tax, for properties in a given valuation band.

The grant is not intended to be used in any prescribed way, it is not, therefore, possible to identify a particular portion of the total grant as being related to any particular type of service.

Irish Sea

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has received on the reconnaissance marine aggregrate resource assessment of the Irish sea conducted by the Crown estate.

Mr. Yeo: The Crown estate commissioned the British Geological Survey (BGS) to undertake a desk study of information on marine aggregate resources on an area in the Irish sea and BGS has recently published the results of this study. A copy has been sent to my Department.

Unitary Local Authorities

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new unitary authorities he plans to create; and how many will straddle review areas.

Mr. Baldry: This information will not be available until the Local Government Commission has made recommendations to my right hon. Friend about local government structure for all the shire counties of England; and Parliament has approved all the orders, to be made under section 17 of the Local Government Act 1992, giving effect to those recommendations.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to make York and Harrogate unitary local authorities.

Mr. Baldry: The Local Government Commission is due to complete its final report to my right hon. Friend on the structure of local government in Humberside, Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire by 23 January 1994. Once the commission has published its report, my right hon. Friend will consider its recommendations and any representations which he receives about them, before taking any decision about the future structure of local government in North Yorkshire.

Biodiversity

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to monitor the implementation of the biodiversity action plan and national sustainability strategy and to review arrangements where necessary.

Mr. Yeo: We aim to publish our biodiversity action plan and our sustainable development strategy after the House reassembles in the new year. Those documents will outline arrangements for implementation and monitoring.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the United Kingdom biodiversity action plan.

Mr. Yeo: The United Kingdom biodiversity action plan is due to be published after the House returns in January.

Passenger Transport

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local services are funded by a precept.

Mr. Baldry: Services provided by county councils, metropolitan police authorities, fire and civil defence authorities, and local precepting authorities, such as parish councils, may be the subject of precepts.

Green Research

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to support collaborative research work with the winners of the Green Initiative awards supported by the *Local Government Chronicle* to assist their commercial implementation.

Mr. Yeo: I was very pleased to be able to present the awards and certificates to the winners of Green Initiative sponsored by KPMG and the *Local Government Chronicle*, and my Department will be happy to continue its support for the 1994 competition. We have no plans jointly to commission research with the winners, though we shall be interested to follow the progress of their schemes.

Seals

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest estimates by the sea mammals research unit of the numbers of grey and common seals in England and Wales.

Mr. Yeo: The estimates for 1992 are 9,700 grey seals and 1,700 common seals in England and Wales.

Cryptosporidium

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the findings of the scientific report into cryptosporidium.

Mr. Yeo: The drinking water inspectorate has completed its assessment of two incidents, in March-April 1992 and October-November 1992, involving the detection of low levels of cryptosporidium in the water supplied from Broadfields treatment works, Isle of Wight. The inspectorate will be writing shortly to Southern Water Services Ltd. setting out its conclusions and recommendations on each incident. Copies of these letters will be sent to the local authorities, district health authorities and customer service committee concerned, to the Office of Water Services and others who have expressed an interest. I will send the hon. Member copies.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what are the minimum and maximum numbers of possible board members of *(a)* urban development corporations, *(b)* housing action trusts and *(c)* the Housing Corporation; what guidelines he has issued concerning the composition of these boards; and what specific guidance has been given on how many board members should be (i) from ethnic minorities, (ii) women, (iii) from the local business sector, (iv) from local authorities and (v) from trade unions;

(2) what are the minimum and maximum numbers of board members of English Partnerships; what guidelines he has issued concerning the composition of these boards; and what specific guidance has been given on how many board members should be (i) from ethnic minorities, (ii) women, (iii) from the local business sector, (iv) from local authorities and (v) from trade unions.

Mr. Baldry: Schedule 26 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, Schedule 6 of the Housing Associations Act 1985, Schedule 7 of the Housing Act 1988 and Schedule 17 of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993 set out the statutory requirements for making appointments to urban development corporations, the Housing Corporation, housing action trusts and English Partnerships (Urban Regeneration Agency), respectively.

The minimum number of board members required, by statute, by an urban development corporation is a chairman and deputy chairman and five members, the maximum is a chairman and deputy chairman and 11 members. The minimum number of board members required, by statute, by a housing action trust is a chairman and five members, the maximum is a chairman and 11 members. The maximum number of board members required by the Housing Corporation is 15. The minimum number of board members required, by statute, for English Partnerships is six, including a chairman; no maximum number is specified.

Appointments to my Department's public bodies are made from people of all backgrounds and walks of life. In the light of the founding legislation for urban development corporations and housing action trusts, local business people and local authority members are commonly appointed to these boards.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria are used in the selection of the chair and the executive members of *(a)* the Housing Corporation, *(b)* English Partnerships and *(c)* the urban development corporations, in respect of relevant experience and qualifications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: When making appointments to the boards of these bodies my right hon. Friend has regard to the range of skills and expertise necessary for the boards to carry out their functions effectively.

Climate Change

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the United Kingdom "Strategy to Limit Climate Change".

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) on 3 December 1993 at column *764*.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government intend to ratify *(a)* the biodiversity convention and *(b)* the climate change convention agreed at Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the replies that I gave to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 2 December 1993 at column *654* and to the hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) on 3 December 1993 at column *764*.

Central European Time

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate his Department has made of the likely effect of a move to central European time on energy consumption and consequently on carbon dioxide emissions.

Mr. Yeo: It is estimated but subject to considerable uncertainty that a change to single double summer time (i.e. GMT+1 in the winter and GMT+2 in summer) might slightly increase overall energy consumption and result in extra CO_2 emissions of up to 0·1 million tonnes of carbon a year.

Conservation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce a statutory provision to provide for the production of management plans for all designated special areas for conservation.

Mr. Yeo: The EC habitats directive requires member states to establish appropriate management plans for special areas of conservation if need be. The statutory nature conservation agencies' powers to formulate management plans will be available for designated special areas of conservation, and the Government will encourage formulation of such plans wherever they will benefit the nature conservation interest of the area.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to what extent the United Kingdom biodiversity action plan is intended to implement the Government's commitment made at the United Nations conference on environment and development to environmental education for sustainable development.

Mr. Yeo: The United Kingdom biodiversity action plan, which is due to be published after the House returns in January, will contain a strategy for the conservation and enhancement of species. A component of this strategy will be the important role of environmental education.

Albemarle Children's Home

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will refer to the district auditor the case of the London borough of Bromley and the Albemarle children's home; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: No. My right hon. Friend has no powers to take such action. Representations should be made direct to the district auditor.

Administration

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total expenditure by his Department on administration in 1992-93; what is the estimated outturn for expenditure by his Department on administration for 1993-94 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms in, 1992-93 prices; and what is his estimate for expenditure on administration by his Department for 1994-95 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1992-93 prices.

Mr. Gummer: The cash figures requested for my Department are as follows:

	£ million
1992-93	278
1993-94	280
1994-95	285

The GDP deflators required to calculate real terms figures are shown on page 121 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95" (HC 31), copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Housing

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish figures of the number of permanent dwellings started by *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* housing associations each year from 1978 to 1993 and the estimates for the number of permanent dwellings in each category to be started each year from 1994 to 1996 under current provisions for public sector housing investment.

Sir George Young: Estimates of housebuilding starts for England are shown in the publication "Housing and Construction Statistics". Figures for each year from 1982 to 1992 are in table 6.1(a) of the 1982 to 1992 annual edition. Figures for 1978 to 1981 are in the same table of the editions for earlier years: 1980 and 1981 figures are in the 1980-1990 edition; 1978 and 1979 figures are in the 1978-1988 edition. Copies of these publications are in the Library.

The Department does not predict the number of houses to be built by local authorities or by housing associations.

Tenants' Rights

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish for consultation the regulations governing the operation of the new right to compensation for tenants' improvements in the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, have today published for consultation the regulations governing the operation of the compensation for tenants' improvement scheme. The views of local government, housing organisations and other interested parties are being sought on the detailed operation of a new mandatory scheme whereby local authority tenants can receive compensation for carrying out worthwhile home improvements, once their tenancy ends. The scheme will apply to improvements begun after 1 April next year. In line with the citizens charter this new right will benefit all council tenants, and provide them with a valuable incentive to improve their homes.

The powers to establish this new scheme in England and Wales are contained in section 122 of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be consulting on a similar scheme in Scotland. Copies of the draft regulations will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the overall cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

Mr. Gummer: The overall cost to the Department of the Environment for their Ministers' car service was estimated at £270,000 in 1990-91. Eight cars were provided by the Government car service with drivers and full backup services.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department spends annually on *(a)* television advertising; *(b)* radio advertising and *(c)* press advertising; and what were the corresponding figures for 1985 and 1979.

Mr. Gummer *[pursuant to the answer of 9 December 1993, column 362]:* I regret that the figures contained in my earlier answer were incorrect. The correct information is as follows.

In the financial year 1992-93, the Department spent £2,716,974·74 on press advertising and £4,212,673·15 on television advertising. These costs include creative and production charges, value added tax, and other levies as paid.

The main campaigns were:

Helping the Earth Begins at Home
Right to Buy
Council Tax Press Advertising March 1993
Making a Corporate Commitment—to Energy Saving
Halon Banking
EMAS—Energy Management Assistance Scheme

There was no expenditure on radio advertising in that financial year.

A breakdown of publicity advertising is not available for the years 1985 and 1979.

Radon Gas

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information is available about levels of radon gas in workplaces in radon-affected areas; what powers are available to local authorities to limit exposure to radon gas in the workplace; and what guidance has been issued.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have been asked to reply.

The Health and Safety Executive—HSE—commissions the National Radiological Protection Board—NRPB—to carry out research into the level of radon gas in workplaces in radon-affected areas, and reports of this work are produced. The NRPB also publish results of its own research.

HSE and local authority inspectors use their normal powers under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to ensure compliance with the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985. These set limits on occupational exposure to radon gas and require exposures to be kept as low as reasonably practicable.

The HSE issued and widely circulated a free leaflet in July 1992 entitled "Radon in the Workplace", copies of which are available in the Library. Inspectors have fuller information which they issue to employers whose workplaces may be affected by radon.

TRANSPORT

Ashford International Station

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is yet in a position to make an announcement about Ashford international passenger station.

Mr. MacGregor: I am delighted to announce that the construction of Ashford international passenger station is to go ahead as a privately financed project. European Passenger Services has now signed agreements with John Laing plc whereby Laing will construct the station buildings and car parks, at its own cost and risk, and will in return receive from EPS a fee for each passenger using the station.

The whole station is now expected to be completed in 1995, together with the associated railway works which I announced on 22 March.

Merchant Navy (Homosexuality)

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to repeal section 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 1967 to decriminalise homosexual acts in the Merchant Navy.

Mr. Norris: Yes, having consulted widely on this matter and considered all the factors involved, I have decided that there is no continued justification for the retention of offences specific to the Merchant Navy. Section 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 1967 will therefore be repealed when a suitable legislative opportunity occurs.

Rail Services

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much Government funding has been paid annually to district councils to support rail services under section 20 of the Transport Act 1968.

Mr. Freeman: Assistance to local authority programmes is given through revenue support grant paid by the Department of the Environment. An amount is set aside within the "All other services" block for distribution to district councils in the six English metropolitan county areas in view of their responsibility for supporting local rail services. The amounts for the last four years are:

Year	*£ million*
1990-91	77
1991-92	93
1992-93	105
1993-94	110

The equivalent figure for 1994-95 is £112·9 million.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what meetings he has had with the Freight Transport Association in regard to the impact on refrigerated transport of Her Majesty's Government's policy of phasing out CFC use in refrigeration systems by 1 January 1996.

Mr. Key: None.

Road Noise

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce type approval legislation governing the level of road noise produced by motorway road surfaces.

Mr. Key: I have no plans to introduce type approval legislation governing the level of road noise produced by motorway road surfaces. I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 13 December, *Official Report*, column *467*.

Motorway Accidents

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of accidents per mile of United Kingdom motorway and the equivalent figure for each other EC country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Comparable data for EC countries are only available for fatalities. The table shows the number of fatalities per 100 miles of motorway for each of the EC countries.

Fatalities per 100 miles of motorway, EC countries 1991

	Fatalities per 100 miles of motorway
Belgium	7·7
Denmark	1·9
France	5·9
Germany	8·8
Irish Republic	2·6
Italy	7·4
Luxemburg[1]	—
Netherlands	3·4
Portugal	18·8
Spain	16·1
United Kingdom	4·7
EC TOTAL[2]	7·7

[1] Data not available for Luxemburg.

[2] Excluding Luxemburg.

Light Dues

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what decision he has made on changing the basis for the payment of light dues for 1994-95 from net to gross tonnage.

Mr. Norris: Light dues are currently assessed on the net registered tonnage of the vessel. In 1990, the then Secretary of State for Transport announced to the House the Government's decision in principle to change to a gross tonnage assessment from April 1994.

I have decided not to proceed with such a change at this stage. However the standard tonnage assessment under the International Convention on Tonnage Measurement 1969 —ICT 69—will be fully implemented in July 1994. Further evidence collected by Trinity House suggests that some vessels would face a substantial increase in light dues if the final introduction of ICT 69 measurement followed closely on a move to gross tonnage assessment. Accordingly, I have decided to allow the change to ICT 69 measurement to take place and will monitor the results. This will permit a more accurate analysis of the effects on light dues of a move to gross tonnage. I shall then give further consideration to the possibility of a change to gross tonnage assessment.

Air Navigation Services

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what United Kingdom airlines will be charged for air navigation services in 1994; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The charges for air navigation services in 1994 are set out in the Civil Aviation (Route Charges for Navigation Services) (Second Amendment) Regulations 1993. A copy of the regulations was laid before the House on 10 December.

It was necessary to revoke the Civil Aviation (Route Charges for Navigation Services) (Amendment) Regulations 1993, laid before the House on 6 December, before they came into force as the result of a very late change by France to their charges. I am happy to say that this last minute change, as shown in the second amendment to these regulations, was to the benefit of airspace users.

Several of the member states of Eurocontrol have reduced their charges, and I am pleased to say that the United Kingdom's charge will fall by nearly 4 per cent. in sterling terms, or 9·5 per cent. in ecu. I know that this will be welcomed by the airlines, and it reflects well on the Civil Aviation Authority's control of its own costs that a reduction is possible at a time when it is investing to meet the airlines' future needs.

Air Traffic Control Delays

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the level of air traffic control delays in the summers of *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993; and what steps have been taken by the Civil Aviation Authority to improve the position on delays.

Mr. Norris: I am glad to say that this summer delays have been significantly less than last year. Delays to traffic leaving the United Kingdom have been reduced from an average of 11 minutes throughout summer 1992 to seven minutes over the same period of this year. There has been an even greater improvement for domestic traffic, with a decrease in the average delay for early morning flights to London from 20 minutes to four minutes over the same period. The number of outward bound flights delayed by more than an hour was decreased by 37 per cent., numbering typically 100 out of a total of some 7,500 flights a week. Delays to flights inbound to the United Kingdom have fallen from an average of 16 minutes in 1992 to 10 minutes in 1993. The service to airlines has been improved with the time taken to respond to requests for take-off "slots" reduced from 24 minutes to 14 minutes.

These improvements reflect hard work by the CAA to provide increased airspace capacity, both through procedural measures and capital investment.

The authority's investment programme continues to make good progress with the successful transfer in October of the Heathrow and Gatwick approach control functions to the new central control function operations room at the London air traffic control centre at West Drayton. The authority's £340 million new air traffic control centre at Swanwick, Hampshire, due to be completed in 1996, continues on time and on budget.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the availability and response of search and rescue services in Shetland to the recent incidents involving Klondykers, with particular reference to the Lunohods 1 on 9 November and the Borodinskye Poyle on 15 November; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: We are indeed satisfied with the availability and response of the search and rescue services in general and in particular those in the Shetlands. In the case of the Lunohods 1 and Borodinskye Poyle the magnificent and heroic efforts of the crew of the coastguard helicopter and the Lerwick RNLI lifeboat are of special note, together with the invaluable support of coastguard response teams, the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy, the offshore industry including a Norwegian infield helicopter, and the merchant vessels. All of these services, professionally and expertly co-ordinated by the Shetland coastguard maritime rescue sub-centre, worked together to save the lives of all 60 crew of the Lunohods 1 and all 74 crew of the Borodinskye Poyle.

Without doubt, these incidents were conducted in the best traditions of the United Kingdom search and rescue services and deserving of the highest praise for all those involved.

British Rail

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the privatisation of British Rail's infrastructure service activities.

Mr. Freeman: I have today approved proposals from the British Railways Board for the restructuring and sale of its infrastructure service activities.

From next April, British Rail will operate a new division—British Rail Infrastructure Services—BRIS—which will contract with Railtrack and the train operating companies to provide infrastructure maintenance, renewal and associated services. BRIS will be restructured during 1994-95 to set up two major groups of companies. One group will provide infrastructure maintenance services and the other will undertake renewal and other capital schemes. Other BRIS activities, for example design services, will also be established as companies. The companies will be sold during 1995 and the early part of 1996. BR's aim is to complete the transfer of the companies to the private sector by April 1996.

Transferring these companies to the private sector and opening up the infrastructure supply market will ensure the competitive and efficient supply of infrastructure services to the rail industry.

Red Star Parcels

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make an announcement on the future of Red Star Parcels.

Mr. Freeman: Today, the British Railways Board announced, with the agreement of the Government, that it will be withdrawing the sale of Red Star as no satisfactory offers for the business have been received. The board will now seek urgently to prepare a new management plan for Red Star, with a view to achieving financial viability and successful disposal in 1994.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which of the appointments made to public bodies by his Department since 1992 have been advertised.

Mr. Norris: Appointments made by my right hon. Friend since 1992 which had been advertised are the Rail Regulator and the Director of Passenger Rail Franchising, both of whom head non-ministerial Government departments, and the Scottish Traffic Commissioner.

The post of deputy traffic commissioner for the west midlands and south Wales traffic areas was advertised recently, but an appointment has not yet been made.

Like other employers, we also advertise some internal posts.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what his Department's policy is regarding the use of executive search consultants in making appointments to public bodies; and if he will *(a)* list the appointments where such consultants have been used and *(b)* list the cost in each case since April 1992.

Mr. Norris: The Department's policy is to use executive search consultants wherever this is thought necessary to obtain a wide field of suitable candidates for important full-time appointments or high profile part-time appointments, in particular where it has not been possible to identify suitable candidates from the public appointments unit's list or other sources.

In 1992, executive search consultants were used to identify candidates to serve initially as advisors on regulation and franchising and then, subject to parliamentary approval of the Railways Bill, to take up appointment as the Rail Regulator and Director of Passenger Rail Franchising. At the same time, the consultants were asked to search for candidates for two appointments to the BR board, subsequently combined into one. The cost of search for candidates for the posts was £103,428 for fees, expenses and VAT, plus £28,670 for advertising costs.

Consultants were also used by London Transport in 1992 in the search for candidates for appointment to the board as chief executive. The cost of this was borne by LT and is a matter for them.

A41

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much expenditure there has been on roadworks on the A41 between Spur road and the Finchley road garage in the last five years.

Mr. Norris: During the five-year period ending March 1993, some £5·6 million has been spent on improvement and major maintenance schemes on the A41 between A410 Spur road, the north circular road and A598 Finchley road, including the A1 Barnet bypass but not the Great North way. In addition, £800,000 per annum is spent on routine and minor maintenance works.

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for further improvements to the A41 between Spur road and the Finchley road garage after 1994.

Mr. Norris: Subject to availability of resources, the following improvements and substantial maintenance schemes are currently planned over the three years from April 1994, for the A41 between A410 Spur road and A598 Finchley road, including the A1 Barnet bypass.

They will be programmed to cause the minimum of disruption and inconvenience.

Improvement schemes

Five Ways Corner—Junction improvements;

Edgware Way—Local safety schemes between Spur road and Apex corner.

Road maintenance

Hendon Way—Carriageway strengthening between Brent Cross and Finchley road;

Watford Way—Carriageway strengthening between Mill hill and Five Ways corner;

Edgware Way—Carriageway strengthening between A410 Spur road and The Grove.

Structure Maintenance

Hendon Way—Repairs to Brent Cross flyover;
—Strengthening of Brent Cross east subway;
—Waterproofing of the subways at The Burroughs, Hendon Central, Rundell crescent, Ridgeway hill, Hall lane, Sunny hill park and Greyhound hill.

Watford Way—Reconstruction of Bunns lane bridge.

Press Releases

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many press releases his Department has issued in each year since 1979.

Mr. Norris: The number of Department of Transport press notices issued nationally since 1984 was as follows:

	Number
1984	584
1985	511
1986	601
1987	619
1988	623
1989	558
1990	461
1991	392
1992	379
1993	[1]503

[1] to 13 December 1993.

Before 1984, issue of press notices was a common service of the Department of Transport, Environment and Property Services Agency and information concerning the number of press notices issued separately on transport is not available.

Railtrack

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those positions so far filled on the staff of Railtrack, with salary in each case.

Mr. Freeman: These are matters of management for the British Railways Board while Railtrack is still part of BR.

Administration

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total expenditure by his Department on administration in 1992-93; what is the estimated outturn for expenditure by his Department on administration for 1993-94 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms in, 1992-93 prices; and what is his estimate for expenditure on administration by his Department for 1994-95 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1992-93 prices.

Mr. MacGregor: The final outturn for the recurrent costs of running my Department in 1992-93 is £386 million.

The running costs provision for my Departments, including the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency; the forthcoming Highways, Marine Safety and Marine Emergencies agencies; the new Office of Passenger Rail Franchising and the new Office of the Rail Regulator, for 1993-94 is £433 million in cash, and £420 million in 1992-93 prices. An estimated outturn will be published in the spring in the 1994 departmental report and the unified Budget supplement.

My Departments' planned running costs expenditure for 1994-95 will be published in the unified Budget supplement and in the Department's annual report which will be issued in the spring.

Automatic Train Protection

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Tranport what is his policy towards the system known as automatic train protection.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail is evaluating the technical trials, costs and benefits of automatic train protection systems. I understand that British Rail expects to reach conclusions on the results of that work by the spring. I shall review ATP policy with British Rail and Railtrack in the light of those conclusions and of advice from the Health and Safety Commission.

A205, Catford

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will take a decision on the start of the scheme to improve the A205 Catford town centre.

Mr. Norris: I will make an announcement on the A205 Catford town centre improvement scheme early next year.

Railway Rolling Stock

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has completed its appraisal of the north Yorkshire passenger transport executive bid for new rolling stock for the electrified Leeds-Bradford line; and if he will make a statement on the current position with regard to this order.

Mr. Freeman: The appraisal is still under discussion between my Department and West Yorkshire passenger transport executive. We have not yet had from the PTE all the information we need to enable us to reach a conclusion. We hope to reach a conclusion quickly once all the information is made available.

British Rail Employees

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people are employed in each division of British Rail on salaries of £30,000 or more at a recent convenient date.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail advises that, as of 15 December 1993, 1,337 people out of a total payroll of 128,800 were employed at salaries of £30,000 or more. This represents 1.04 per cent. of the work force. Further information in the form requested is not available except at disproportionate cost.

Child Road Deaths

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effect on the incidence of child road deaths of the United Kingdom adopting double British summer time.

Mr. Key: Based on 1991 road accident data, the Transport Research Laboratory has estimated that a total of 29 fatalities, 125 serious injuries and 140 slight injuries to children under the age of 16 could be saved in Great Britain if double British summer time were adopted.

Buses, London

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given, as a part of the policy of Her Majesty's Government in respect of the organisation Keeping London First, to requiring operators of private bus companies bidding for future bus route franchise contracts with London Transport to retain a standard form of bus livery or permitted variation thereof.

Mr. Norris: I am aware of the support which has been expressed for the retention of a red livery for buses in London. LT has no current plans to require private bus operators to conform to a standardised bus livery.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Children (Statistics)

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security further to his reply of 2 December 1993, *Official Report*, column 720, if he will now show *(a)* the numbers of United Kingdom families with children and *(b)* the numbers of United Kingdom children dependent on supplementary benefit and income support in 1979, 1989 and 1992 and the percentages of (i) United Kingdom families with children and (ii) United Kingdom children involved.

Mr. Burt: The available information is in the table and is for Great Britain only.

Year	*Number of families in receipt of supplementary benefit/income support*	*As a percentage of families in receipt of child benefit*	*Number of dependants of supplementary benefit/income support recipients*	*As a percentage of Great Britain population under 19*
1979	488,000	6·8	955,000	6·3
1989	1,144,000	17·2	2,138,000	15·8
1992	1,500,000	21·9	2,874,000	21·3

Notes:

1. *Sources:* Supplementary Benefit/Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiries November 1979, May 1989, May 1992.
Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys.
Social Security Statistics.
2. Figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand. Percentages are correct to one decimal place.
3. The number of families in receipt of child benefit has been used as an estimate of the number of families with dependent children in Great Britain.
4. The number of dependent children is expressed as a percentage of the resident population of Great Britain of the same age group; ie: under 19. Some of these people will be living independently and may receive supplementary benefit/income support in their own right.

Departmental Offices (Heating Bills)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by location the annual fuel heating bills for each of his Department's offices for the last four years, and for this year to date.

Mr. Hague: Information is not available in the form requested.

Records showing expenditure on heating for individual buildings for the past four years are not held.

Before April 1991 fuel and utility charges for the Government estate were met by the Property Services Agency.

Since 1991 we have, in common with other Government Departments, provided to the Department of the Environment's energy efficiency office the following total expenditure on energy:

Year	£
1990-91	12,515,493
1991-92	14,213,000
1992-93	15,600,000

Details of energy expenditure for the year to date are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cases have been dealt with by the Child Support Agency since its inception from the Warrington, South constituency.

Mr. Burt: I understand from Ros Hepplewhite, the Chief Executive of the Child Support Agency, that information in the form requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

However, a report showing the agency's national performance is available each month in the Library.

Unemployed People (Mortgages)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures he is taking to limit payments to unemployed people in respect of very large mortgages.

Mr. Burt: Help for mortgage loans is given through income support. A limit of £150,000 was introduced on 2 August 1993. This limit will be reduced to £125,000 from 11 April 1994.

Savings (Tariff Rates)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the tariff rates for savings in respect of claimants on income support and other related benefits.

Mr. Burt: In all the income-related benefits, capital up to £3,000 is ignored. The formula applied for capital above this figure does not imply any particular return on investments. It ensures that help is targeted on those who need it most, while not denying benefit to those with only a moderate amount of capital. The rules are kept under review, but we have no plans for change.

Pensions

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women he estimates will lose five years of pension as a result of his Budget, for each year from 2010 to 2020.

Mr. Hague: No women reaching state pension age before 6 March 2020 will lose five years of pension as a result of the changes announced on 30 November 1993.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the cost of unemployment benefit in the next 12 months; and what was the cost in 1979.

Mr. Burt: The estimated cost of unemployment benefit for 1994-95 is given in table 1 of the social security departmental report as £1·9 billion.

The cost of unemployment benefit in 1979-80 was £653 million.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what his Department's policy is regarding the use of executive search consultants in making appointments to public bodies; and if he will *(a)* list the appointments where such consultants have been used and *(b)* list the cost in each case since April 1992;

(2) which of the appointments made to public bodies by his Department since April 1992 have been advertised.

Mr. Hague: The use of executive search consultants is one of a number of options which may be considered in making appointments to public bodies. Since April 1992, no posts have been advertised nor have consultants been used in making any such appointments.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what the cost of advertising by his Department has been for each year since 1979 and for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Hague: The available information is in the tables.

	£
Advertising costs in whole years	
1989-90	6,799,000
1990-91	4,560,000
1991-92	5,794,000
1992-93	4,517,000
Advertising costs for the last 12 months	
December 1992	88,492
January 1993	1,055,229
February	29,840
March	2,800,494
April	12,343
June	1,223,689
July	2,018,378
August	589,155
October	412,129
November	25,498

Notes:

1. The Department of Social Security did not exist independently prior to August 1988.

2. These figures include advertising on behalf of the Department's HQ and executive agencies other than the Benefits Agency (BA). The projected expenditure in 1993-94 for BA is £670,734. A monthly breakdown of this figure is not available. Figures for previous years since 1991-92 (when the agency took over responsibility for expenditure in this area) are not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Press Releases

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many press releases his Department has issued in each year since 1979.

Mr. Hague: The available information is in the table.

	Number
1991	187
1992	199
1993[1]	214[2]

[1] Up until 14 December.

[2] This figure includes press releases issued on behalf of executive agencies other than the Benefits Agency.

Notes:

1. The total number of press releases issued by the Benefits Agency between April 1991 and 13 December 1993 is 281. (This figure excludes press releases issued by the local offices of the Benefits Agency).
2. Before 1988 the Department was part of the DHSS and separate figures for Social Security are not available.
3. From 1988 to October 1990 press releases were still processed centrally by the joint Departments and separate figures are not available.

Disability

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has for extending the pre-qualification period for disability premium before the commencement of payment; what will be the consequential estimated change in payment to a married couple; if he will list the passported benefits, the waiting period for which would also alter consequential upon any alteration in the waiting period for first payment of disability premium and their weekly value to a married couple; and what will be the estimated changes in Government expenditure under this heading in a full year.

Mr. Burt: The disability premium provides extra help in income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit for the long-term sick and the disabled. The amount of the disability premium for a married couple is currently £26·45 a week, increasing to £27·80 a week from 11 April 1994.

For those claiming these benefits as long-term sick the rules for the disability premium will be changed from April 1995 to reflect the incapacity benefit changes announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 1 December. The highest rate of the new incapacity benefit will act as a passport to the disability premium. Severe disablement allowance will continue to bring entitlement to the disability premium. For those who have no other means of entitlement to the disability premium, the period of incapacity needed to qualify will increase from 28 to 52 weeks and the new definition of work and assessment of incapacity will apply.

Disability living allowance, attendance allowance and mobility supplement are other passporting benefits to the disability premium, which can also be awarded on other grounds—for instance, if the person is registered blind. These routes to the disability premium will not be affected by the incapacity benefit changes.

The estimate of the consequences of the incapacity benefit changes on income-related benefit expenditure for sick and disabled people is not available at present. I will write to the Hon. Gentleman with this information as soon as possible.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many war pensioners have been in receipt of invalidity benefit in each year since 1980; and what is the current figure.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the relationship between invalidity benefit rulings and disabled living allowance.

Mr. Scott: Invalidity benefit and disability living allowance are separate benefits designed to meet different needs. Different rules apply to the award of these benefits. If my hon. Friend has a particular concern in mind, perhaps he would care to write to me about it.

Administration

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total expenditure by his Department on administration in 1992-93; what is the estimated outturn for expenditure by his Department on administration for 1993-94 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms in 1992-93 prices; and what is his estimate for expenditure on administration by his Department for 1994-95 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1992-93 prices.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

(i) The final outturn for the recurrent costs of running the Department in 1992-93 is £3,741 million.

(ii) The estimated outturn for 1993-94 is £4,118 million or £3,988 million at 1992-93 prices.

(iii) The Department's planned administration expenditure for 1994-95 is £4,023 million or £3,747 million at 1992-93 prices.

Notes:

The figures at 1992-93 prices were calculated by using the GDP deflator.

The figures do not include the subsidy given in respect of work carried out by local authorities.

The figues in (iii) were agreed in the 1993 Public Expenditure Survey. These will be published in the 1994 Departmental Report, but, in the meantime, may need to be revised to take into account any subsequent transfers.

Child Support

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many powers were conferred on him by the Child Support Act 1993.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Act 1991 confers some 150 powers on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, many of them reflecting previous arrangements under social security legislation. About 80 per cent. of these powers provide for making regulations or orders and are in many cases procedural. The remainder cover straightforward administrative matters.

VAT on Fuel

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out details of the new rates of benefits proposed from April 1994 and the details of help to be made available to meet the cost of VAT on domestic fuel.

Mr. Lilley *[pursuant to his reply, 30 November 1993, columns 437-50]:* The information given in the schedule contained two typographical errors.

Column *440:*

The figure of "£139·99" quoted in relation to alternative maximum council tax benefit second adult on income support—second adults gross income: should read "£138·99".

Column *448*:
The entry for contracted out deductions should read:
"Contracted out deductions (CODs) and
increments to CODs (from post-April 1988
earnings)." 1·8 per cent. paid by scheme

NATIONAL FINANCE

Imports And Exports

11. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for imports and exports between the United Kingdom and each of the other countries of the European Union.

Mr. Nelson: In the first nine months of the year, there was a deficit of £0·8 billion in visible trade with other members of the European Union, compared with a deficit of £2·5 billion over the same period in 1992.

Figures for United Kingdom trade with individual members of the Union consistent with these totals will be available shortly.

Christmas Help

12. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what policies he will introduce to assist the unemployed people and pensioners in the Southwark and Bermondsey constituency over Christmas.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The measures to bring about economic growth and the benefit increases that I was able to announce in my Budget will help pensioners and unemployed people, and not just in Southwark and Bermondsey, but throughout the whole country.

Income Tax

13. **Mr. Heppell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people in the east midlands who have previously paid no income tax will now do so as a result of changes announced in the Budget.

Mr. Dorrell: In 1994-95 no one will be brought into income tax as a result of the Budget changes.

Fuel (VAT)

14. **Mr. Milligan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received following his measures to help pensioners pay value added tax on fuel.

Sir John Cope: Our decision to add £1·30 a week to the single pension and £1·85 a week to the couples pension by April 1996 to help with fuel bills has been widely welcomed.

26. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the amount which will be raised in a full year by the imposition of VAT on fuel.

Sir John Cope: VAT on fuel and power is estimated to raise £2,850 million in 1996-97, the first full year of revenue.

18. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue will be raised in the 1993-94 tax year by the changes in the value added tax rate on fuel.

Sir John Cope: Nil.

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

15. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the public sector borrowing requirement as a percentage of gross domestic product for each year until 1997-98; and what is the equivalent figure for each other EC country.

Mr. Portillo: The public sector borrowing requirement in the United Kingdom is projected to fall steadily to 1½ per cent. of GDP by 1997-98. Equivalent projections for each other EC country are not available.

Mortgage Interest Payments

16. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate for the reduction in interest payments on an average mortgage since October 1990.

Mr. Nelson: Since October 1990, mortgage rates have been reduced from over 15 per cent. to under 8 per cent., saving a homeowner with an average mortgage £160 a month.

Retail Sales

17. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the level of retail sales.

Mr. Nelson: In the three months to November, retail sales volumes were over 3½ per cent. higher than a year earlier and at record levels.

Business Taxes

19. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what total payments have been made in each of the last four years to cover return of advance corporation tax or other taxes on dividends or interests to companies or businesses which are either owned by, or are in the control of, foreign Governments under the sovereign immunity arrangement; and in which OECD countries the rates are more favourable to businesses.

Mr. Dorrell: Sovereign immunity from taxation is accorded only to foreign sovereigns and Governments; it does not apply to companies or other separate entities. I regret that I am not clear what information is requested in the second part of the question.

Debt Interest

20. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his estimates of the change in public sector debt interest payments over the next three years as a result of the November Budget; and what estimate he has made as to the effect of the change on the sustainability of Government finances.

Mr. Portillo: By 1996-97, I estimate that debt interest payments will be £1·2 billion lower as a result of the November Budget. The Budget puts the public finances on a sound and sustainable basis.

National Health Service

21. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of total public spending is accounted for by spending on the national health service.

Mr. Portillo: Net NHS expenditure in the United Kingdom is expected to account for 12·5 per cent. of general Government expenditure in 1993-94.

Indirect Taxation

22. **Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the impact on the average family's tax bill of the Budget changes in indirect taxation.

24. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the impact on the average family's tax bill of the Budget changes in indirect taxation.

Sir John Cope: The impact of changes to indirect taxes will depend on the level and pattern of spending by a family and as such any estimates are subject to large margins of error. However, it is estimated that on average the changes in indirect taxation will cost households about 90p per week over the next year relative to indexation.

Value Added Tax

23. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest figure he has for the number of companies registered for value added tax in the United Kingdom; and what this figure was 12 months ago.

Sir John Cope: The latest available information and that for the 12 months ago is as follows:

Number of companies registered

Date	*Number*
September 1993	498,750
December 1992	514,085

27. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much VAT was paid by an average family on an income of £200 per week on 9 April 1992; and how much he estimates they will pay on 9 April 1994.

Sir John Cope: Estimates of indirect tax payments outside the range of three-quarters to one-and-a-half times average earnings are not available. A one-earner couple with two children on three-quarters average earnings—£260·80 a week in 1992-93—paid approximately £13·30 a week in VAT. The equivalent figure for 1994-95, in 1992-93 prices, is estimated to be £14·40 a week.

Construction Industry

25. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to compensate the construction industry, following his decision to cut the annual allocation to the Housing Corporation.

Mr. Portillo: The construction industry's main requirements are for continuing low interest rates and increasing economic confidence. My right hon. and learned Friend's Budget offers decisive action to reduce public sector borrowing. My right hon. and learned Friend has also announced several important new potential projects under the private finance initiative which can provide a boost for construction employment.

Tax Increases

Mr. McFall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much he estimates the cumulative tax increases since last March will cost the average family from *(a)* April 1994 and *(b)* 1995.

Mr. Dorrell: On average, the main tax related changes will cost households around £5·30 a week from April 1994, and an additional £3·30 a week from April 1995.

Royal Palaces

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if tax is applicable in the occupied royal palaces reserved for *(a)* the Duke and Duchess of Kent, *(b)* the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, *(c)* Princess Alexandra and *(d)* Prince and Princess Michael of Kent.

Mr. Dorrell: The normal income tax rules apply to living accommodation provided in royal palaces. I am sure the hon. Gentleman will realise that the rules of confidentiality regarding taxpayers' affairs prevent me from commenting on individual cases.

Departmental Offices (Heating Bills)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list, by location the annual fuel heating bills for each of his Department's offices for the last four years, and for this year to date.

Sir John Cope: The annual fuel heating bills for HM Treasury attributable to the last three years and to date are as follows:

Building	*1990-91* £	*1991-92* £	*1992-93* £	*1993-94* £
Great George Street	59,900·00	62,494·00	4,846·00	9,535·00
Alencon Link Basingstoke	6,464,·96	8,877·00	5,521·00	3,759·30
Allington Towers				4,414·11

Prior to 1990-91 utilities on the departmental estate were paid direct by Property Services Agency. These figures are not available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Interest Rates

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what rate of interest the Government are paying to borrow money; and what has been the rate in each of the last five years.

Mr. Nelson: The Government's borrowing programme involves issuing a number of different liabilities, mainly gilts and National Savings products.

The coupons payable on gilts are given in table 3·6 of "Financial Statistics", together with the nominal amount of each issue and the cash received. The supplementary statements to the Consolidated Fund and National Loans Fund Accounts give further details on an annual basis. For each stock, they indicate the principal outstanding at the beginning and end of the year, the cash received from borrowing and the discount on each stock, repayments, and the interest paid.

A summary measure of the interest rates payable on gilts is provided by the par yields for five, 10 and 20 year gilts in table 13·5 of "Financial Statistics". These show that gilt yields are now at their lowest levels for more than 20 years. The rates on National Savings products are published in the London, Edinburgh and Belfast Gazettes and in press notices at the time of each interest rate change. The rates are also displayed in Post Offices. A back series of the rates on the investment account is published in "Financial Statistics", table 13·9.

Flight Tax

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements he proposes to ensure that air passengers originating in destinations which do not possess through-check-in facilities will not be double-charged flight tax on journeys of more than one leg.

Sir John Cope: Air passenger duty will be collected from airlines. It is expected that they will charge it to customers when the ticket is sold. Customs and Excise are discussing with the airline industry details of the operation of the duty, including arrangements to ensure that the correct amount of duty is charged for passengers on multi-legged journeys.

Petrol Tax

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will now introduce measures to compensate for higher duties on petrol and diesel for those parts of the United Kingdom likely to be hardest hit by such increases of duty.

Sir John Cope: No.

Gross National Product

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the predicted size of the gross domestic product and the gross national product is during the current financial year; what they were five, 10 and 15 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Gross domestic product at current factor cost—1990 prices—was £367 billion in 1978-79, £388 billion in 1983-84, and £470 billion in 1988-89. For the current financial year, 1993-94, it is forecast to be £477 billion.

Gross national product at constant factor cost—1990 prices—was £369 billion in 1978-79, £391 billion in 1983-84, and £475 billion in 1988-89. The Government do not publish a forecast of gross national product.

Value Added Tax

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he makes of the annual revenue which would be forgone as a result of increasing the VAT turnover threshold to £45,000.

Sir John Cope: The revenue cost of raising the VAT registration threshold to £45,000 is estimated to be of the following order:

1993-94 (part year)	*1994-95 (full year)*	*1995-96 (full year)*
£5 million	£40 million	£45 million

Tax Avoidance

Mr. Richards: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the yield from the anti-tax avoidance measures contained in the Budget over the next two years.

Mr. Dorrell: The anti-avoidance measures announced in the Budget will yield an estimated £580 million in 1994-95 and £615 million in 1995-96.

Incomes

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average annual percentage increase or decrease in real disposable income between *(a)* 1964 and 1970, *(b)* 1970 and 1974, *(c)* 1974 and 1979 and *(d)* 1979 to the latest available year.

Mr. Nelson: Real personal disposable income has increased in each of these periods. The average annual percentage increases are as follows:

Year	*Per cent.*
1964-70	2·0
1970-74	3·8
1974-79	2·2
1979-92	2·5

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which of the appointments made to public bodies by his Department since April 1992 have been advertised.

Mr. Nelson: The post of chief executive of the Royal Mint Management Board was advertised using the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency in December 1992.

European Union

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the heads under which the United Kingdom makes regular public expenditure and tax revenue contributions to the European Union and its institutions.

Sir John Cope: In accordance with the "Own Resources Decision", Cm 419, the United Kingdom's gross contribution to the European Community budget is comprised of:

(a) agriculture and sugar levies;
(b) customs duties;
(c) payments on the basis of a harmonized VAT base;
(d) GNP contributions (the fourth resource).

Agricultural and sugar levies and customs duties are paid to the Commission after the deduction of 10 per cent. for collection costs. The United Kingdom's gross contribution is reduced by the abatement arrangements agreed at Fontainebleau in 1984, and set out in the "Own Resources Decision". In addition, the United Kingdom also contributes to the capital of the European investment bank, the European development fund and pays production levies on the import of coal and steel products to the European Coal and Steel Community.

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the total and average income tax liability in 1994-95; what these would have been if the 1978-79 regime had been maintained in index-linked form; and if he will give the figures including and excluding national insurance contributions and for men and women separately.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest estimates are in the table. For the purposes of the calculations, the 1978-79 regime has been indexed to 1994-95 by reference to the statutory formula and allowing for independent taxation and applied directly to the income base of 1994-95. In practice, retention of the regime, indexed as appropriate, for the intervening years would have led to changes in the income base.

1994-95

	Income tax liability		*Income tax and National Insurance contribution liability*[1]	
	Total £ billion	*Average £*	*Total £ billion*	*Average £*
Men	52·0	3,480	66·0	4,420
Women	18·5	1,770	24·5	2,340
All	70·5	2,780	90·5	3,560

[1] Excluding the National Insurance liability of individuals not liable to income tax.

1978-79 income tax and National Insurance regimes indexed to 1994-95

	Income tax liability		*Income tax and National Insurance contribution liability*[1]	
	Total £ billion	*Average £*	*Total £ billion*	*Average £*
Men	74·5	4,820	83·4	5,400
Women	27·8	2,450	32·3	2,850
All	102·3	3,820	115·7	4,320

[1] Excluding the National Insurance liability of individuals not liable to income tax.

Controlled Foreign Companies

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has, in advance of the publication of the Finance Bill, to publish the changes he proposed in the Budget to the provisions on controlled foreign companies.

Mr. Dorrell: The relevant clause, which is to be included in the forthcoming Finance Bill, is being published today in an Inland Revenue press release. Copies of the clause are being placed in the House of Commons Library.

Air Passenger Duty

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of revenue to be derived from air passenger duty in the first full financial year in respect of *(a)* scheduled passenger flights to and from Orkney, *(b)* scheduled passenger flights to and from Shetland, *(c)* scheduled passenger flights to and from the western isles and *(d)* scheduled passenger flights to and from airports operated by Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 15 December 1993]:* The total revenue yield from passengers on these routes is expected to be under £2 million.

Travel Tax

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how he proposes to collect the new travel tax.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 15 December 1993]:* Air passenger duty will be collected from airlines on the basis of the number of passengers carried. It is expected that airlines will add the duty to the ticket price paid by passengers when tickets are issued. Airlines will be required to register with Customs and Excise and make returns to account for the duty due. Copies of the document outlining the duty, issued by Customs and Excise at my request on Budget day, have been placed in the Library of the House.

ECOFIN

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the ECOFIN meeting on 14 December; and what arrangements have been made to deal with the need for borrowing by the European investment bank.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the EC ECOFIN Council of 13 and 14 December indicating the voting record of each member state on each item and where no formal votes were taken.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The last ECOFIN under the Belgian presidency was held on 13 December. I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council adopted a recommendation for broad economic policy guidelines under article 103 of the treaty. The final text was closely modelled on the report from ECOFIN to the European Council agreed on 5 December subject to certain changes to ensure consistency with the European Council conclusions on growth, competitiveness and employment. The text was fully acceptable to me and in line with the policy of the British Government.

ECOFIN also conducted the assessment of progress required under article 109e of the treaty with regard to economic and monetary convergence and the implementation of Community law concerning the internal market.

The directive on VAT on second hand goods was agreed. The United Kingdom secured a satisfactory compromise on the treatment of imported works of art. These will be taxed at the equivalent rate of 2·5 per cent. until 30 June 1999. The Council also adopted a number of derogations for member states under the mineral oils structures directive—92/81/EEC.

The Council discussed its remit from the European Council to consider further the financing of trans-European networks. Financing will be on the basis of private sector finance supplemented by funds from within the expenditure ceilings agreed at Edinburgh and loans and guarantees from the European investment bank—EIB—and the European investment fund. It was agreed that there would be further discussions between the presidency, EIB and the Commission in advance of discussion in the Council during the Greek presidency on whether there was a need for any additional sources of finance.

There was some discussion of the Commission's proposal for interest rate subsidies on EIB lending to small and medium-sized enterprises under the Edinburgh lending facility. The presidency stressed the importance of reaching agreement on the text by the end of the year in line with the conclusions of the European Council.

There was also discussion of the Commission's proposals for the harmonised treatment of withholding tax on savings. I reiterated the United Kingdom's objections to the proposal but agreed that work should continue within the Commission and at official level.

The presidency heard a statement from the Commission on its proposal for a directive on the taxation of interest and royalties which, in broad terms, would remove source country taxation of cross-border interest and royalty payments between companies. The Commission hopes that work will continue at official level with a view to a further discussion in the Council in the new year.

The Council agreed in principle a Commission proposal for balance of payments support for Moldova. The Council emphasised that its actions did not constitute a precedent and would be funded within the existing budgetary ceilings for assistance.

There was little substantive discussion on the Commission's proposal for a carbon/energy tax and the matter was referred back for further consideration at official level. I made it clear that there is no need for further environmental taxes in the United Kingdom to meet our commitments under the Rio convention, and that we were opposed to an EC-wide carbon/energy tax.

ECOFIN Ministers and their EFTA counterparts met to discuss the economic situation against the background of the broad economic policy guidelines and the European Council discussion on growth, competitiveness and employment. There was general agreement on the importance of economic co-operation in Europe.

The Council took no formal votes.

WALES

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

Mr. Redwood: The cost of providing a car service for Ministers in the 1990-91 financial year was £143,000; four official vehicles were involved, including two based in Cardiff. The Welsh Office has no armoured Daimlers, and no car with a cost price of more than £25,000 contrary to some recent press comment.

Lamb Exports

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the value of Welsh lamb exports in each of the past five years; and what plans he has for initiatives to improve export levels in coming years.

Mr. Redwood: Exports of Welsh lamb to Europe in recent years have been as follows:

	£ million
1989	33
1990	35
1991	45
1992	75
1993	95

The 1989 and 1990 figures are estimated; that for 1993 is a forecast.

Welsh Food Promotions Ltd. and its associated body, Welsh Lamb Enterprise, are working closely and successfully with Food From Britain in promoting exports of lamb. New market opportunities are being identified and exploited vigorously. I myself help promote Welsh lamb and other Welsh foods whenever opportunity presents itself.

Severn Bridge (Charges)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding the effect of current Severn bridge toll charges and practices on tourism in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Six representations have been received regarding the effect of current Severn bridge toll charges and practices on tourism in Wales.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set up a unit within the Welsh Office to advise local authority joint committees on grant application for grants during the period of transition to the new unitary structure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No. Advice will be issued to transition committees at the appropriate time where necessary.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements he will make to encourage efficient adoption of information technology by the new unitary authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I shall be urging the new authorities to make the fullest possible use of existing IT facilities.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) when he will issue guidelines for the listing of assets of local authorities prior to their merger to the unitary councils and the residual authority;

(2) what representations he has received on the timing of the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering for unitary authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave him on 14 December.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what his Department's policy is regarding the use of executive search consultants in making appointments to public bodies; and if he will *(a)* list the appointments where such consultants have been used and *(b)* list the cost in each case since April 1992.

Mr. Redwood: Executive search consultants are considered only in cases where candidates for a public appointment are unlikely to be found from the Department's register of candidates or recommendations from other sources.

Since April 1992, consultants have not been used in making public appointments. Some of the bodies themselves do use search consultants for appointments within their powers.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which of the appointments made to public bodies by his Department since April 1992 have been advertised.

Mr. Redwood: Since 1992, I have advertised the chairmanship of the Welsh Development Agency and the Cardiff bay barrage independent groundwater complaints administrator. It is my policy to advertise by press release and/or paid advertisement the important posts available.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what are the minimum and maximum numbers of possible board members of *(a)* the further education funding council and *(b)* the higher education funding council; what guidelines he has issued concerning the composition of these boards; and what specific guidance has been given on how many board members should be (i) from ethnic minorities, (ii) women, (iii) from the local business sector, (iv) from local authorities and (v) from trade unions;

(2) what criteria are used in the selection of the chair and the executive members of *(a)* the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales; *(b)* the Further Education Funding Council for Wales and *(c)* Housing for Wales, in respect of relevant experience and qualifications; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, the Further and Higher Education Funding Councils for Wales are required to have a minimum of eight and a maximum of 12 members. The Chairmen and members were appointed in accordance with the criteria set out in section 1 and section 62 respectively of the Act, which require members of the councils to have relevant experience in further and/or higher education or in the industrial, commercial and financial sectors or the professions.

In making the appointments to the board of Housing for Wales, I consider factors including the skills, experience and capabilities relevant to the successful conduct of this major public body.

Forestry Commission Woods

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all Forestry Commission woods in Montgomeryshire; what plans he has to sell off any of these woods under the current disposals programme; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Forestry Commission is preparing such a list which will also show those woods which are currently on the market, and I shall send a copy to the hon. and learned Gentleman as soon as possible. I shall also arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the date of expiry of the initial five year experimental phase of the environmentally sensitive area scheme in Wales; when he expects the new environmentally sensitive area agreement to be made available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The first management agreement signed under the Environmentally Sensitive areas (Cambrian Mountains) Designation Order 1986 expired on 18 June 1992. A revised scheme, under the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (Cambrian Mountains) Designation (Amendment) Order 1992, came into force on 30 June 1992.

Sheep Annual Premium

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many sheep farmers in Wales have not yet received their sheep annual premium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Around 4,000 of the 17,445 valid claims received remain to be paid; a further 1,000 will be paid out shortly. The remaining claims are being given priority.

Press Releases

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many press releases his Department has issued in each year since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: My Department issued press releases for the Welsh Office and on behalf of other Government Departments as follows:

Year	*Welsh Office*	*Other departments*	*Total*
[1]1979	—	—	197
1980	—	—	440
1981	—	—	484
1982	742	292	1,034
1983	847	253	1,100
1984	916	187	1,103
1985	878	420	1,298
1986	814	470	1,284
1987	779	564	1,343

Year	*Welsh Office*	*Other departments*	*Total*
1988	960	558	1,518
1989	815	511	1,326
1990	881	397	1,278
1991	1,245	329	1,574
1992	1,088	256	1,344
1993	1,039	146	1,185

[1] Last seven months.

Records have not been kept of the split between press releases issued for the Welsh Office and for other departments for the years 1979, 1980 and 1981.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what the cost of advertising by his Department has been for each year since 1979 and for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Redwood: Welsh Office advertising expenditure for each year since 1979 is as follows:

Year	*£000*
1979-80	61
1980-81	62
1981-82	100
1982-83	99
1983-84	108
1984-85	66
1985-86	31
1986-87	76
1987-88	230
1988-89	174
1989-90	411
1990-91	288
1991-92	349
1992-93	427

The records which my Department keeps and those of the Central Office of Information, which buys Government advertising, shows payments for invoices received rather than the value of actual advertising for each month. Costs are also monitored on a campaign by campaign basis. Shown is a table of monthly payments on that basis:

Total monthly expenditure for advertising November 1992 to November 1993

Month	*£*
1992	
November	969
December	30,197
1993	
January	17,003
February	9,985
March	190,625
April	0
May	1,850
June	0
July	17,738
August	24,076
September	38,200
October	55,749
November	59,408

Administration

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure by his Department on administration in 1992-93; what is the estimated outturn for expenditure by his Department on administration for 1993-94 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms in 1992-93 prices; and what is his estimate for expenditure on administration by his Department for 1994-95 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1992-93 prices.

Mr. Redwood: The final outturn for the recurrent costs of running the Department in 1992-93 was £60·6 million. The estimated outturn for 1993-94 is £66·8 million in cash terms and £64·7 million in 1992-93 prices. The Department's planned running costs expenditure for 1994-95 will be published in the departmental report due for publication in February. The 1993-94 figures include superannuation, but those for 1992-93 do not; so they do not represent a true figure for the increase.

Health Services

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will accelerate the fusion of health authorities and family health service authorities in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health announced on 21 October that enabling legislation would be introduced. Authorities are already working closely together and are establishing joint management structures.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has of the income generated by private medical practice within each of the area health authorities in the years 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The amount of income from private medical practice generated within the area of each health authority in Wales in the financial years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 was as follows:

£ thousands

District	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Clwyd	528	593	639
East Dyfed	256	246	210
Gwent	62	167	201
Gwynedd	258	269	180
Mid Glamorgan	145	228	276
Pembrokeshire	130	133	155
Powys	—	—	2
South Glamorgan	94	142	189
West Glamorgan	221	264	300

Notes:

1. Consists of private in-patients (Section 65), private non-resident patients (Section 66) and accommodation and services provided under Section 58 of the National Health Service Act 1977.
2. Data for Pembrokeshire in 1992-93 relates to income received by the Pembrokeshire National Health Service Trust.

Source: Health Authorities' and Pembrokeshire National Health Service Trust annual accounts.

Press Officers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many press officers his Department has employed in each year since 1983.

Mr. Redwood: The numbers are as follows:

Year	Press officers
1983	8
1984	9
1985	9
1986	9
1987	9
1988	8
1989	8
1990	8
1991	8
1992	8
1993	8

Green Belts

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will announce his decision on green belts and green barriers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Assembly of Welsh Counties submitted its advice on strategic planning guidance in Wales, which includes its consideration of the green belt question in late July this year. My right hon. Friend is currently considering that advice.

Business Advice

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he intends to establish business centres offering easy access to business advice and support.

Mr. Redwood: Yes. I intend early next year to publish a prospectus inviting public and private sector organisations to make proposals for the formation of business centres. These will provide single points of access to advice and guidance for businesses and will have strong business leadership. I will approve a centre only if it reduces the overlap which currently exists. I will expect high-quality standards. They will provide services themselves, but will also be required to recognise the very substantial contribution that accountants, solicitors and others in the private sector make to the growth of local firms. The prospectus will be a challenge. I want to see imaginative responses.

Publicity Expenditure

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the out-turn figures for publicity expenditure for the year 1992-93, the estimated out-turn for publicity expenditure for 1993-94, sub-divided by television, press and other categories; and if he will make a statement concerning proposals for publicity expenditure in the next financial year.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* Publicity expenditure in 1992-93 and for the first seven months of 1993-94 is as follows:

	Television £000	*Press £000*	*Other £000*
1992-93	77	350	1,547
1993-94	—	[1]206	[1]653

[1] Provisional out-turn.

A reliable estimate of expenditure for the remainder of 1993-94 is not available at present. My Department will shortly be carrying out an annual review of publicity expenditure plans for the remainder of 1993-94 and I will write to the hon. Member when the information is available in the new year.

I aim to keep TV advertising to a minimum and then only for public information on items such as road safety and health.

EMPLOYMENT

Disabled Employees (Quotas)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list *(a)* the Government Departments, *(b)* next steps agencies and *(c)* public bodies which have been issued with certificates exempting them from fulfilling quota obligations on the employment of disabled people in each of the last three years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It has been the policy of successive Governments to treat as confidential information about the issue of permits under the quota scheme to individual employers and not to disclose it without their permission. Government Departments and agencies are not legally bound by quota legislation and do not have to apply for permits.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those employers currently utilising his Department's two-tick logo denoting good practice in the employment of disabled people.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Dafydd Wigley, dated 16 December 1993:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question requesting a list of those employers currently utilising the disability symbol (the "two-ticks logo") denoting good practice in the employment of disabled people.

Unfortunately I am unable to enclose a full national list with this reply. As you may know, the disability symbol was first introduced in 1990. It was reviewed towards the end of 1992 and, in order to clarify its meaning and improve its impact, we have introduced changes to the initiative which came into effect on 1 June this year. We now require employers using the symbol to make five specific commitments to good practice in the areas of recruiting, consulting and retaining disabled people, developing disability awareness and reviewing the effectiveness of the commitments in the organisation.

These changes have meant that the earlier symbol users needed to re-examine their practices and, in some cases, to introduce changes before confirming whether or not they would continue to use the symbol. My field disability service has been working to contact all symbol users, discuss the new commitments and confirm which employers would continue under the new arrangements. Former symbol users not able to make the commitments have been asked to cease using the symbol.

Although we have recently compiled a draft list of symbol users throughout the country, we are not yet satisfied that old users of the symbol who are not continuing as symbol users have been fully weeded out. It is, of course, very important that we are able to provide a full and accurate list of organisations using the symbol and we are reluctant to publish it until we have had a further opportunity to check its accuracy.

The checking process is now in hand and I would hope to write to you again with a full national list as soon as it is practicable. In the meantime, I enclose for your information a checked list of large company symbol users with whom our Major Organisations Development Unit has been working closely.

Employing people with a disability

The disability symbol

Companies using the symbol
- Anglia Television
- B and Q
- Bank of England
- Bank of Scotland
- Barclays Bank
- The Body Shop
- Boots (dealt with by Nottinghamshire PACT)
- British Nuclear Fuels
- Central TV
- Channel 4
- Ford Motor Company
- Forte plc
- George Wimpey
- Granada Television
- Halifax Building Society
- IBM
- Iceland
- John Menzies
- Lloyds Bank
- London Weekend Television
- Midland Bank
- National Westminster Bank
- Nationwide Building Society
- Pearl Assurance
- Pizza Hut
- Post Office Corporation
- Rank Organisation
- Royal Bank of Scotland
- Safeways
- Sainsburys
- Tesco
- Woolwich Building Society

Note:—The above list includes symbol users among the major companies dealt with by the Employment Service Major Organisations Development Unit. It does not constitute a full national list of symbol users. (Correct at 15 December 1993).

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the total number of certificates issued to companies in each year since 1979 allowing exemptions from quota obligations for the employment of disabled people.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Dafydd Wigley, dated 16 December 1993:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question about how many certificates allowing exemptions from quota obligations for the employment of disabled people have been issued to companies in each year since 1979.

It may help if I briefly explain employers' duties and obligations under the provisions of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944.

The Act places a duty on employers who have twenty or more workers to employ a quota of registered disabled people. It is not an offence to be below Quota. However, when in this situation, an employer has a further duty under the Act to engage suitable registered disabled people if any are available when vacancies arise. An employer who is below Quota must not engage anyone other than registered disabled person without first obtaining a permit to do so, and must not discharge a registered disabled person without reasonable cause.

Permits may be issued to authorise the engagement of one or more people for specific vacancies. However the majority of employers who are granted permits receive bulk permits. These authorise the engagement of a specified number of people who are not registered as disabled, during a period of up to six months. Bulk permits do not grant exemption from employers' duties and obligations under the Act.

We do not collect figures centrally on the numbers of permits issued overall. I am, therefore, unable to provide the precise information you asked for. However, I am able to provide figures on the numbers of employers that were below Quota on 1 June each year from 1979 onwards, who had been issued with permits at some stage in the previous 12 months. This information is in the attached table.

I hope this is helpful.

Number of employers below quota on 1 June issued with permits in the previous 12 months

Year	*Numbers*
1979	22,412
1980	22,001
1981	21,183
1982	19,796
1983	18,536
1984	18,769
1985	18,681
1986	18,840
1987	18,577
1988	18,594
1989	18,530
1990	18,036
1991	17,649
1992	15,871
1993	16,684

Access to Work Scheme

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the result of research carried out by his Department on the attitude of disabled employees and prospective employees upon the introduction of employers' contributions under the access to work proposals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Disabled people's organisations have generally welcomed the new forms of help to overcome barriers to work which the employer contributions under access to work will make possible. We are taking account of the views expressed by their organisations about the employer contribution in making our final decisions about the scheme.

Business Start-up Scheme

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of entrants to the business start-up scheme who were receiving income support immediately previous to entry remained in business for at least 18 months.

Miss Widdecombe: Information on the number of business start-up scheme—BSUS—participants receiving income support prior to entry is not routinely collected; nor has information in this form been collected through recent surveys. A recent follow-up survey of BSUS participants identified those who were unemployed and claiming any State benefit prior to entry on BSUS. Sixty-nine per cent. of these survived in business for at least 18 months.

Enterprise Allowance

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of those taking up enterprise allowance in 1992-93 were immediately prior to their taking up this scheme in receipt of income support or unemployment benefit.

Miss Widdecombe: The business start-up scheme replaced the enterprise allowance scheme in April 1991. Information about those who start on the scheme is collected from special surveys. The latest survey covers those who started in May 1991. From the survey, it is estimated that 66 per cent. of those who started in May 1991 were unemployed and claiming benefit prior to starting the scheme.

Workstart

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have taken up places on the workstart pilot schemes in *(a)* south London, *(b)* Tyneside and *(c)* east Kent since last March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon and learned Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) on 7 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *210-11.*

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what his Department's policy is regarding the use of executive search consultants in making appointments to public bodies; and if he will *(a)* list the appointments where such consultants have been used and *(b)* list the cost in each case since April 1992.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The use of executive search consultants is one of the options which the Employment Department considers in making appointments to public bodies.

Since April 1992, the following appointments made using consultants and the fees paid excluding VAT are as follows:

Chairman of the Health and Safety Commission,
appointed from 1 October 1993. Fees—£25,000.

Chief Executive of Investors in People UK,
appointed from 1 December 1993. Fees—£15,000.

Finance Director of Remploy Ltd.,
appointed from 1 April 1992. Fees—£18,085.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which of the appointments made to public bodies by his Department since April 1992 have been advertised.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The following five appointments to public bodies sponsored by the Employment Department have been advertised since April 1992:

Chairman of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS);
Chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission;
Chairman of the Health and Safety Commission;
Chief Executive of Investors in People UK;
Finance Director of Remploy Ltd.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the minimum and maximum numbers of possible board members of training and enterprise councils; what guidelines he has issued concerning the composition of these boards; and what specific guidance has been given on how many board members should be (i) from ethnic minorities, (ii) women, (iii) from the local business sector, (iv) from local authorities and (v) from trade unions.

Miss Widdecombe: A training and enterprise council board must have at least nine directors and not more than 15, excluding the chief executive. The TEC operating agreement sets out the broad framework for TEC boards and specifies that two thirds of the directors must come from the private sector. The remaining third may be drawn from education, economic development, trade unions, voluntary organisations and the public sector. More generally, the Department expects a TEC board to reflect the composition of the local area it serves.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of chairpersons and board members of training and enterprise councils in England and Wales.

Miss Widdecombe: The total number of board members for the 75 training and enterprise councils for England is 1,015—75 of whom are chairmen. Information for the TECs in Wales is for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales to reply.

Joblink Enterprise Ltd.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what is the average cost to public funds of a Joblink Enterprise Ltd. job plan class; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the total amount of funding the Government have committed to Joblink Enterprise Ltd. since Joblink Enterprise's inception; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Alex Carlile, dated 16 December 1993:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Questions about Joblink Enterprise Ltd and their involvement in the delivery of programmes for unemployed people and in particular Jobplan Workshops.

It may be helpful if I explain that the Employment Service (ES) contracts for a range of programmes to help unemployed people back to work. Contracts are normally awarded as a result of competitive tendering and successful organisations come from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

You ask for information about one provider, Joblink Enterprise Ltd who currently hold a number of contracts to deliver ES programmes including Jobplan workshops. Without the permission of the organisation in question, it would, I believe, be inappropriate to disclose information about the average cost of these contracts not least because as it may give other organisations an unfair advantage when future tenders are invited. I can tell you, however, that the average costs nationally of Jobplan workshops and Restart Courses are £1,067 and £708 per course excluding VAT, respectively.

You also ask what is the total value of contracts placed with Joblink Enterprise. Between 1 July 1992 and 14 December 1993 we have paid them a total of £2,501,706 for the delivery of our programmes.

Vocational training is delivered through the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) in England and Wales and Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) in Scotland. Contracts for the delivery of training are awarded by the individual TECs and LECs.

I have been told by Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate (TEED) of the Employment Department that there is no record of any training contracts between any TEC/LEC and Joblink Enterprise Ltd.

I hope this is helpful.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what the cost of advertising by his Department has been for each year since 1979 and for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is set out in the table:

Cost of Advertising since 1979 and monthly over last 12 months

	£
1979-80	70,000
1980-81	320,000
1981-82	400,000
1982-83	360,000
1983-84	500,000
1984-85	320,000
1985-86	1,220,000
1986-87	12,300,000
1987-88	4,100,000
1988-89	4,400,000
1989-90	1,800,000
1990-91	500,000
1991-92	12,600,000
1992-93	4,300,000
Last 12 months	
December 1992	1,555,460
January 1993	920,006
February 1993	34,440
March 1993	1,046,965
April 1993	Nil
May 1993	Nil
June 1993	155,329
July 1993	Nil
August 1993	928,438
September 1993	675,035
October 1993	15,586
November 1993	1,685,833

Press Releases

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many press releases his Department has issued in each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of press notices issued by the Employment Department in each year since 1979 is as follows:

	Number
1979	365
1980	304
1981	313
1982	297
1983	297
1984	245
1985	317
1986	343
1987	301
1988	301
1989	341
1990	427
1991	418
1992	302
[1]1993	249

[1] To date.

Administration

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total expenditure by his Department on administration in 1992-93; what is the estimated outturn for expenditure by his Department on administration for 1993-94 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms in, 1992-93 prices; and what is his estimate for expenditure on administration by his Department for 1994-95 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1992-93 prices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The following figures show the Employment Department's spend for 1992-93 and expenditure plans for 1993-94 and 1994-95.

(i) The final outturn for the recurrent costs of the Department for 1992-93 is £1·568 million.

(ii) The running costs limit for 1993-94 is £1·672 million. An estimated outturn will be published in the spring in the 1994 departmental report and the unified Budget supplement.

(iii) The Department's planned running costs expenditure for 1994-95 will be available in the unified Budget supplement and the departmental report to be published in the spring.

The gross domestic product deflators required to calculate real terms figures are shown on page 121 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95", HC 31, copies of which are available in the Library.

Subsidiarity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the European Community directives which the Government are considering submitting for abolition, modification or replacement on grounds of subsidiarity.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him today by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what costs have so far been incurred by the Health and Safety Executive in the course of its pay and grading review, including both the costs of external consultants and in-house staff.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Executive will assume responsibility for delegated pay bargaining on 1 April 1994. The cost incurred so far is £4,000 for computer software. Similar expenditure is anticipated in 1994. There are no additional staff costs.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what areas the Health and Safety Executive is considering for the introduction of increased, or new, charges to industry.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Commission has under review the scope for introducing new charges for performance by the Health and Safety Executive—HSE—of statutory functions and the provision of facilities and services. Existing charges are reviewed annually to ensure HSE's costs in discharging the functions or providing the facilities or services are fully recovered.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the Health and Safety Executive's grant-in-aid was spent in 1992-93 on *(a)* salaries, *(b)* travel and subsistence, *(c)* accommodation, *(d)* extra-mural contracts and *(e)* training.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Executive's expenditure expressed as percentage of the grant-in-aid was:

	Per cent.
(a) Salaries	65·6
(b) Travel and Subsistence	5·7
(c) Accommodation	11·3
(d) Extra-Mural Research and Testing Contracts	16·6
(e) Training	2·6

The Health and Safety Commission/Executive's total expenditure in 1992-93 was £211·8 million of which £171·3 million was funded by grant-in-aid.

Construction Sites (Electricity)

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations the Health and Safety Executive has received from the European Commission in respect of the use of 110 volt equipment on construction sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Earlier this year, European Commission officials responsible for ensuring free trade in electrical equipment challenged the Health and Safety Executive—HSE—to justify its consistent encouragement of the use of 110 volt as opposed to 240 volt electrical equipment on construction sites and similar outdoor worksites.

The European Commission has not asked that 110 volt electrical equipment be banned from use on United Kingdom construction sites, only that HSE should cease to encourage the use of this equipment in preference to 240 volt.

Correspondence is continuing between the Commission and United Kingdom officials who are defending our position on electrical safety in high-risk sites of this type.

Bank Holidays

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of the early May day bank holiday in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mr. David Hunt: On 1 December 1992, the Government issued a consultation document on the future of the early May bank holiday in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

It is clear from the representations received by my Department that there is no clear consensus in favour of a move. While some favour permanently moving the holiday, businesses anticipate difficulties with such a change.

In light of its goal of reducing burdens on business, the Government have decided not to move the early May bank holiday from the first Monday in May on a permanent basis. However, for 1995 only, the holiday will be held in England, Wales and Northern Ireland on the second Monday in May, to link with events on and near VE day commemorating the 50th anniversary of the ending of the second world war. In Scotland the anniversary will be marked by an additional day's bank holiday, also on the second Monday in May and for 1995 only. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is making an announcement today on the commemorative arrangements for 1995.

International Labour Conference

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has for publishing the White Paper on the instruments adopted at the 79th session of the International Labour Conference 1992.

Mr. David Hunt: I have today published the White Paper entitled "International Labour Conference", Cm. 2433.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Non-departmental Public Bodies

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total budget for the non-departmental public bodies for *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94; and what is the planned budget for 1994-95.

Mr. Waldegrave: There is no overall budget for non-departmental public bodies—NDPBs—but the Government continue to keep the numbers and cost effectiveness of NDPBs under scrutiny. The total expenditure for NDPBs in 1992-93 is shown in "Public Bodies 1993", published today.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many *(a)* women and *(b)* members of ethnic minorities were included on both the public appointments unit central list and reserve list for each year since its formation.

Mr. David Davis: Information about the number of women on the public appointments unit's list is available only from 1988:

Public Appointments Unit's list as at 1 April

	Women	*Per cent.*	*Total*
1988	1,573	27·5	5,721
1989	1,769	30	5,873
1990	1,807	30·5	5,926
1991	1,823	32	5,699
1992	1,868	33	5,671
1993	1,712	36·3	4,713

Information about the number of members of the ethnic minorities on the public appointments unit's list is not available for each year since the unit's formation. Currently, 138 individuals on the list are known to be members of the ethnic minority communities. However, since the unit only began inviting candidates to state their ethnic origin in mid-1990 this is likely to be an incomplete assessment.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish a table showing the numbers of people from each region held on both the public appointments unit central and reserve lists.

Mr. David Davis: The information requested is as follows:

Number of people on the Public Appointments Unit list

Region	*Number*
East Anglia	653
East Midlands	233
West Midlands	290

Region	*Number*
South East	3,339
Northern	155
North West	307
South West	350
Yorkshire and Humberside	258
Northern Ireland[3]	11
Scotland[3]	157
Wales[3]	107
Elsewhere	[1]42
TOTAL	[2]5,902

[1] Individuals in this category ar those who are currently living or working overseas.

[2] This figure is higher than the total number of people currently on the Public Appointment Unit's list (4,982 at 1 December 1993) as individuals can be counted as being in more than one region if they live in one area and work in another, or if they have homes in different areas.

[3] Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland also maintain their own central lists.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish a table showing for both the public appointments unit central and reserve lists for each year since its formation, how many of the people on the lists were aged *(a)* under 30, *(b)* 30 to 44, *(c)* 45 to 54 and *(d)* over 55 years.

Mr. David Davis: The information cannot be given in the form requested. The number of people on the public appointments unit's list by age group is available only from 1988 onwards:

Breakdown of public appointments unit's list by age as at 1 April

Age	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Under 40	304	299	279	260	249	238
41 to 50	1,108	1,200	1,201	1,180	1,172	1,124
51 to 60	2,290	2,329	2,314	2,282	2,259	2,069
61 and over	2,009	2,035	2,121	1,967	1,982	1,266
Not known	10	10	11	10	9	16
Total	5,721	5,873	5,926	5,699	5,671	4,713

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many non-departmental public bodies are currently in existence; and when the annual list of such bodies will be published.

Mr. David Davis: On 1 April 1993, there were 358 executive bodies, 11 fewer than in 1992; 829 advisory bodies, 17 less than in 1992; 68 tribunals, two more than in 1992; and 134 boards of visitors, three more than in 1992. In total there were 1,389 non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs)—a fall of 23 over 1992. Details can be found in "Public Bodies 1993" published today. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

The publication also includes details of the numbers of appointments to boards and tribunals which are held by women and by members of the ethnic minorities. The figures show that at 1 September 1993, 28 per cent. of such appointments were held by women, and that 2·3 per cent. of such appointments were held by members of the ethnic minorities. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster gave further details in his answers to two questions from my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) on 10 December, at column *378*.

Press Releases

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many press releases his Department has issued in each year since 1979.

Mr. David Davis: My Department issued 190 press releases up to 13 December this year. In the 12 months to 31 December 1992, we issued 113 releases. The Department did not exist in a comparable form before 1992 and earlier figures are not therefore available.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what the cost of advertising by his Department has been for each year since 1979 and for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. David Davis: Expenditure by the Office of Public Service and Science on advertising was £19,304 in 1991-92 and £608,957 in 1992-93. The figure for 1992-93 includes £589,838 in connection with the citizens charter. Figures for earlier years are not available in the form requested.

The costs of advertising by the OPSS, including the citizens charter, in each of the last 12 months was as follows:

	£
December 1992	70,048
January 1993	3,677
February 1993	47,509
March 1993	5,376
April 1993	4,089
May 1993	22,255
June 1993	94,920
July 1993	35,878
August 1993	11,772
September 1993	47,179
October 1993	231,589
November 1993	58,199

Equal Opportunities

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the progress towards achieving equality of opportunity for women staff in the civil service.

Mr. David Davis: In the past year, steady progress has been made. Women now represent 51·2 per cent. of staff in the non-industrial home civil service. There are more women than ever before in the management grades, with improved representation in the senior grades. There is an increasing use of flexible working patterns by women and men in the civil service and further development of childcare facilities. A report on the progress made during 1992-93 towards achieving equality of opportunity for women in the civil service has been published today. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Health and Social Services

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average annual cost for each health and social services board of employing *(a)* medical staff, *(b)* nursing and midwifery staff, *(c)* managerial staff and *(d)* administrative and clerical staff since 1989.

Mr. Ancram: The total salary costs for each health and social services board are as follows:

	1989-90	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Northern board				
Medical	8,210,442	9,288,732	10,786,951	12,381,748
Nursing and midwifery	34,387,647	36,955,307	40,705,840	43,072,674
Managerial	1,784,946	2,614,931	3,606,049	4,120,506
Administrative and clerical	8,623,084	10,094,044	11,988,912	13,437,300
Southern board				
Medical	7,575,299	8,586,603	9,620,066	11,017,376
Nursing and midwifery	33,742,156	35,761,324	39,162,441	42,337,341
Managerial	1,653,891	2,394,217	3,277,790	3,824,360
Administrative and clerical	6,666,472	7,566,225	8,515,539	9,700,053
Eastern board				
Medical	35,894,014	38,970,147	43,475,622	48,752,455
Nursing and midwifery	101,627,840	107,421,303	118,280,999	124,805,719
Managerial	4,387,540	7,063,168	10,482,805	11,692,542
Administrative and clerical	25,243,937	28,616,370	32,697,561	35,914,746
Western board				
Medical	7,343,414	8,124,386	9,260,413	10,546,166
Nursing and midwifery	34,521,277	37,242,366	40,937,151	43,719,361
Managerial	1,197,128	1,738,941	2,404,004	3,104,756
Administrative and clerical	6,478,957	7,456,332	8,560,506	9,435,497

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list, for each health and social services board, the number of *(a)* administrative and clerical staff, by grade, and *(b)* managerial staff by grade since 1989.

Mr. Ancram: The information in the format requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, the table shows the combined managerial, administrative and clerical staff levels in the four boards since 1989.

Northern Ireland Administrative and Clerical Staff at 30 September

	EHSSB		*NHSSB*		*SHSSB*		*WHSSB*		*Total*	
Year	*Number*	*WTE*[1]	*Number*	*WTE*[1]	*Number*	*WTE*[1]	*Number*	*WTE*[1]	*Number*	*WTE*[1]
1989	3,411	3,018·15	1,227	1,075·03	993	836·22	867	784·09	6,438	5,713·49
1990	3,643	3,250·08	1,327	1,169·40	1,012	888·93	930	859·89	6,912	6,168·30
1991	3,965	3,554·54	1,488	1,325·39	1,118	966·92	999	912·00	7,570	6,758·85
1992	4,174	3,719·56	1,565	1,395·21	1,162	1,044·18	1,099	1,006·00	8,000	7,164·95
1993	4,064	3,621·47	1,680	1,489·93	1,196	1,060·93	1,127	1,017·82	8,067	7,190·15

[1] WTE = Whole Time Equivalent.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list, for each health and social services board, the number of *(a)* medical staff by grade and *(b)* nursing and midwifery staff since 1989.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is shown in the tables.

Medical staff by board by grade
(headcount)

	30 September 1989	*30 September 1990*	*30 September 1991*	*30 September 1992*
Eastern board				
Consultants	379	389	400	402
Associate specialists	38	38	28	28
Senior registrars	100	102	107	117
Registrars	104	107	101	97
Senior house officers	303	310	280	326
Pre-reg house officers	106	102	104	102
TOTAL	1,030	1,048	1,020	1,072

	30 September 1989	30 September 1990	30 September 1991	30 September 1992
Northern board				
Consultants	75	76	81	86
Associate specialists	17	16	11	11
Senior registrars	6	5	5	7
Registrars	15	15	12	9
Senior house officers	84	88	104	108
Pre-reg house officers	19	20	18	18
TOTAL	216	220	231	239
Southern board				
Consultants	68	69	70	75
Associate specialists	10	11	7	8
Senior registrars	6	4	4	5
Registrars	11	8	10	10
Senior house officers	71	82	84	85
Pre-reg house officers	22	19	21	24
TOTAL	188	193	196	207
Western board				
Consultants	73	73	78	80
Associate specialists	8	8	5	5
Senior registrars	9	9	10	10
Registrars	10	9	14	15
Senior house officers	65	74	72	71
Pre-reg house officers	16	18	20	20
TOTAL	181	191	199	201

Northern Ireland nursing and midwifery staff

	EHSSB		NHSSB		SHSSB		WHSSB		Total	
Nurse Type	*Number*	*WTE*[1]	*Number*	*WTE*[1]	*Number*	*WTE*[1]	*Number*	*WTE*[1]	*Number*	*WTE*[1]
at 30 September 1989										
Trained	7,400	6,072·31	2,456	2,098·31	2,361	1,962·86	2,254	2,066·26	14,471	12,199·74
Student	1,782	1,777·00	279	279·00	291	290·00	370	365·00	2,722	2,711·00
Others	1,809	1,480·79	445	404·74	585	516·60	443	430·13	3,282	2,832·26
Total	10,991	9,330·10	3,180	2,782·05	3,237	2,769·46	3,067	2,861·39	20,475	17,743·00
at 30 September 1990										
Trained	7,358	5,998·35	2,466	2,114·27	2,399	1,952·78	2,312	2,093·04	14,535	12,158·44
Student	1,833	1,825·60	247	247·00	207	206·00	373	371·00	2,660	2,649·60
Others	1,942	1,591·51	435	392·37	612	520·44	461	442·87	3,450	2.947·19
Total	11,133	9,415·46	3,148	2,753·64	3,218	2,679·22	3,146	2,906·91	20,645	17,755·23
at 30 September 1991										
Trained	7,408	6,016·02	2,530	2,158·25	2,431	1,955·45	2,319	2 087·90	14,688	12,217·62
Student	1,415	1,410·60	150	150·00	138	138·00	353	352·00	2,056	2,050·60
Others	2,110	1,746·38	455	411·40	655	547·57	502	485·57	3,722	3,190·92
Total	10,933	9,173·00	3,135	2,719·65	3,224	2,641·02	3,174	2,925·47	20,466	17,459·14
at 30 September 1992										
Trained	7,286	5,858·66	2,561	2,151·51	2,498	2,000·72	2,357	2,087·65	14,702	12,098·54
Student	894	888·56	60	60·00	40	40·00	165	165·00	1,159	1,153·56
Others	2,166	1,783·14	467	411·61	688	562·50	548	516·97	3,869	3,274·22
Total	10,346	8,530·36	3,088	2,623·12	3,226	2,603·22	3,070	2,769·62	19,730	16,526·32
at 30 September 1993										
Trained	7,171	5,719·68	2,606	2,164·40	2,564	2,024·65	2,385	2,022·05	14,726	11,930·78
Student	313	307·80	6	6·00	2	2·00	37	36·00	358	351·80
Others	2,212	1,806·45	481	420·01	701	573·08	606	543·69	4,000	3,343·23
Total	9,696	7,833·93	3,093	2,590·41	3,267	2,599·72	3,028	2,601·74	19,084	15,625·80

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[1] WTE=Whole Time Equivalent.

Handicapped Children

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what provision currently exists in Northern Ireland for *(a)* children with learning difficulties and *(b)* children with cerebral palsy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: A wide range of services and facilities is available at special schools and special units throughout Northern Ireland for children with learning difficulties, including those with cerebral palsy and other motor disorders. Each child follows a learning programme which is individually tailored according to his or her needs (as specified in his or her statement of special educational needs), together with any necessary equipment and ancillary support.

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements are made to ensure that special advisers to Ministers in his Department do not have access to the kind of information, and are not involved in the type of business, that would be likely to create suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Care is taken to ensure that my special adviser does not have access to the kind of information likely to create suspicion of impropriety. He is not involved in evaluating tenders or letting contracts.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the name and job description of each special ministeral adviser employed in his Department showing any particular outputs for which each adviser is responsible.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Mr. Jonathon Caine is my special adviser. His role is to provide political advice on a range of matters concerning Northern Ireland.

School Bus Service

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the capacity of the school bus provided by Ulsterbus for the morning journey from Castlereagh road to Newtownbreda high school; how many children travel each morning in this bus; whether the bus is insured for this level of service; and if he will make a statement about the safety of pupils on this bus.

Mr. Ancram: The maximum seating and standing capacity on buses is governed by the Public Services Vehicles Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1985.

There are two 53-seater buses and one 49-seater bus provided by Ulsterbus for the morning journey from Castlereagh to Newtonbreda high school and other schools and colleges in the area; each of these buses may also carry up to 22 standing passengers. A recent survey by Ulsterbus showed that the maximum number of passengers carried on each bus at any time on their journey averaged 62. Ulsterbus is insured for this level of service.

Prison Officers (Assaults)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many assaults have been made on prison officers in each Northern Ireland prison in each of the last 24 months; how many prison officers required hospital treatment in each month; and how many assaults in each month were made by *(a)* loyalist prisoners, *(b)* republican prisoners and *(c)* other prisoners.

Sir John Wheeler: The table shows the number of prison officers physically assaulted in Northern Ireland prisons in each of the last 24 months resulting in an absence from duty on medical grounds. Details of officers requiring hospital treatment, and of the affiliation of prisoners who carried out assaults, are not held centrally but will be made available by the end of January.

Month/Year	*Belfast*	*Maze*	*Maghaberry*	*Magilligan*	*YOC*	*Monthly total*
December 1991	17	1	nil	nil	3	21
January 1992	1	2	1	1	nil	5
February 1992	1	nil	nil	2	1	4
March 1992	6	1	17	5	1	30
April 1992	3	1	2	nil	nil	6
May 1992	1	1	nil	3	2	7
June 1992	5	2	4	nil	nil	11
July 1992	12	1	1	1	nil	15
August 1992	4	nil	3	1	1	9
September 1992	16	1	1	nil	nil	18
October 1992	3	1	1	3	nil	8
November 1992	8	nil	3	nil	nil	11
December 1992	3	2	3	nil	nil	8
January 1993	4	nil	1	1	nil	6
February 1993	nil	2	1	1	1	5
March 1993	2	4	1	1	1	9
April 1993	11	8	1	1	1	22
May 1993	5	2	1	2	nil	10
June 1993	2	3	2	nil	nil	7
July 1993	2	16	4	nil	nil	22
August 1993	11	6	4	nil	nil	21
September 1993	4	3	3	nil	nil	10
October 1993	1	nil	2	2	nil	5
November 1993	nil	8	nil	nil	nil	8
TOTALS	122	65	56	24	11	
GRAND TOTAL						278

Note: The figures show the number of staff absent from duty on medical grounds due to physical assault by prisoners. There may be other staff who although assaulted were not injured and did not go off duty on sick leave.

School Performance Data

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much his Department spent on the collection and publication of school performance data; if he has any plans to extend the scope of any future data to include vocational qualifications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Expenditure on the publication of information about school performance in the 1991-92 school year was in the region of £32,000. Information to be published about school performance in the 1992-93 school year and subsequent years will include data about performance in general national vocational qualifications at intermediate and advanced level and in a range of other vocational qualifications.

Housing Executive

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what criteria are used in the selection of the chair and the executive members of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, in respect of relevant experience and qualifications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The board of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive consists of 10 members, including a chairman and vice-chairman. Of these, three must be members nominated by the Northern Ireland Housing Council (a statutory advisory body made up of one representative from each of the 26 local councils). In considering appointments to the board of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive I have a responsibility to ensure that, taken as a whole, the board is balanced and reflects a mix of experience, business background and expertise to enable it to achieve the objectives for which it has been established. The work of the board, including the development of a more customer-orientated approach and appropriate business practices, means that board membership should include those with an interest in housing or related public sector policies and relevant professional, managerial and commercial experience.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what his Department's policy is regarding the use of executive search consultants in making appointments to public bodies; and if he will *(a)* list the appointments where such consultants have been used and *(b)* list the cost in each case since April 1992.

Sir John Wheeler: The Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments may, in accordance with paragraphs 5.20 to 5.25 of the guide on public appointments procedures, use executive search consultants when making appointments to public bodies. To date, however, search consultants have not been used.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which of the appointments made to public bodies by his Department since April 1992 have been advertised.

Sir John Wheeler: The following appointments have been advertised:

Chief Commissioner of the Planning Appeals Commission.
Principal Professional Commissioner of the Planning Appeals Commission.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing, at 1992-93 prices, the gross public spending for each year since 1990-91 and the projected expenditure for each year to 1995-96 for each executive non-departmental public body sponsored by his Department, as listed in "Public Bodies 1992".

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer 15 December 1993]:* Gross public spending for each executive non-departmental public body from 1990-91 to 1992-93 and the estimated outturn for 1993-94 at 1992-93 prices is shown in the table.

My right hon. and learned Friend recently announced allocations to Northern Ireland programmes for the years 1994-95 to 1996-97. Allocations to individual public non-departmental bodies will be decided over the next few months.

(thousands)

	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*Estimated outturn 1993-94*
Public Service Training Council	325	307	250	302
National Board for Nursing, Midwifery, Health Visiting for Northern Ireland	9,830	10,002	10,226	9,870
Northern Ireland Council for Post Graduate Medical Education	685	808	840	859
Mental Health Commission for Northern Ireland	295	288	281	292
Agricultural Research Institute for Northern Ireland	2,059	2,185	2,263	2,388
Agricultural Wages Board	3	4	4	4
Foyle Fisheries Commission	125	123	122	125
Northern Ireland Fisheries Harbour Authority	784	767	761	780
Arts Council for Northern Ireland	5,883	6,428	6,286	5,926
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	846	877	923	962
Education and Library Boards (ELBs)	416,509	878,876	918,337	902,221
Northern Ireland Schools Examinations and Assessment Council	1,818	2,625	3,617	4,736
Staff Commission for ELBs	182	159	176	178
Sports Council for Northern Ireland	1,883	1,904	1,970	1,887
Ulster Folk and Transport Museum	2,709	3,591	3,885	3,544
Ulster Museum	4,439	4,177	3,734	3,646
Youth Council for Northern Ireland	1,635	1,746	1,909	1,948
Enterprise Ulster	6,671	7,581	7,206	7,684
Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland	934	1,054	1,252	1,354
Fair Employment Commission for Northern Ireland	1,519	1,690	1,983	2,473
General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland	350	377	406	361

	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*Estimated outturn 1993-94*
Health and Safety Agency	146	166	173	157
Labour Relations Agency	1,157	1,259	1,323	1,386
Local Enterprise Development Unit	42,861	37,176	33,411	37,573
Northern Ireland Tourist Board	7,357	7,094	11,660	11,902
Ulster Sheltered Employment Ltd.	1,427	1,900	2,329	2,245
Wages Council Northern Ireland	4	5	8	7
Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company	23,213	22,880	22,288	22,584
Laganside Corporation	6,746	7,513	4,577	4,847
Northern Ireland Housing Executive	495,760	475,582	468,000	461,017
Fire Authority for Northern Ireland	40,080	39,675	40,609	41,513
Training Schools	9,063	10,081	11,062	12,022
Probation Board	7,738	8,594	9,494	9,764
Independent Commission for Police Complaints	532	622	644	693
Police Authority for Northern Ireland	471,284	522,936	566,442	592,878
Vaughan's Charity	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Pig Production Development Committee	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Livestock Marketing Commission for Northern Ireland	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Construction Industry Training Board	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Northern Ireland Consumer Committee for Electricity	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Northern Ireland Local Government Officers Superannuation Committee	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

Press Releases

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many press releases his Department has issued in each year since 1979.

Sir John Wheeler: The number of press releases issued since 1979 is as follows:

	Number
1979	1,444
1980	1,410
1981	1,436
1982	1,573
1983	1,719
1984	1,440
1985	1,460
1986	1,371
1987	1,252
1988	1,294
1989	1,063
1990	1,553
1991	1,294
1992	1,289
1993	1,370

Habitats and Species Directive

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will issue a consultation paper on the implementation of the EC habitats and species directive in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: The consultation paper on the implementation of the EC habitats and species directive in Northern Ireland was issued on 7 December 1993 and was circulated widely to interested bodies.

The paper largely mirrors proposals put forward in the Great Britain consultation document which was issued on 4 October 1993, but takes account of Northern Ireland's distinct legislative framework.

The closing date for responses to the paper is 21 January 1994.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much his Department spends annually on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising and *(c)* press advertising; and what were the corresponding figures for 1985 and 1979.

Sir John Wheeler: The information could be obtained in the form requested only at disproportionate cost. The total figure for spending on all advertising, and other promotional material for 1992-93 is £7,356,526. Of this sum £509,000 was used for security advertising, a breakdown of which is provided in the table.

The available corresponding figures for 1985-86 and 1979-80 are £3,916,824 and £468,972 respectively.

SCOTLAND

Caledonian Pine

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to maintain and extend the area covered by native Caledonian pine in the next 20 years, in response to *(a)* the EC habitats and species directive and *(b)* the biodiversity convention signed at the United Nations conference on environment and development.

Sir Hector Monro: The Government recognise Caledonian pine forest as a priority habitat type of European importance, and as a significant component of United Kingdom biodiversity in respect of its genetic, species and habitat values. We are fully committed to supporting the international initiatives referred to by my hon. Friend and have already introduced measures for the management and extension of the area covered by Caledonian pine in Scotland.

Grants are available to private woodland owners for the regeneration and extension of native pinewoods, and since 1989, the Forestry Commission has grant-aided the planting and regeneration of over 6,000 hectares of native pines and associated broadleaves. This has increased the native pinewood area by one half. Owners of native pinewoods are also eligible for management grants in return for maintaining their woods in a way that conserves their environmental value.

The Forestry Commission itself has a programme of enhancing the biodiversity value of the 3,000 hectares of native pinewoods in its care, and of doubling the area by the year 2000.

Youth Training

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many YTS or youth training places there were in *(a)* Dundee and *(b)* Scotland in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is given in the table:

Estimated population aged 16 and 17

	Dundee city district			*Scotland*		
	16	*17*	*16-17*	*16*	*17*	*16-17*
1988	2,511	2,692	5,203	76,813	81,292	158,105
1989	2,211	2,492	4,703	71,291	76,069	147,360
1990	2,088	2,215	4,303	66,248	70,849	137,097
1991	2,012	2,033	4,045	64,501	65,750	130,251
1992	1,978	2,048	4,026	63,397	64,338	127,735

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 1 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *639*, how many letters, cards and other representations he has received from people resident in Musselburgh supporting the case for Musselburgh to remain in East Lothian; and what support he has had for his proposal to detach Musselburgh from the East Lothian local authority area.

Mr. Stewart: Since publication of the White Paper "Shaping the Future—The New Councils" a total of 35 letters, all of which have supported the retention of Musselburgh within East Lothian, have been received from Musselburgh residents, businesses and other organisations. In addition a number of the 14,000 postcards received as part of the East Lothian "Standing Firm" campaign have been sent from people resident in Musselburgh.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will carry out an investigation into the offering of tracts of Forestry Commission land to various conservation bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: I refer the hon. Member to my letter to him of 16 November, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to ensure that the freedom to roam on any currently available Forestry Commission land will not be placed in jeopardy following the report of the forestry review group; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The remit of the forestry review group includes the request that it should make proposals for changes which would improve the effectiveness of the delivery of the Government's forestry policy objectives, having regard to the Government's other economic and environmental policies.

Such objectives and policies include the practice of the Forestry Commission in encouraging public access to woodlands as set out in "Forestry Policy for Great Britain", copies of which are in the library.

Ministers are well aware of the importance to many people of access and therefore, have asked the review group to take this into account when developing its advice.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy, following the report of the forestry review group, to maintain the freedom to roam on any Forestry Commission land currently available in *(a)* the Sheffield, Hillsborough constituency and *(b)* elsewhere in Britain.

Sir Hector Monro: Ministers are conscious of the importance to many people of access to Forestry Commission land including land in the hon. Member's constituency. They have therefore asked the review group to take the issue of public access fully into account when developing its advice.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all Forestry Commission woods in Scotland by region; and which woods are to be placed for sale under the current disposals programme.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 13 December 1993]*: The Forestry Commission manages the following areas of land in Scotland:

Region	*Area (hectares)*
Borders	30,853
Central	29,850
Dumfries and Galloway	101,258
Fife	4,780
Grampian	61,555
Highland	236,983
Lothian	1,650
Orkney	9
Strathclyde	201,738
Tayside	40,084
Western Isles	867

Details of individual forests and woodlands are not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. I have, however, made arrangements for a map showing the location of the individual areas to be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

The areas of forest land in Scotland currently being offered for sale by the Forestry Commission on the open market are as follows:

Region and Name	*Area (hectares)*
Dumfries and Galloway	
Glaik	63
Grampian	
Barlatch	3
Craigmuir Wood	34
Crimond Hill	25
Cruchie Wood	7
Haremoss	19
Hillend Moss	16
Lauchentilly Moss	30

Region and Name	*Area (hectares)*
Longhill	120
Moreseat of Hatton	38
Mormond Hill	255
New Pitsligo (2 lots)	42
Whitestones	5
Highland	
Ardelve	26
Balmore (Main Road)	40
Clava and Craggie (Lot 1)	33
Croftdhu	14
Dhivach (North)	45
Dhivach (South)	77
Dundonnell	312
Eilean Darach	110
Fain (Cpt 2038)	22
Fain South (Cpt 2037)	4
Score Farm and Roadside Strips	17
Storr (East)	79
Strathclyde	
Aucheneden	538
Achentorlie	439
Auchindrain	234
Carrick	2
Daljarrock	52
Dalsmirren (part)	1,094
Garrochoran	192
High Ugadale	21
Inverneill	102
Loch Sween	179
Merkins/Knockupple	587
Moss Priory	71
Scoor and Beech (Lot 5)	360
Tayside	
Aukleeks	358
Keillour	11

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list, for each separate piece of land currently owned or leased by the Forestry Commission in the Central, Dumfries and Galloway, Fife, Grampian and Highland regions *(a)* its name and *(b)* its area in hectares; and whether he will place a map in the Library which names and identifies each of these pieces of land;

(2) if he will list for each separate piece of land currently owned or leased by the Forestry Commission in the Borders *(a)* its name and *(b)* its area in hectares; and if he will place a map in the Library which names and identifies each of these pieces of land;

(3) if he will list for each separate piece of land currently owned or leased by the Forestry Commission in Lothian, Orkney, Shetlands, Strathclyde, Tayside and Western Isles regions *(a)* its name and *(b)* its area in hectares; and whether he will place a map in the Library which names and identifies each of these pieces of land.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 8 December 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) earlier today.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what publicly owned woodland in the Clydebank and Milngavie constituency has been put on sale in each of the past five years; and what areas are planned to be put on sale.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* Lists giving details of the areas of forest land sold by the Forestry Commission in each region from the start of the disposals programme in July 1981 to December 1992 are held in the Library of the House. A list of the forest land sold by the Commission in 1993 will be drawn up and placed in the Library in the new year.

Aucheneden—538 hectares—is the only commission woodland currently on the market in the hon. Member's constituency.

Mr. Paddy Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in respect of which areas of Forestry Commission land assurances have been issued that they will not be privatised; and according to what criteria these decisions are made.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 November 1993]:* Ministers will await the advice of the forestry review group before considering what action, if any, should be taken in respect of the ownership and management of Forestry Commission woodlands.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultation there has been in relation to the national forest plan to be published shortly.

Sir Hector Monro: Since we did not wish the plan to pre-empt the findings of the forestry review group or to prejudice our decisions on the group's recommendations, we decided it would not be practical for the plan to go beyond drawing together the various strands of the Government's present forestry policy and programmes.

We concluded, therefore, that there would be little benefit in consulting publicly before publishing the plan. Instead, we will be inviting comments on the plan after it has been published.

Local Enterprise Companies

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total budget for local enterprise companies in Scotland for *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94; and what is the planned budget for 1994-95.

Mr. Stewart: The allocation of resources to the local enterprise companies is an operational matter for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. I understand that total budgets for the local enterprise companies for 1992-93 and 1993-94 amount to £382·1 million and £379·2 million respectively, but that budget allocations for 1994-95 have yet to be determined.

Winter Deaths

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of excess winter deaths in Scotland in each of the last three years.

Mr. Stewart: The information available is given in the table.

Number of deaths by quarter, Scotland, 1990-92

Year	*(Quarter)*	*Number of deaths*
1990	1	16,933
	2	15,105
	3	13,737
	4	15,752
1991	1	16,278
	2	14,891
	3	13,814

Year	*(Quarter)*	*Number of deaths*
	4	16,058
1992	1	16,511
	2	14,668
	3	14,024
	4	15,734

Seals

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his estimates for each of the last three available years of the number of each type of seal resident in Scottish waters and the varieties and value of fish taken by such seals in each of these years.

Sir Hector Monro: Both grey and common seals are resident in Scottish waters. Estimated grey seal numbers are as follows:

	Number
1990	79,000
1991	86,900
1992	92,800

Comparable figures are not available for common seals which are presently estimated at 24,100.

Research has shown that seals are opportunistic feeders which consume a wide variety of species including those of commercial importance such as cod, whiting, various flat fishes, herring, sprat and sandeels as well as salmon. No recent estimate is available of the value of the commercial fish consumed by seals in Scottish waters.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest estimates by the sea mammals research unit of the numbers of grey and common seals in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: The latest grey and common seal populations in Scotland as estimated by the sea mammal research unit are 92,800 and 24,100 respectively.

Sheriff Court Fees

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will reconsider the proposed increases in sheriff court fees; and what representations he has received from the Law Society on this matter.

Mr. Lang: The changes to Sheriff Court fees, which are projected to lead to an overall 12 per cent. increase in income, are included in the Sheriff Court Fees Amendment (No. 2) Order 1983 which was laid before Parliament on 10 December.

My noble and learned Friend has received a number of representations from the Law Society of Scotland to which he has responded clarifying the basis of the changes.

Water Metering

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what instructions he has given to local authorities, concerning features to be incorporated in provision of new domestic water supplies, with a view to future adaptation for metering.

Sir Hector Monro: No requirements have been placed on local authorities in Scotland concerning the future adaptation of new domestic water supplies for metering. Metering is a voluntary option we made available to householders from 1 April this year. The technical adaptations necessary are matters for discussion between regional or island councils as water authorities and the individual consumer.

In May my Department issued a circular to water authorities drawing their attention to the new optional provision (in the Local Government Finance Act 1992) and highlighting certain matters such as meter siting and payment terms that they might wish to take into account when meeting a consumer's request for a meter. I am arranging for a copy of the circular (SOEnD 10/93) to be placed in the Library.

Department of Education

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland under what public expenditure headings costs of public relations, publications, and circulars to schools, parents and local authorities, incurred by the Scottish Office Department of Education are shown; and how much has been expended under each heading since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since 1979, the Scottish Office Education Department (formerly the Scottish Education Department) has issued a wide range of materials to local authorities, schools and parents including consultation documents, circulars, regulations and publications.

The cost of these are included under a variety of public expenditure headings, either within Departmental running costs or within the votes appropriate to the subjects to which they relate. No single headings cover only costs related to these reports, circulars or publications. It is therefore not possible to identify such costs separately.

Kilgarth Tip, Coatbridge

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 10 December, *Official Report*, column *411*, if he will publish the correspondence relating to his decision about the application by City of Glasgow district council in respect of Kilgarth tip, Coatbridge.

Mr. Lang: I do not intend to publish the correspondence relating to my decision in the Kilgarth case. It is our normal practice to treat such papers as private matters involved only the parties directly concerned. After decision letters are issued it is for each party to decide whether, or to what extent, it wishes to disclose details of the case.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what his Department's policy is regarding the use of executive search consultants in making appointments to public bodies; and if he will *(a)* list the appointments where such consultants have been used and *(b)* list the cost in each case since April 1992.

Mr. Lang: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible. Copies of my reply will be placed in the Library of the House.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria are used in the selection of the chair and the executive members of *(a)* Scottish Enterprise, *(b)* Highlands and Islands Enterprise, *(c)* the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council and *(d)* Scottish Homes, in respect of relevant experience and qualifications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend is required by the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Act 1990 to appoint to Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise persons who appear to him to have knowledge or experience relevant to the discharge of the functions of those bodies (regard being had to the principle that equality of opportunity should be promoted as between men and women).

Criteria for the selection of the chairman and executive members of the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council are set out in the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992 and are as follows:

(a) persons who appear to the Secretary of State for Scotland to have experience of, and to have shown capacity in, the provision of higher education or to have held, and to have shown capacity in, any position carrying responsibility for the provision of higher education and, in appointing such persons, he shall have regard to the desirability of their being currently engaged in the provision of higher education or in carrying responsibility for such provision; and

(b) persons who appear to the Secretary of State for Scotland to have experience of, and to have shown capacity in, industrial, commercial or financial matters or the practice of any profession.

The appointment of members of Scottish Homes is also made having regard to the relevant experience and qualities of potential candidates and according to the particular expertise required by Scottish Homes at the time.

Individuals are appointed by the Secretary of State in their own right and not as representatives of any organisation, or interest group.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which of the appointments made to public bodies by his Department since April 1992 have been advertised.

Mr. Lang: No specific non-executive appointments to public bodies sponsored by my Department have been advertised since April 1992. However, there is a major publicity campaign, including press advertisement, each year seeking members for children's panels. In the summer of 1992 advertisements also sought applications from those interested in serving on health boards and NHS trusts.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the minimum and maximum numbers of possible board members of *(a)* Scottish Enterprise, *(b)* Highlands and Island Enterprise, *(c)* local enterprise companies and *(d)* Scottish Homes; what guidelines he has issued concerning the composition of these boards; and what specific guidance has been given on how many board members should be (i) from ethnic minorities, (ii) women, (iii) from the local business sector, (iv) from local authorities and (v) from trade unions.

Mr. Stewart: The minimum and maximum numbers of possible board members of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise are laid down in the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Act 1990 while the maximum number of board members for Scottish Homes is laid down in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988, all as set out in the table. My right hon. Friend is responsible for making appointments to the boards of each of these bodies guided by the requirements of the relevant Act.

Guidelines published by the Scottish Office Industry Department before the initial award of operating contracts to local enterprise companies stipulated that at least two-thirds of their board members should be drawn from the local private sector, that boards should number a maximum of 12 and minimum of nine (for those contracting with Scottish Enterprise) or seven (for those contracting with Highlands and Islands Enterprise), and that each local enterprise company would have to demonstrate that it had obtained the commitment of a broad range of interested parties in the area it was to cover.

Possible numbers of board members

	Minimum	*Maximum*
Scottish Enterprise	9	12
Highlands and Islands Enterprise	7	12
Scottish Homes	[1]—	10

[1] No statutory minimum.

Note: Minimum and maximum numbers quoted are inclusive of the chief executive at each of the three bodies, who is an ex-officio board member in all cases.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of chairpersons and non-executive board members of local enterprise councils.

Mr. Stewart: There are 22 local enterprise companies (the Scottish equivalent of training and enterprise councils) each of which has a chairman. Arrangements governing the appointment of non-executive board members are operational matters for individual companies, within national guidelines which stipulate that boards should number a maximum of 12 and minimum of nine (for those contracting with Scottish Enterprise) or seven (for those contracting with Highlands and Islands Enterprise).

Inverclyde Enterprise Zone

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the proposed public local inquiry into the Parklea site in the Inverclyde enterprise zone will take place; and where it will be held.

Mr. Stewart: Once the relevant papers have been received from Inverclyde district council, it should be possible for a public local inquiry to be held into the Parklea proposal within six months or so. The inquiry will be held as near to the proposed development site as is practical.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what the cost of advertising by his Department has been for each year since 1979 and for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Lang: Expenditure by my Department on advertising has been:

	£
1988-89	994,000
1989-90	2,081,000
1990-91	1,542,000

	£
1991-92	1,550,000
1992-93	1,366,000

Figures in the form requested are not available for 1979-80 to 1987-88. Total expenditure on information publicity for each year of that period was:

	£
1979-80	263,000
1980-81	362,000
1981-82	393,000
1982-83	386,000
1983-84	360,000
1984-85	704,000
1985-86	677,000
1986-87	857,000
1987-88	1,094,000

Details of advertising expenditure by my Department for each of the last 12 months is not immediately available and I shall reply further to the hon. Member.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the date on which each advertising campaign initiated by his Department since 1987 was launched and its duration.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Libraries of the House.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advertising campaigns have been undertaken by his Department each year since 1979; if he will list the cost of each campaign, the extent of each campaign, the advertising agency employed in each case, the subject matter and the office within his Department which sanctioned the spending; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Libraries of the House.

Press Releases

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many press releases his Department has issued since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The following table shows the number of news releases issued by the Scottish Office information directorate in each year since 1985. The information for the years prior to that is not available.

	Total news releases issued
1985	1,660
1986	1,793
1987	2,070
1988	2,231
1989	2,089
1990	2,008
1991	2,028
1992	1,993
[1]1993	1,914

[1] As at 10 December 1993.

Administration

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total expenditure by his Department on administration in 1992-93; what is the estimated outturn for expenditure by his Department on administration for 1993-94 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms in 1992-93 prices; and what is his estimate for expenditure on administration by his Department for 1994-95 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1992-93 prices.

Mr. Lang: Information covering provision for running costs spending, including superannuation, in the Scottish Office and its agencies, is as follows:

£ million

	1992-93 Outturn	*1993-94 Estimated Outturn*
Actual	319	326
In 1992-93 terms	319	316

The GDP deflators required to calculate real terms figure are shown on page 121 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95" (HC 31).

Details of planned provision for 1994-95 and subsequent years will be published in my departmental report "Serving Scotland's Needs" in the new year.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, by local authority area, at what age it is the practice to initiate a record of needs for children with learning difficulties; and if he will outline the statutory obligations in this respect.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Education authorities have a statutory duty, under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 as amended, to establish which children aged two and over who have come to the authorities' attention as having special educational needs require the opening of a record of needs. Authorities must make provision for any special educational needs which are so recorded.

Wool Marketing Scheme

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the prescriptive resolution under the British wool marketing scheme, particularly relating to foreign merchants buying British wool; what measures his Department intends to implement to halt the alleged disadvantage that British merchants are suffering compared to their foreign counterparts; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend has received representations from a number of hon. Members and from one company of wool merchants about the British Wool Marketing Board's prescriptive resolution of 1981 which exempts producers from the statutory monopoly if they are selling their wool direct for export to an overseas buyer. Although this means that an overseas buyer can, unlike a United Kingdom merchant, buy wool direct from a producer, I do not believe that in practice this damages the interests of United Kingdom merchants.

Retention of the board's statutory monopoly provides all producers with an outlet for their wool, including those in the more remote areas. It has the full support of the National Farmers Union of Scotland and the Confederation of British Wool Textiles.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of speech therapists employed in each health board area indicating, in each case, any shortfall which exists.

Mr. Stewart: The number, in whole-time equivalent terms, of qualified speech therapists employed in the national health service at 31 March 1993 in each health board area is given in the table. Details of the funded establishment for qualified speech therapists in each health board area are not held centrally.

Whole-time equivalent qualified speech therapists in the national health service in Scotland at 31 March 1993

Health board	*Whole-time equivalents*
Argyll and Clyde	38·0
Ayrshire and Arran	31·5
Borders	13·5
Dumfries and Galloway	19·1
Fife	40·3
Forth Valley	21·4
Grampian	52·4
Greater Glasgow	83·1
Highland	23·6
Lanarkshire	44·3
Lothian	69·3
Orkney	2·5
Shetland	2·0
Tayside	39·7
Western Isles	5·7

Distance Selling Directive

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the proposed EC directive on distance selling; if he intends to raise the matter with European partners; what evidence he has to suggest that the directive may cause problems for hoteliers and other businesses in Scotland; what action he intends to take to protect Scottish business; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have received no such representations. I am, however, fully aware of the problems which the provisions of this directive, if implemented, would pose to the tourist industry in Scotland. The Government are making appropriate representations.

Loch Lomond Report

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial resources he is providing to Scottish Enterprise for the implementation of the Loch Lomond working party report.

Mr. Stewart: The resources which my right hon. Friend makes available to Scottish Enterprise are not generally allocated for a particular activity or purpose; and it is for Scottish Enterprise and the relevant local enterprise companies to determine the level of resources to be devoted to implementation of the Loch Lomond working party report out of the budgets made available to them.

Nurses

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his current target for the ratio of nursing teachers to students he considers appropriate; and what plans he has to review it.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 6 December 1993 at column 92.

Road Bridge, Queensferry

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he proposes to compensate contractors invited to bid to construct a new road bridge across the Firth of Forth at Queensferry; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 30 November 1993]:* We have suggested that unsuccessful tenderers in any competition might have a proportion of their properly incurred bid costs up to £500,000 reimbursed by the successful tenderer. Tenderers might also be required to lodge a bond, for a similar amount, designed to secure conforming bids. These measures are consistent with practices elsewhere in the construction industry in relation to projects of such size and complexity where bid costs can be very large. They will stimulate competition to the ultimate benefit of users of the facilities.

No decision on whether or not to proceed to tender will be made until the results of feasibility studies now under way are available.

Mr. Laurence Peterken

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his Department was consulted by the Greater Glasgow health board about the dismissal of Laurence Peterken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* Officials of the Scottish Office were not consulted by Greater Glasgow health board in relation to the proposed dismissal on 2 November of Mr. Peterken.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the report to be published of the investigation into the dismissal of Mr. Laurence Peterken as general manager of Greater Glasgow health board; and if he will list those consulted in the course of the investigation.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* The investigation by the chief executive, NHS in Scotland, is not yet completed.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland further to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *179*, about the appointment of Mr. Peterken to the NHS Management Executive, if he will give details of the issues which Mr. Peterken is to examine.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 December 1993]:* Mr. Peterken will review the future organisation of the Common Services Agency.

Departmental Files

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many files marked "not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by his Department.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 3 December 1993]:* There is a total of 263 subject files in my Department which carry the marking "Not for NAO Eyes".

The marking "Not for NAO Eyes" is used in accordance with guidance from the Treasury and agreed by the National Audit Office under which documents relating to the handling of relations between Departments and the NAO are not automatically available to NAO while they are current.

The marking is removed once the subject matter is no longer current. The Scottish Office audit unit check from time to time to ensure that the marking is being used and removed correctly.

Prisons (Drugs)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest information available to him about the prevalence of the illegal taking of drugs by injection in prisons in Scotland.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* Independent research undertaken by Power et al over a period of 18 months during 1990 and 1991, when the prison population was some 4,800, found that 28 per cent. (154 prisoners) of a representative sample of 559 prisoners admitted to injecting drugs at some stage prior to imprisonment. A number 15 per cent. (85 prisoners) had stopped injecting prior to imprisonment, principally to reduce the risk of HIV infection. That left 12 per cent. (69 prisoners) still injecting following imprisonment, although most of this group were also attempting various forms of risk reduction such as stopping sharing, sharing less or sterilising before sharing.

The proportion of the total sample who admitted to injecting drugs at some stage during a prison sentence was 8 per cent. (43 prisoners), but 4 per cent. (23 prisoners) had subsequently stopped injecting, again principally as a means of reducing risk of HIV infection. That left 4 per cent. (20 prisoners) continuing to inject at the time of the research of whom 3 per cent. (17 prisoners) had shared needles in prison. The full sample of prisoners was also asked how many prisoners they personally "knew" (ie had seen or firmly believed) to be involved in intravenous drug misuse in prison. The answer averaged out at 2·7 per cent. of prisoners.

Following the outbreak of HIV infection at HMP Glenochil, 227 out of the 378 adult prisoners there took up the offer in June of independent counselling. Of these 76 (33 per cent.) said that they had injected drugs at some time in their lives and 33 of that group (15 per cent. of the total) admitted injecting at some point while in Glenochil.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people have been charged with attempting to smuggle drugs into prisons while visiting inmates this year in Scotland.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* The information requested is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prisoners were put on report for being in possession of drugs this year in Scotland.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* In 1992-93, 838 prisoners were put on report for being in possession of illicit drugs or injecting equipment.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made as to the extent of the availability of illegal drugs in Scottish prisons; and what action is being taken to prevent importation and use.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* It is difficult to make an accurate assessment of the true level of the availability of illegal drugs in prisons, but there are some indicators which help to measure trends. Any prisoners found in possession of illicit drugs or injecting equipment is guilty of a disciplinary offence under the prison rules. The number of recorded offences for the last three years were 1990-91—749, 1991-92—845 and 1992-93—838. Taking account of the prisoner population increase from an average of 4,738 in 1990-91 to 5,395 in 1991-93, the number of recorded offences suggests a slight decrease in the level of drug taking in prisons. Although detailed figures are not kept, most of these offences involve cannabis. A further indictor of drug activity is the number of finds of injecting equipment uncovered through security checks: 1990-91—72, 1991-92—96, and 1992-93—66.

The Scottish Prison Service makes strenuous attempts to minimise the amount of drugs entering prisons. These include the use of closed circuit television at visits, sniffer dogs, lockers for visitors' hand luggage, staff surveillance at visits, strip searching of prisoners suspected of receiving drugs following visits, use of "closed" visits for those prisoners who abuse the visits facility and regular close liaison with the police and other agencies.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what quantity of drugs and implements for drug use have been found in Scottish prisons in the past 10 years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* Any prisoner found in possession of illicit drugs or equipment is guilty of a disciplinary offence under the prison rules. Information on the quantity of drugs and implements is not collected centrally, but most drug finds in prison are extremely small and comprise of a few tablets or a small amount of cannabis. The number of recorded offences for the last three years were: 1990-91—749, 1991-92—845 and 1992-93—838. The number of finds of injecting equipment uncovered through security checks were: 1990-91—72, 1991-92—96 and 1992-93—66.

Caledonian Paper Mill

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about prospects for inward investment in the second Caledonian paper mill.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* All discussions between my Department and companies concerning future investment decisions are held on a strict commercially confidential basis.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list his Department's policy on the provision of speech therapy for children with special educational needs; and if he is satisfied that this policy is being implemented throughout Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Education authorities have a statutory duty to ensure appropriate provision of speech therapy where this has been identified as a special educational need in a child's record of needs. Under new arrangements which came into force in 1992, all education authorities now contract with health boards for the provision of speech therapy services to meet the needs of recorded children and an additional £2 million was included in the local government financial settlement for 1992-93 for this purpose.

These new arrangements have been very effective. However, when we implemented them we did not know whether the amount of money set aside would be sufficient. We therefore undertook a joint review of costs with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and, following that review, we have concluded that an annual amount of £3 million is needed to provide fully for speech therapy for children with records of needs. As a result, I am announcing today that an additional £1 million is being included in the local government settlement for 1994-95 for this purpose.

I am confident that these extra resources will ensure that some of our less fortunate children receive the assistance we are all so concerned they should have.

Patients' Travel

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each health board the budget for patient travel.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* The information is as follows:

Health Board	*1993-94* *£*
Argyll and Clyde	224,000
Ayrshire and Arran	75,500
Borders	15,600
Dumfries and Galloway	44,300
Fife	41,700
Forth Valley	31,300
Grampian	156,300
Greater Glasgow	200,600
Highland	352,200
Lanarkshire	65,100
Lothian	83,400
Tayside	49,500
Orkney	380,200
Shetland	481,200
Western Isles	654,100

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by health board, for each year since 1990 *(a)* the number of patients flown to the mainland, *(b)* the number of medical staff flown to the mainland, (c) the number of visiting medical staff flying from the mainland and *(d)* the number of flights which will be affected by the imposition of air passenger duty.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has regarding the additional cost to *(a)* Orkney health board and *(b)* Shetland health board in respect of sending patients to the United Kingdom mainland for treatment as a result of the proposed introduction of air passenger duty.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 December 1993]:* Aircraft of under 10 tonnes maximum take-off weight, or seating under 20 passengers are to be exempted from the new excise duty. In practice this will exclude air ambulances operated by the Scottish ambulance service and there will be no additional cost to these health boards.

It is not expected that Orkney and Shetland health boards will require to purchase many tickets for non-emergency patients to be carried on fare paying scheduled flights to the mainland. Any additional costs would be more than offset by the 4·5 per cent. increase in funding for the NHS in Scotland which my right hon. Friend has announced for the next financial year.

Hospitals, Ayrshire

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what facilities in Ayrshire Central and Ravenspark hospitals have been closed by the Community Health Care NHS trust since its establishment;

(2) what facilities in Crosshouse hospital have been closed by the North Ayrshire and Arran NHS trust since its establishment;

(3) if he will make a statement about Ayrshire and Arran health board's plans for the future of Ravenspark hospital; and what steps the health board is taking to safeguard the interests of the hospital patients;

(4) if he will make a statement on the refurbishment of the reception area of Crosshouse hospital by the North Ayrshire and Arran NHS trust; if he will indicate what is the source of funding for this refurbishment; and what refurbishment work was carried out in the hospital before the North Ayrshire and Arran NHS trust being established.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the replies given to him on Thursday 9 December, at columns *350-51.*

Air Passenger Duty

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to the implications for health boards of the imposition of air passenger duty.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* There are exemptions to the new excise duty announced by the Chancellor in the Budget statement. The new excise duty applies only in respect of fare paying passengers and does not apply to air ambulances for emergency cases. Health boards do not make many arrangements for non-emergency patients to be carried on fare-paying scheduled flights. Most importantly for Scotland aircraft of under 10 tonnes take-off weight or seating under 20 passengers are exempt. In practice this will exclude many of the inter-island flights.

The implications for health boards would therefore be minimal and would be more than offset by the 4·5 per cent. increase in funding for the NHS in Scotland which my right hon. Friend has announced for the next financial year.

Clean Technology

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps are being taken by the Scottish Office to promote the use of clean technology by Scottish industry; what grants are available to assist industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1993]:* The Scottish Office promotes the use of clean technology by raising awareness and by publicising and directing Scottish companies towards schemes of financial assistance which can assist such projects. Assistance may come from a variety of sources. For example, financial support is available under research and development promotion schemes, such as the small firms merit award for research and technology, support for products under research (SPUR) and the innovation element of the regional enterprise grants scheme, for companies planning to develop new products or processes—including those relating to clean technology.

Scottish companies will be eligible for funding under the new £16 million environmental technology best practice programme, which is to be operated jointly by the Department of Trade and Industry and Department of the Environment.

Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many commissioners have been appointed under section 33 of the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993; when they were given their appointments; how many are women; what is the length of their term of office; what is their remuneration; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 15 December 1993]:* Under the provisions of section 33 of the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993 which will come into effect on 1 January 1994, a commissioner to take a child's evidence will be appointed by a judge on application. The appointment will last for the duration of the commission.

Remuneration to the commissioner will depend on a number of factors including the commissioner's legal seniority, the duration of the commission and its location.

Highlands and Islands

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many copies of the booklet entitled "The Highlands and Islands Objective 1 Plan, 1994-99" have been published; by whom they were printed and published; what was the total cost of the printing, publication and distribution of the document; how many requests for copies have been received; and if he will list those individuals and organisations to whom copies have been sent.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1993]:* The Highlands and Islands objective 1 plan 1994-1999 was published internally by the Scottish Office. One hundred and seventy copies were printed and distributed at an estimated cost of £2,700. These have been distributed primarily to the Highlands and Islands Partnership, to organisations responding to the consultation exercise on the objective 1 plan, and to other organisations, including Government Departments, with an interest in European structural funds in other areas of Scotland and the United Kingdom. These organisations are listed in the table. In addition, the Scottish Office has also sent copies of the objective 1 plan to a small number of other organisations and individuals, including the hon. Member, specifically requesting a copy:

Angus District Council
Argyll and Bute District Council
Argyll and the Islands Enterprise
Association of Community Enterprises in the Highlands and Islands
Badenoch and Strathspey District Council
British Waterways Board
Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise
Caithness District Council
Caledonian MacBrayne
Central Regional Council
Citizens Advice Scotland
City of Glasgow District Council
Comunn na Gaidhlig
Cromarty Firth Ports Authority
Cunninghame District Council
Department of Employment
Department of the Environment
The Department of Finance and Personnel (Northern Ireland)
Department of Trade and Industry
Department of Transport
Dumfries and Galloway Enterprise
Dumfries and Galloway Regional Council
European Commission
Fife Regional Council
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
The Forestry Commission
Forth Valley Enterprise
Grampian Regional Council
The Hebridian Trust
Highland Communities Health Unit
Highland Community Care Forum
Highland Regional Council
Highlands and Islands Airports
Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Highlands and Islands Forum
Hotel and Catering Industry Training Board
Inverness and Nairn Enterprise
Inverness College
Inverness District Council
Inverness Harbour Trust
Lanarkshire Development Agency
Lerwick Harbour Trust
Lewis Council of Social Service
Lews Castle College
Lochaber District Council
Lochaber Limited
Mallaig Harbour Authority
Merseyside Task Force
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Moray, Badenoch and Strathspey Enterprise
Moray District Council
Moray Firth Radio
Nairn District Council
National Farmers' Union of Scotland
National Trust for Scotland
Orkney Islands Council
Red Deer Commission
Ross and Cromarty District Council
Ross and Cromarty Enterprise
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
The Royal Zoological Society
ScotRail
Scottish Agricultural College
Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society
Scottish Conservation Projects Trust
Scottish Council for Voluntary Service
Scottish Crofters' Union
Scottish Enterprise
Scottish Homes

Scottish Hydro-Electric
Scottish Native Woods Campaign
Scottish Natural Heritage
Scottish Wildlife Trust
Scrabster Harbour Trust
Shetland Enterprise
Shetland Islands Council
Skye and Lochalsh Enterprise
Skye Environmental Centre
Stirling District Council
Stornoway Pier and Harbour Commission
Strathclyde Integrated Development Operation
Strathclyde Regional Council
Sutherland District Council
Tayside Regional Council
The UK Permanent Representation to the European Community
Ullapool Harbour Trust
The Welsh Office
Western Isles Enterprise
Western Isles Islands Council
Wick Harbour Trust
The Wise Group, Glasgow
World Wildlife Fund Scotland

Local Enterprise Companies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards of local enterprise companies.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1993]:* The boards of local enterprise companies consist of directors who have formed companies under the Companies Act 1985, and have entered into contracts with Scottish Enterprise or Highlands and Islands Enterprise. The arrangements for appointing chairmen and directors are a matter for individual local enterprise companies, subject to the terms of their respective memoranda and articles of association, which must be approved by Scottish Enterprise or Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

Harbours

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what powers he has to aid improvements, improving safety, of islands and mainland harbours.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 15 December 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has power to provide financial assistance to harbour authorities, including Caledonian MacBrayne, for the improvement of transport piers and harbours in the highlands and islands. He also has power to assist fishery harbour works throughout Scotland. The relevant legislation is as follows. Harbour authorities are responsible for safety.

Congested Districts (Scotland) Act 1897.
Highlands and Islands Shipping Services Act 1960.
The Fisheries Act 1955.

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is *(a)* the 1993-94 estimated outturn and *(b)* the 1994-95 planned provision of central government net capital expenditure in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 December 1993]:* The information is (a) £1,125 million and (b) £1,206 million respectively, resulting in an increase of over £80 million or 7·1 per cent.

The figures for both years exclude expenditure brought forward from previous years under the end-year flexibility arrangements. They also exclude capital expenditure funded from the European regional development fund.

The planned provision for 1994-95 is provisional since detailed expenditure allocations are subject to revision until final plans are published in the departmental report "Serving Scotland's Needs" and the supply estimates.

Youth Training

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many YTS or YT places there were in *(a)* Dundee and *(b)* Scotland in each of the past five years for which figures are available;

(2) what were the numbers of YTS or YT places contracted with managing agents in *(a)* Dundee and *(b)* Scotland in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested on YTS/YT places contracted with managing agents is available only in respect of Scotland as a whole. Numbers of places were as set out in the table.

YTS/YT places contracted with managing agents

	Number of places
At 31 March 1987	55,384
At 31 March 1988	63,285
At 31 March 1989	62,493
At 31 March 1990	60,985

Figures for the period before 1986-87 are not available. On 1 April 1991 Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and their networks of local enterprise companies took over responsibility for delivering youth training in Scotland. Local enterprise companies contract to provide numbers of training weeks, and numbers of places are not therefore available. Figures for 1990-91 are not available because of disruption to the management information gathering system during 1990-91.

DEFENCE

Ground Proximity Warning Systems

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the current in-service date for the ground proximity warning system for the Jaguar aircraft;

(2) if he will list the dates of key project milestones for the development of ground proximity warning systems for *(a)* the Tornado GR, *(b)* the Tornado F3, *(c)* the Harrier GR5/7, *(d)* the Hawk, *(e)* The Tucano and *(f)* The Hercules; what plans he has to fit such a system to the Eurofighter in RAF service; and what other types in United Kingdom military service are under consideration for fitment of such a device.

Mr. Hanley: The only such project which currently has formal project milestones is the fitment of a ground proximity warning system to the Jaguar aircraft, the in-service date for which is 1997. We are also considering fitting such systems to the Tornado GR1/1A and F3, Harrier GR7 and T10, Hawk, Tucano and Eurofighter 2000 aircraft.

National Air Traffic Services

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the titles, names of contractors and dates of all external research contracts on behalf of the National Air Traffic Services since 1985.

Mr. Hanley: My Department does not place contracts on behalf of NATS. This is done by the Civil Aviation Authority. Additionally, information relating to contracts placed before 1988 is not held centrally and could not be provided without disproportionate cost and effort. However, I am able to provide the following details.

Since 1 April 1988, some 378 contracts have been placed. These contracts cover a wide range of subjects including the development of improved air traffic control systems; airport and airspace capacity studies; safety studies; cost-benefit analyses; development/improvement of communication, navigation and surveillance systems.

Details of all companies to whom contracts have been awarded since 1985 again could not be provided without disproportionate cost. Companies awarded contracts since April 1991 are:

AGI
AEA Technology
AA Quinn (Builder) Ltd.
ABA Electronics Ltd.
ACT Logsys Ltd.
ACWL
Adelard
Admiral Computing Ltd.
Air Hanson Ltd.
Alan A Woodfield
Alcatel TITN Inc
ASHTEC
Aubrey Watson
Aztec Business Services Ltd.
B A Wyndham
B T Aeronautical and Maritime
BAe SEMA Systems Ltd.
Berkshire Engineering Consultants
BNR Europe Ltd.
Booz, Allen and Hamilton International
Brameur Ltd.
British Airways PLC
CGP Ltd.
CACI Ltd.
Cambridge Consultants Ltd.
Canadian Marconi Ltd.
Centre for Software Maintenance
City University
Clark Engineering and Construction Ltd.
Clark Masts Teksam Ltd.
Computer Recognition Systems Ltd.
Cossor Electronics Ltd.
Cranfield Institute of Technology
CSS Trident Plc
Data-Logic Ltd.
Defence Research Agency (Bedford)
Defence Research Agency (Malvern)
Dept. of Civil Aviation, Holland
E-Systems
EASAMS Ltd.
EDS Scicon Ltd.
ELTA Electronics Ltd.
ERA Technology Ltd.
Flow Solutions Ltd.
Four Elements Ltd.
GEC-Avionics Ltd.
GEC-Ferranti Ltd.
GEC-Marconi Research Ltd.
Gultronics Computer Centre
Hall and Tawse Scotland Ltd.
Hewlett Packard Ltd.
Honeywell Inc.
ISVR Consultants Ltd.
ICOM (UK) Ltd.
Information Processing Ltd.
Intergraph (UK) Ltd.
IPSYS Software Ltd.
JMEC Ltd.
JRC (UK) Ltd.
Lancaster Simulation Specialists Ltd.
Logica (UK) Ltd.
Logistyx Ltd.
Loughborough University
MA-COM Ltd.
Macdonald Dettwiler Ltd.
Magec Aviation Ltd.
Manchester Polytechnic
Mantron Displays Ltd.
Marconi Instruments Ltd.
Marconi Underwater Systems Ltd.
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Matra Marconi Ltd.
Mawdsley's Ltd.
MCM Research Ltd.
Meteorological Office
Microtouch Systems Ltd.
Ministry of Defence
Modus International Ltd.
Morse Computers Ltd.
National Aeronautical Laboratory
Navstar Navigation Systems
Norcontrol Ltd.
Novotel Communications Ltd.
Penny and Giles Data Recorders Ltd.
PHS Smith
Plessey Radar Ltd.
Plessey Roke Manor
Primagraphics Ltd.
Public Attitude Surveys Ltd.
Quadrant Connectors Ltd.
R. C. Bowes
R M Consultants Ltd.
Racal Radar Defence Ltd.
Real Time Consultants Ltd.
Rediffusion Simulation Ltd.
Rex Thomson and Partners Ltd.
RMCS Cranfield Ltd.
Robert Dick and Son Ltd.
Royal College of Art
SNEC
Satellite Navigation Systems
SD—Scicon UK Ltd.
Serco Ltd.
SES Incorporated
Siemens Plessey
Silicon Valley Consultants Ltd.
SITA
Smith Associates Ltd.
Societe Nouvelle D'equipment
STC Navigation Systems
Susar Ltd.
Sygnus Data Communications Ltd.
TA Consultancy Services
Technische Universitat Braunschweig
Technology PLC
Thames Valley Systems Ltd.
Thomson-CSF
Thorley Software
Trevor Brewer Associates
Trimble Navigation
University College London
University of Leeds
University of Leicester
University of Southampton
University of Surrey
Vega Space Systems Ltd.

Aircraft Accidents

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to include accidents to Ministry of Defence (Procurement Executive) and Defence

Research Agency aircraft in the tables of military aircraft accidents published in "UK Defence Statistics"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: We have no such plans.

Departmental Offices (Heating Bills)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by location the annual fuel heating bills for each of his Department's offices for the last four years, and for this year to date.

Mr. Hanley: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements are made to ensure that special advisers to Ministers in his Department do not have access to the kind of information, and are not involved in the type of business, that would be likely to create suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment.

Mr. Hanley: Care is taken to ensure that special advisers do not have access to the kind of information likely to create suspicion of impropriety. They are not involved in evaluating tenders or letting contracts.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the names and job descriptions of each special ministerial adviser employed in his Department showing any particular outputs for which each adviser is responsible.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend's special adviser is Crispin Blunt. His duties vary.

Foreign Military Personnel

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what foreign military personnel are at present on training programmes with British military forces in the United Kingdom; and if he will list each country, the numbers of personnel involved and the courses they are taking.

Mr. Hanley: At the end of the week 5 to 11 December 1993, there were 592 foreign students, attending 102 different developmental and technical training courses at British military establishments, from the following countries:

Abu Dhabi
Australia
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belgium
Belize
Botswana
Brazil
Brunei
Canada
Chile
Denmark
Dubai
Egypt
Fiji
France
Gambia
Germany
Ghana
Greece
Guyana
Hong Kong
Hungary
India
Indonesia
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Ivory Coast
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kenya
Kuwait
Lebanon
Malaysia
Maldives
Malta
Malawi
Mauritius
Mozambique
Namibia
Nepal
Netherlands
Norway
New Zealand
Oman
Pakistan
Paraguay
Poland
Portugal
Qatar
Romania
Russia
Saudi Arabia
Senegal
Singapore
Slovakia
Spain
Sri Lanka
Swaziland
Sweden
St. Vincent
Thailand
Trinidad and Tobago
Turkey
United Arab Emirates
United States of America
Yemen
Zambia
Zimbabwe

The details of training provided for overseas military personnel are not normally disclosed as they are confidental between Governments.

FH70 (Ammunition)

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 1 December, *Official Report*, column 606, what were the outline terms of the trinational memorandum of understanding with Germany and Italy governing the procurement of 155 mm ammunition for the FH70 gun; why primers manufactured in Germany were procured; what proportion of the ammunition originally procured under the terms of this MOU remains in service; whether ammunition for the AS90 is to be procured under the terms of the MOU; and when he now expects to place orders in the United Kingdom for further 155 mm ammunition.

Mr. Aitken: The trinational MOU with Germany and Italy for FH70, which was signed in 1970, covers the development, evaluation and production of a towed 155 mm howitzer and its ammunition—comprising the L15 HE shell, charges and primers. The MOU allocates work between the three Governments, giving responsibility for production of primers to Germany. In fact, there is no alternative source of supply for these primers. Stocks of the same 155 mm ammunition were also purchased for use with the M109 gun and there is no differentiation in the current holdings of 155 mm ammunition between that originally procured for the FH70 and M109 guns. Therefore, it is not possible to state how much of the ammunition purchased for FH70 under the terms of the MOU remains in service. There have been no purchases of this 155 mm ammunition for several years. Ammunition for the AS90 howitzer will not be procured under the terms of this MOU, but under our normal procedures by competitive tender. Current purchases of 155 mm ammunition are limited to relatively small amounts for training; no major order for 155 mm ammunition is imminent. The country of manufacture of this ammunition will be determined by whichever company wins the contract to provide it.

Combat-ready Aircrew

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the requirement for all combat-ready RAF strike/attack/reconnaissance fast jet aircrew to be current in operational low flying down to 100 ft was introduced; and if this requirement applies to *(a)* Buccaneer crews, *(b)* Canberra reconnaissance crews, *(c)* instructors on the Haw aircraft and *(d)* instructors in the Tornado, Harrier and Jaguar reserve squadrons.

Mr. Hanley: The requirement for all combat-ready RAF strike/attack/reconnaissance fast jet aircrew to be current in operational low flying came into effect on 1 May 1993 for aircrew of No. 1 Group RAF Strike Command and on 1 November 1993 for aircrew of No. 2 Group. Canberra reconnaissance crews, instructors on Hawk aircraft and instructors on Tornado, Harrier and Jaguar reserve squadrons are not required to be current in operational low flying. In keeping with their maritime role, however, Buccaneer crews are required to be current in operational low flying over the sea.

Low Flying

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of authorised operational low-flying movements, broken down by tactical training areas and by aircraft type, *(a)* in each year since 1979 and *(b)* in each month between January 1982 and June 1982.

Mr. Hanley: My noble Friend the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Lance Corporal Gary Fryer

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now provide a copy of the police report and inquest reports on the death of Lance Corporal Gary Fryer No. 24792566 to his parents.

Mr. Hanley: I am not yet able to give the next of kin a summary of the report by the special investigation branch of the Royal Military Police. This is because the inquest cannot be held until an appeal by the driver responsible for the accident against the sentence on him from a German court has been completed. That appeal has yet to be heard. Once the inquest has been held, the next of kin of Lance Corporal Fryer will be sent a copy of the summary which would also cover the German police road traffic report.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much plutonium has been used in United Kingdom nuclear warhead production since 1953; and what is the current total inventory of weapons plutonium at nuclear sites in the United Kingdom and overseas territories.

Mr. Hanley: In the interests of national security, this information cannot be made public, the harm test, as set out in paragraph 3.7 of the White Paper on open government —Cm 2290—being applicable.

Hercules

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at what stage the C130K Hercules fleet is at in its life cycle.

Mr. Hanley: The aircraft is now some 26-years-old, having entered service in 1967. At purchase, it was foreseen that the fleet would have a life of only 13 years. However, following major wing modifications in the 1970s, and ongoing fatigue monitoring, the majority of the fleet is expected to last until 2007.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what distinguishes the C130K Hercules, or similar military airlifter, from its civil counterparts in terms of operational capability and on-board equipment.

Mr. Hanley: The basic aircraft structure, systems and engines for both the civil and military variants of the Hercules transport aircraft are likely to be the same. Civil aircraft are not generally equipped for tactical tasks such as air dropping of troops, equipment or supplies, may not be capable of operating onto unprepared strips and are not equipped with the defensive aids necessary for operating in hostile airspace.

Aircraft (Hazardous Loads)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what restrictions apply to the carriage of live ordnance and other hazardous payloads on aircraft leased by the Ministry of Defence from civil contractors.

Mr. Hanley: The carriage of dangerous air cargo—DAC—by air is governed by the United Nations through the International Civil Aviation Organisation—ICAO—which issues technical instructions which regulate how cargoes should be packed and the restrictions to be applied with regard to their safe transport. With regard to the live ordnance and hazardous items of a similar nature, the ICAO regulations preclude their carriage on civil aircraft and these restrictions would be applied to any civil aircraft leased by the MOD.

Trident

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether Her Majesty's Government have purchased any Trident missiles to replace those used by the United States for testing.

Mr. Hanley: No.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* Polaris and *(b)* Trident submarines are assumed to be operational at any one time in calculating the level of operational explosive firepower of Britain's nuclear forces and their subsequent reduction.

Mr. Hanley: The anticipated reduction of more than 25 per cent. in the explosive power of the United Kingdom's operational nuclear inventory when Trident is fully in service compared with 1990 is based on the overall number of United Kingdom nuclear weapons—excluding any awaiting final breakdown—irrespective of how many may be deployed at any one time on submarines.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the transfer of Britain's sub-strategic nuclear capability to the Trident fleet requires any modification to the Trident missile purchase arrangements.

Mr. Hanley: No.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the funds allocated for the purchase of Trident missiles is spent on administration surcharges.

Mr. Hanley: Three per cent.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the total number of Trident missiles being purchased by the United Kingdom are to be used in test firing.

Mr. Hanley: On current plans, about 20 per cent. of the total number of United Kingdom's Trident missiles will be test fired.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the 204 nuclear tests, the existence of which was made public by the United States Energy Secretary on 7 December, were jointly conducted with the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hanley: One. I refer the hon. Member to the answer my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Sir P. Beresford) on 8 December, *Official Report*, column 298.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Croydon, Central (Sir P. Beresford) of 8 December, *Official Report*, column 298, what was the code name of the nuclear test carried out at the Nevada test site on 25 September 1964; and with which United States laboratory this test was carried out.

Mr. Hanley: The test, codenamed Courser, was carried out in conjunction with the Los Alamos national laboratory.

WE177 Bombs

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the reduction in nuclear explosive firepower calculated by his Department assumes the stockpile of WE177 bombs to be deployed at *(a)* their highest yield, *(b)* their lowest yield or *(c)* a mixture of yields.

Mr. Hanley: It is not our practice to discuss details of nuclear weapon design, but the anticipated reduction of more than 25 per cent. in the explosive power of the United Kingdom's operational nuclear inventory when Trident is fully in service compared with 1990 is based on the full yield of all the weapons in the United Kingdom's stockpile.

MOD Dwellings

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many dwellings are currently owned by the MOD; how many have been sold since 1979; and what plans he has for further disposals.

Mr. Hanley: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many dwellings owned by his Ministry in Plymouth are currently unoccupied.

Mr. Hanley: As at 30 September 1993 the MOD owned 252 vacant dwellings in Plymouth, of which 245 were service married quarters and seven were MOD civilian houses. Of these properties, 107 were undergoing major maintenance work or modernisation and 63 were already allocated to service families who were due to move in shortly. In addition, some 47 vacant service married quarters were in the process of being sold.

Rapid Deployment Force

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the size and cost of the United Kingdom contribution to the rapid deployment force.

Mr. Hanley: In addition to the headquarters framwork, the United Kingdom is assigning to the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps—ARRC—the 1st United Kingdom Armoured Division, 3rd (UK) Division, and combat service support for both these divisions. The United Kingdom is also assigning 24 Airmobile Brigade to the Multinational Division (Central)—MND(C)—together with a contribution to the divisional HQ and communications elements and corps troops.

I will write to the hon. Member about the costs of the United Kingdom contribution.

Press Releases

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many press releases his Department has issued in each year since 1979.

Mr. Hanley: Details of press releases issued by the Ministry of Defence before 1985 are not available. Since that year, the number of press releases issued centrally by the MOD have been as follows:

	Number
1985	207
1986	190
1987	119
1988	149
1989	165
1990	263
1991	259
1992	307
1993	[1]181

[1] to 14 December

Command and district offices and bases of the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force are encouraged to issue press releases to their local media. Full records of these are not maintained.

Press Officers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many press officers his Department has employed in each year since 1983.

Mr. Hanley: Reliable manning figures are not available for the period prior to 1987 and estimates based on complements are provided for these earlier years. On this basis, the numbers employed in the Ministry of Defence Press Office have been:

	Number
1983-85	27
1985-87	23
1987-92	20
1992	13
1993	16

Military Airfields

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the military airfields in respect of which payments have been made by his Department equivalent to injurious affection compensation under the Land Compensation Acts.

Mr. Hanley: Compensation has been paid at the following military airfields:

RAF Conningsby
RAF Cottesmore
RAF Honington
RAF Lakenheath
RAF Leeming
RAF Mildenhall
RAF Marham
RAF Upper Heyford
RAF Wattisham
RNAS Yeovilton

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what his Department's policy is regarding the use of executive search consultants in making appointments to public bodies; and if he will *(a)* list the appointments where such consultants have been used and *(b)* list the cost in each case since April 1992.

Mr. Hanley: In respect of MOD non-departmental public bodies, executive search consultants will be used when appropriate. At present, there are no appointments that have been made where such consultants have been used.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which of the appointments made to public bodies by his Department since April 1992 have been advertised.

Mr. Hanley: There have been four appointments made to MOD NDPBs since April 1992: two trustees to the RAF museum and a chairman and one member to the Review Board for Government Contracts.

None of the above posts was advertised.

Contract Specifications

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 10 December, *Official Report,* column *424,* how he distinguishes between reliability and maintainability requirements forming an essential and non-essential element of a contract specification.

Mr. Hanley: The word "essential" was used to indicate the tauter approach which is now used in contracting for reliability and maintainability. In the past, reliability and maintainability were often specified as targets. Today's contracts are not fulfilled until the specified levels of reliability and maintainability are achieved.

Defence Research Agency

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a de-classifiied copy of the management parameters in the customer satisfaction survey used by the Defence Research Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: This is a matter delegated to the Defence Research Agency under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Letter from J. Chisholm to Dr. David Clark, dated 16 December 1993:

In today's written answer the Minister of State for Defence Procurement informed you that I would be replying to your question about the DRA's customer satisfaction survey.

In answer to the first part of your question the management parameters of the survey are not classified and are shown in the annex. The results of the survey are however commercially confidential.

You also asked for a statement about the survey. As part of the DRA's Framework Document we are required to agree annual performance targets with the Secretary of State and one of these concerns quality of service. One element of this is the customer satisfaction survey.

The survey has three related uses. Firstly is demonstrates to my Secretary of State that the DRA is offering a quality service and that this is improving. The target for this year is a 2 per cent. increase in overall satisfaction since the previous survey. Secondly, it helps to develop the strategic relationship we are trying to forge with industry where we are both a competitor and partner. Thirdly, and very importantly, it helps the DRA's business sectors to become more effective by knowing their customers' perception of their strengths and weaknesses.

The survey has been carried out for the last three years and last year was extended to 18 key industrial as well as about 50 MOD customers. This year's survey is now under way but the results will not be known until about the end of January when they will be incorporated into the DRA's Business Plan.

ANNEX

Management parameters for customer satisfaction survey

Overall customer satisfaction

An overall impression of the top-level performance of the technical work of a particular DRA business sector (BS).

Responsiveness

The ability of the BS to provide the customer's needs in the required timescale.

Quality

The progress towards formal quality accreditation and the impact on the customer's product.

Project management

The BS's management of the research task as a discreet project: monitoring and reporting performance against milestones, deployment of staff and resources and use of management information systems.

Understanding requirements

The ability to analyse and interpret the customer's needs to their satisfaction.

Technology

The level of technology development or innovation used to meet the customer's expectation.

Facilities

The customer's view on the use, relevance and cost of using DRA facilities.

Staff reputation

The customer's perception of the scientific and management qualifications and reputation of the BS staff undertaking their work.

RAF Support Command

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures are used by the RAF Support Command maintenance group to assess efficiency savings.

Mr. Hanley: The RAF Support Command maintenance group efficiency programme is based on the detailed reporting of efficiency performance against annual targets set by the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of RAF Support Command, the agency's owner. Efficiency savings from all the stations and units within the maintenance group are rigorously pursued, and reported upon at mid-year and end-of-year financial reporting points. In addition, the maintenance group financial staff have pursued the efficiency savings generated by the group on behalf of other areas within the Ministry of Defence. Significant efficiency savings have also been programmed into each of the annual costing exercises.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the prototype financial and management accounting systems installed by RAF Support command maintenance group at RAF St. Athan and at its headquarters.

Mr. Hanley: The financial and management accounting system installed by the maintenance group at RAF St. Athan and the headquarters to meet Her Majesty's Treasury's draft accounts direction is a commercial package known as FW-Agresso. It is marketed by Fraser-Williams (East Midlands) Ltd.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the pursuit of a total quality approach to management within RAF Support Command maintenance group.

Mr. Hanley: To date four stations have adopted the total quality approach within the RAF support maintenance group.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide detailed descriptions of all of the formal quality systems that have been installed by RAF Support Command maintenance group since its formation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The RAF Support Command maintenance group adopted assessment and certification against recognised quality systems nine years ago. A succession of standards have been used: defence standard 05-21; the NATO allied quality assurance publications; and in recent times the International Standards Organisation 9000 series.

Royal Army Engineer Regiment

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details of the length and number of emergency tours completed by each Royal Army Engineer regiment in each year since 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Royal Engineers have deployed in regimental strength on four occasions since 1988:

To the Gulf (approximately August 1990-March 1991)
  (1) 21 Engineer Regiment with 7 Armoured Brigade
  (2) 23 Engineer Regiment with 4 Armoured Brigade
  (3) 32 Armoured Engineer Regiment with 1 Armoured Division
To former Republic of Yugoslavia (November 1992-May 1993)
  (1) 35 Engineer Regiment with 1 Cheshire.

Services (Christmas Celebrations)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he intends to take to ensure that service personnel deployed in *(a)* Bosnia and *(b)* Northern Ireland can properly celebrate Christmas and communicate with their families over the Christmas period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: An important part of the welfare support for service personnel on unaccompanied tours has always been the provision of facilities to allow them to communicate with their families and friends. This is particularly important at Christmas. For troops in Bosnia, free aerogrammes are already available and the arrangements for subsidised telephone calls will be enhanced over the Christmas period. In Northern Ireland, official welfare telephones are provided and personnel receive reimbursement towards the cost of telephone calls to families. In addition, concessionary telephone cards are available for purchase to allow more frequent contact. British forces deployed in Bosnia and in Northern Ireland will continue their operational duties over the Christmas period. Arrangements are nevertheless in hand for traditional regimental Christmas celebrations.. Church services will be held in both Bosnia and Northern Ireland.

Helicopters

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which RAF units are currently equipped with helicopters capable of operating in all-weather conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: All helicopters are limited in some respects by weather conditions. RAF Chinook and Sea King helicopters have a full capability to operate under instrument flight rules. Furthermore, RAF search and rescue Sea Kings have a capability to operate in reduced visibility.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to replace the helicopters used by the Royal Marines Brigade air squadron; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Lynx helicopter armed with TOW missiles will provide both the Army and the Royal Marines with effective anti-armour capability for some time to come. We plan to replace Lynx/TOW with a modern attack helicopter system by the end of the decade, and this will offer a substantial increase in capability. We have yet to decide on total numbers and deployment. The Royal Marines also currently operate Gazelle helicopters in the communications and battlefield support role. Options for the replacement of these latter aircraft are under consideration.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details of his plans to introduce the Merlin helicopter into service, including a timetable setting out the numbers to be introduced in each year for the next 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: We currently have 44 EH101 Merlin ASW helicopters on order. The first of these is expected to be delivered to the Royal Navy in 1996. Initial aircraft will be allocated to operational proving trials. It is planned that the first operational aircraft will be deployed around the turn of the century.

All-weather Helicopters

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which Army units are currently equipped with helicopters capable of operating in all-weather conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: All helicopters are limited in some respects by weather conditions. All Army air corps helicopters can operate in the majority of conditions likely to be encountered in their primary deployment areas. There are, however, limitations in their capability in cold weather and in poor visibility.

10 Squadron

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current annual running cost of 10 Squadron.

Mr. Hanley: The average annual operating cost—at 1993-94 outturn prices—of 10 Squadron is approximately £43 million. This includes personnel, fuel, maintenance and equipment support costs but excludes depreciation, interest on capital, station and administration costs.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what additional revenue has been generated by the activities of 10 Squadron; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: 10 Squadron was established to provide strategic airlift in support of British defence and foreign policy objectives. It retains an immediate capacity to respond instantly to crises and war situations. In peacetime, it is used to support defence activities across a wide spectrum by providing air transport for operational, administrative and exercise purposes.

It does not generate revenue per se, but when non-defence specific tasks are undertaken on behalf of other Government Departments, the United Nations, or NATO, these are carried out on a repayment basis. The total value of the repayment tasks undertaken on behalf of the Prime Minister, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and in supporting United Nations operations during the 12 months to October 1993, was in the order of £2 million.

Departmental Land

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will give the size, name and location by county, in Wales of land, *(a)* owned and *(b)* leased by his Department which he intends to dispose of;

(2) if he will list by region in Scotland the size, location and name of all land *(a)* owned and *(b)* leased by his Department which he intends to dispose of;

(3) if he will give the size, location and name by county, in England of land *(a)* owned or *(b)* leased by his Department which he intends to dispose of.

Mr. Hanley: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the area, in hectares, in each county of England of land *(a)* owned or *(b)* leased by his Department.

Mr. Hanley: Land owned—freehold—and leased—leasehold—including foreshore by the Ministry of Defence in each of the counties of England is set out in the tables:

(a) Freehold Landholdings

	Hectares
Avon	165
Bedfordshire	1,315
Berkshire	1,911
Buckinghamshire	648
Cambridgeshire	2,793
Cheshire	407
Cleveland	48
Cornwall	2,724
Cumbria	8,025
Derbyshire	112
Devon	2,991
Dorset	4,928
Durham	168
East Sussex	256
Essex	15,927
Gloucestershire	1,487
Greater London	1,226
Greater Manchester	449
Hampshire	12,714
Hereford and Worcester	840
Hertfordshire	92
Humberside	1,047
Isle of Wight	5
Kent	5,528
Lancashire	627
Leicestershire	1,047
Lincolnshire	6,027
Merseyside	198
Norfolk	10,874
North Yorkshire	12,860
Northamptonshire	874
Northumberland	23,092
Nottinghamshire	848
Oxfordshire	3,630
Shropshire	1,795
Somerset	807
South Yorkshire	405
Staffordshire	1,177
Suffolk	3,438
Surrey	4,674
Tyne and Wear	10
Warwickshire	1,631
West Midlands	33
West Sussex	736
West Yorkshire	6
Wiltshire	41,336
TOTAL	181,931

(b) Leasehold Landholdings

	Hectares
Avon	26
Bedfordshire	1
Berkshire	13

	Hectares
Buckinghamshire	26
Cambridgeshire	1
Cheshire	41
Cleveland	1
Cornwall	142
Cumbria	3,786
Derbyshire	Nil
Devon	687
Dorset	452
Durham	209
East Sussex	Nil
Essex	595
Gloucestershire	Nil
Greater London	32
Greater Manchester	2
Hampshire	21
Hereford and Worcester	23
Hertfordshire	6
Humberside	Nil
Isle of Wight	1
Kent	215
Lancashire	6
Leicestershire	8
Lincolnshire	3,915
Merseyside	Nil
Norfolk	294
North Yorkshire	680
Northamptonshire	14
Northumberland	28
Nottinghamshire	648
Oxfordshire	24
Shropshire	1
Somerset	4
South Yorkshire	Nil
Staffordshire	361
Suffolk	19
Surrey	268
Tyne and Wear	4
Warwickshire	Nil
West Midlands	Nil
West Sussex	Nil
West Yorkshire	Nil
Wiltshire	52
TOTAL	12,606

Note:

Figures are at 1 April 1993—the latest date for which records are available—and relate to freehold and leasehold landholdings, including foreshore for which deeds or lease agreements were held. Acquisitions or disposals which may have been completed but where deeds had not been transferred, or agreements not formally signed or determined by 1 April 1993 are not included.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the area in hectares in each region of Scotland of land *(a)* owned and *(b)* leased by his Department.

Mr. Hanley: Land owned—freehold—and leased—leasehold—including foreshore by the Ministry of Defence in each of the regions of Scotland is set out in the table:

	(a) *Freehold landholdings Hectares*	*(b)* *Leasehold landholdings Hectares*
Borders	Nil	1
Central	78	2
Dumfries and Galloway	4,746	5
Fife	1,322	7
Grampian	2,076	87
Highland	2,786	2,278
Lothian	1,155	Nil
Strathclyde	5,581	144
Tayside	1,444	9
Orkney Isles	4	Nil
Shetland Isles	34	13
Western Isles	1,317	25
Total	20,543	2,571

Figures are at 1 April 1993—the latest date for which records are available—and relate to freehold and leasehold landholdings, including foreshore, for which deeds or lease agreements were held. Acquisitions or disposals which may have been completed but where deeds had not been transferred, or agreements not formally signed or determined by 1 April 1993 are not included.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the area in hectares of land in each county in Wales *(a)* owned and *(b)* leased by his Department.

Mr. Hanley: Land owned—freehold—and leased—leasehold—including foreshore by the Ministry of Defence in each of the counties of Wales is set out in the tables:

Hectares

	Freehold landholdings	*Leasehold landholdings*
Clwyd	322	61
Dyfed	6,716	Nil
Gwent	666	4
Gwynedd	796	2
Mid Glamorgan	8	Nil
Powys	12,059	Nil
South Glamorgan	400	2
West Glamorgan	1	Nil
TOTAL	20,968	69

Figures are at 1 April 1993—the latest date for which records are available—and relate to freehold and leasehold landholdings, including foreshore, for which deeds or lease agreements were held. Acquisitions or disposals which may have been completed but where deeds had not been transferred, or agreements not formally signed or determined by 1 April 1993 are not included.

Ferranti International

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *176*, how many contracts he currently has with Ferranti International.

Mr. Hanley: Our records show about 500 current contracts with Ferranti International. On many of these, however, work is complete and they remain open only pending final settlement.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *177*, what assessment he has made of the impact of the immediate termination of all contracts with Ferranti International on the operational effectiveness of *(a)* the Royal Navy, *(b)* the Royal Air Force and *(c)* the Army; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The receivers of Ferranti International are continuing to trade, and my Department is co-operating with them to minimise any disruption to MOD contracts. The question of the immediate termination of all contracts does not arise in the present circumstances.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *177*, what discussions he has had with his NATO counterparts relating to the future of Ferranti International.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no such discussions.

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of outstanding commitments to Ferranti.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has a large number of contracts with Ferranti International, and defence procurement officials have been discussing with the receivers how the outstanding business can be completed with the minimum of disruption.

Amphibious Operations (Support Vessels)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the current vessels available for supporting amphibious operations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Government are satisfied that the Royal Navy is fully capable of providing the support which amphibious operations currently require. In recognition of the importance of this area of operations in the current strategic environment however, the Government are currently making a sizeable investment in our capability in this field: the contract for the design and construction of a helicopter carrier was awarded on 11 May; project definition studies for the replacement of the assault ships HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid are now nearing completion; and the invitation to tender for the refurbishment of the landing ship logistic Sir Bedivere was issued on 26 November 1993.

Bosnia (Logistical Support)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what extra expenditure has been caused by the deployment of Warrior armoured vehicles in Bosnia on *(a)* spare parts and *(b)* other logistical support for these vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what extra expenditure has been caused by the deployment of armoured reconnaissance vehicles in Bosnia on *(a)* spare parts and *(b)* other logistical support for these vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Agencies

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures are used by *(a)* the Defence Analytical Services Agency, *(b)* the Defence Operational Analysis Centre and *(c)* the Directorate General of Defence Accounts to assess efficiency.

Mr. Hanley: I have asked each of the chief executives to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Letter from P. Altobell to Dr. David Clark, dated 16 December 1993:

Minister of State (DP) has asked me to reply to your Question about the measures used to assess efficiency in my Agency.

In DASA we operate a task costing system, and as a result we are able to estimate the cost of producing each of our outputs. This information, together with the replies to our Customer Satisfaction Survey, and the monitoring of established Service Level Agreements, enables changes in efficiency to be assessed.

Letter from D. Leadbeater to Dr. David Clark, dated 16 December 1993:

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement has asked me to reply to your Question about the measures used to assess efficiency in my Agency.

The Secretary of State has set 7 key Performance Targets for my Agency in 1993-94; these have been published in Hansard. One of these targets specifically calls for an increase in efficiency by 2 per cent. of the cash budget.

The Agency maintains tight control of operating costs through a full cost accounting system, hence achieving full visibility of the cost of outputs covering studies, trials, advice and models.

In order to meet the 2 per cent. target, the Agency has a set of efficiency measures which are monitored by the Department and are subject to audit.

Letter from K. M. Miller to Dr. David Clark, dated 15 December 1993:

Minister of State (DP) has asked me to reply to your question about measuring efficiency in my Agency.

My key performance targets for 1993/94 are published in Hansard and include one specifically relating to efficiency. In order to assess whether this target has been met we identify individual measures which we have taken to improve efficiency and we place a value on them by comparing output achieved with the cost of resources utilised, before and after each measure is introduced.

Additionally, my Agency routinely maintains records showing the total outputs of the Agency, eg number of bills processed, number of pay accounts managed, etc, and again by relating these to the inpout of resources used in achieving these outputs, they reflect, over a period of time, our efficiency gains.

We also carry out surveys of our customers to monitor our performance in meeting their needs.

Finally, parts of my Agency are seeking BS5750 accreditation or have adopted Total Quality approaches to their work.

This reply has been discussed with, and agreed by, Mr. Mike Dymond, the Chief Executive. I am signing it on his behalf as he is out of the office today.

Army Costs

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 9 December, *Official Report*, column *358*, if the figures for the annual running costs of Army units include the costs of replacing their equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: No.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 9 December, *Official Report*, column *358*, if he will give details of all the changes made to the basis used for costing Army units; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The figures provided in my answer of 9 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *358*, represent the best available estimate of the annual operating costs for the units in question. Until 1991, costs of units were derived from a defence-wide cost-attribution system. This system was largely reliant on judgments on the attributions of costs which were refined over time. It would not be possible to give a more detailed explanation of the differences between current cost estimates and those produced prior to 1991 without incurring disproportionate cost.

Submarines

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the Royal Navy's conventional submarine fleet.

Mr. Hanley: The only remaining conventionally powered submarines in service with the Royal Navy are the four vessels of the Upholder class. This year's Statement on the Defence Estimates announced our decision to withdraw these submarines from service by 1995. We are currently examining options for their sale, lease or storage, bearing in mind the investment which they represent.

Otterburn Training Area

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the full terms of reference of the environmental impact assessment that is being prepared for the development plan for Otterburn training area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The study, the terms of which have been agreed with the Northumberland national park authority, is not a part of the formal planning process, but will provide a blueprint for future developments. Until firm proposals are available, both parties have agreed that public comment would be premature.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the name of the firm of independent planning and environmental consultants that is preparing the environmental impact assessment for Otterburn training area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The firm of independent planning and environmental consultants that is preparing the preliminary environmental impact assessment for Otterburn training area is RPS Clouston which is based at Steventon, Abingdon, near Oxford.

Army Requirements

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his German and Canadian counterparts relating to future training requirements for the British Army; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: British Army field training currently takes place at Canadian training areas at the British army training unit, Suffield—BATUS—and the British army support unit, Wainwright—BATUW. United Kingdom use of these training areas is covered by a memorandum of understanding with the Canadian MOD and is not due to expire until 2006.

Regular official contact with the Canadian defence authorities makes them well aware of our continuing commitment to training at Suffield and Wainwright and our commitment to ensure that all defence activity is undertaken in the most cost-effective manner.

In Germany, field training exercises are limited to battle group level and below. I understand that the Federal Republic of Germany is considering the establishment of a field training centre in one of the eastern Lander. There are no plans to involve the British Army in this training facility nor are there any plans to increase British training areas in Germany as a whole. German MOD officials are kept informed of our thinking in this area.

Mechanised Brigade

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a declassified statement of the future training requirements of 19 Mechanised Brigade.

Mr. Hanley: 19 Mechanised Brigade will conduct its future training in field training exercise—FTX—and command field exercise—CFX—modes on Salisbury plain training area—SPTA—with low-level individual and collective training carried out on local training areas.

FTX aims to practice all elements of a formation, unit and sub-unit under as realistic conditions as possible and CFX training is a mode of exercising whereby command, control and communication elements deploy, but only selected formations do so in full strength. It combines the aims of FTX with command post exercise—CPX—whereby enemy and/or friendly forces are generated, displayed and moved by electronic or other means on computers, simulators or other training devices. The purpose of the CPX is to practice headquarters staffs at all levels in a realistic way which does not involve manoeuvre elements.

In addition, 19 Mechanised Brigade will also conduct its armoured/mechanised battle group training at the British Army training unit, Suffield—Canada.

Training Equipment, Catterick

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the installation of new types of computerised training equipment at Catterick; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The only training facilities that use computerised training equipment are the brigade and battle group trainer—north—located at HQ Catterick and the unit fire control trainer and small arms trainer which are used for in-barracks training at unit level. HQ 19 Mechanised Brigade, however, may be involved in computer assisted exercises where computers simulate the operational environment and provide event resolution, when the higher formation trainer—HFT—comes into service in 1994. HFT is a computer based trainer to be used for "wargaming" at up to corps level.

Royal Yacht

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the future of the royal yacht; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The royal yacht underwent a refit in Portsmouth in 1991 to enable her to remain safe, seaworthy and up-to-date for the next few years. Nevertheless, she is an old ship, commissioned in 1954, and in view of her age, her future is currently under review. A wide range of options are being considered.

Type 23 Frigate

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current status of the type 23 frigate procurement programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: We currently plan to issue invitations to tender for a further batch of type 23 frigates during the course of next year and to place an order in 1995.

Departmental Objectives

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 10 December, *Official Report*, column *424*, if he will publish details of the quantitative data he uses in the assessment of the achievement of departmental standing objectives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Unclassified data related to the achievement of departmental standing objectives are published in the departmental report—Cm 2201. Other relevant material is published in the Statement on the Defence Estimates—Cm 2270. Copies of both are in the Library of the House.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 10 December, *Official Report*, column *424*, if he will place in the Library declassified copies of all the reports of top and higher level budget holders which contain their judgments on the performance against departmental standing objectives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: No. Although reports by top and higher-level budget holders are sources for MOD headquarters analysis, they cannot give a full account of performance against departmental standing objectives. Piecemeal publication could give an unbalanced and misleading impression. Preparing declassified versions would also divert staff effort and add cost. An overview of performance against departmental standing objectives is published in the departmental report—Cm 2201.

Warrior Vehicles

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what operational impact the deployment of Warrior armoured vehicles in Bosnia has had on those Warrior armoured vehicles still deployed in Germany; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The deployment of a Warrior armoured infantry battalion to the former Yugoslavia has had little operational impact on the rest of the Warrior fleet remaining in Germany. For a time there was a slight shortage of some items for which longer notice is needed. The procurement and repair strategy has been adjusted to ensure the Warrior fleet as a whole is fully supported.

Armoured Reconnaissance Vehicles

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what operational impact the deployment of armoured reconnaissance vehicles in Bosnia has had on those armoured reconnaissance vehicles still deployed in Germany; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: There has been no operational impact on those armoured reconnaissance vehicles still deployed in Germany as there was a surplus of this type of vehicle due to the drawdown.

HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current operational status of *(a)* HMS Fearless and *(b)* HMS Intrepid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: HMS Fearless is fully operational, having completed a period of programmed maintenance earlier this year. HMS Intrepid is currently held in a state of extended readiness at Portsmouth. As such she has a reduced ship's crew, and some systems have been placed in preservation. She remains in commission, however, and could be brought forward for operations if an emergency arose.

RAF Stations

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the distance between *(a)* RAF Valley and RAF St. Athan, *(b)* RAF St. Athan and Pembrey range, *(c)* Pembrey range and RAF Valley, *(d)* RAF Chivenor and RAF St. Athan, *(e)* RAF Chivenor and Pembrey range, *(f)* RAF Brawdy and RAF St. Athan and *(g)* RAF Brawdy and Pembrey range.

Mr. Hanley: The distances are as follows:

a. RAF Valley and RAF St. Athan: 116 nautical miles
b. RAF St. Athan and Pembrey range: 38 nautical miles
c. Pembrey Range and RAF Valley: 91 nautical miles
d. RAF Chivenor and RAF St. Athan: 33 nautical miles
e. RAF Chivenor and Pembrey Range: 38 nautical miles
f. RAF Brawdy and RAF St. Athan: 68 nautical miles
g. RAF Brawdy and Pembrey Range: 30 nautical miles

Note: 1 nautical mile=1·15078 statute miles=1·8520 km.

RAF St. Mawgan

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which search and rescue base covers RAF St. Mawgan military operations.

Mr. Hanley: Search and Rescue—SAR—cover for military aircraft operation in the immediate vicinity of RAF St. Mawgan is provided by the SAR bases at RAF Chivenor and RNAS Culdrose. Aircraft conducting military operations out of RAF St. Mawgan in other areas of the United Kingdom, and requiring SAR support, would be allocated resources by the rescue and co-ordination centres, depending upon the position of the aircraft, whether conditions and SAR resources available.

RAF Chivenor

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his best estimate of the annual cost of support services, including security, catering, sewage disposal and emergency fire services at RAF Chivenor from 1 October 1994.

Mr. Hanley: Under the proposals that I announced in the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) on 7 December, *Official Report*, column *177*, flying training would cease at RAF Chivenor from 1 October 1994 and by 1995 Chivenor would operate on a care and maintenance basis. The annual cost of support services for 1 October 1994 would be some £937,000 per annum.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department has spent on new and existing buildings and infrastructure at *(a)* RAF Chivenor and *(b)* RAF Valley in each of the last five years.

Mr. Hanley: Available historical records show that the amounts spent on new and and existing buildings and infrastructure are as follows:

	£
(a) RAF Chivenor (last two years only):	
1992-93	5,972,000
1993-94 (to date)	3,038,000
(b) RAF Valley (last three years):	
1991-92	4,197,000
1992-93	8,374,000
1993-94 (to date)	3,004,000

Administration

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total expenditure by his Department on administration in 1992-93; what is the estimated outturn for expenditure by his Department on administration for 1993-94 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms in, 1992-93 prices; and what is his estimate for expenditure on administration by his Department for 1994-95 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1992-93 prices.

Mr. Hanley: The final outturn for the running costs of the Ministry of Defence in 1992-93 was £6,251,000. The running cost limit for 1993-94 is £5,475,000. An estimated outturn will be published in spring 1994 in the departmental report and the unified budget supplement. The Department's planned running costs expenditure in 1994-95 is £5,410,000. In 1992-93 prices, the figures shown for 1993-94 and 1994-95 are £5,302,000 and £5,038,000 respectively.

World War II

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements are being made to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II in 1995.

Mr. Rifkind: I am pleased to be able to announce that the Government intend to commemorate the events associated with the ending of the second world war; to recognise the sacrifices of so many who were involved; to give thanks for the beginning of peace; and to take forward the spirit of reconciliation. There will be two church services in London. One will be in St. Paul's cathedral; the venue for the other has yet to be decided. One will be on Sunday 7 May, the other in mid-August. Each will be followed by a parade. The Government also envisage that commemorations in London will be reflected in events around the nation and intend to consult widely, especially with veterans' associations and voluntary organisations, on the detailed planning.

In addition, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment announced today, for 1995 only and in association with these commemorative events, the early May bank holiday will be on Monday 8 May, which in Scotland will be an additional day's bank holiday.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the decision to extend ethnic monitoring to service personnel will be implemented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The implementation of in-service ethnic monitoring will begin this week with a survey of the ethnic origins of regular armed forces' personnel, excluding the brigade of Gurkhas. Ethnic origin questionnaires will be sent first to RAF personnel, and then to Navy and Army personnel in the new year. Information on the survey is currently being disseminated throughout the armed forces. To reinforce the services' policy of equal opportunities for personnel of all racial groups, a code of practice on race relations in the armed forces has been published and is also being disseminated throughout the services. A copy of the code of practice has been placed in the Library of the House.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 17 December 1993

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Northern Ireland Courts

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many persons have been appointed deputy county court judges in Northern Ireland in the current year; and for what periods such appointments have lasted.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Thirteen persons have been appointed deputy county court judges in Northern Ireland since 1 January 1993, each appointment being made for a period of three years.

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list all the functions organised by the Northern Ireland court service to which officials of the Irish Republic were invited in 1992 and 1993.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The only function organised by the Northern Ireland court service to which officials of the Government of the Irish Republic were invited in 1992 and 1993 was the Christmas drinks party hosted by the directorate.

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many county court vacancies exist in Northern Ireland.

Mr. John M. Taylor: At present two county court vacancies exist in Northern Ireland.

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proportion of correspondence received by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each of his Department's agencies receives (i) an acknowledgement within five days and (ii) a substantive reply within 15 days.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Magistrates, Gwent

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the political balance of magistrates in Gwent.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The political balance of magistrates for the Gwent commission area, based on their political affiliations on appointment, is as follows:

Political party	
Conservative	115
Labour	97
Liberal Democrat	34
Plaid Cymru	2
Independent/Not known	56

Press Officers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many press officers his Department has employed in each year since 1983.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Chancellor's Department has employed the following press officers: in 1983—one; in 1984—one; in 1985—two; in 1986—two; in 1987—two; in 1988—two; in 1989—three; in 1990—four; in 1991—six; in 1992—six; in 1993—seven.

Legal Aid

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what reports he has received from the Legal Aid Board in respect of the average time taken to pay solicitors interest payments made on the payments and negotiations between solicitors and the board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Legal Aid Board has extensive contact with the Law Society, including many meetings at which a wide range of matters are discussed. The board reports annually to the Lord Chancellor. Details about the time taken to pay lawyers' bills are included in the report. The board's targets and performance for the year to date are set out in the table. The board's payment targets are short and are generally met. It is therefore not appropriate to pay interest. On rare occasions it makes an ex-gratia compensation payment where there has been an error by the board which caused undue delay in payment.

Bills for Magistrates' Courts' proceedings

Time taken	*1993-94 Target* Per cent.	*1993-94 Performance to date* Per cent.
6 weeks	[1]90	94·6

[1] For standard fee payments, the target will increase to 97·5 per cent. of bills paid within 4 weeks, for the period 1 January 1994-31 March 1994.

Civil bills: Taxed and assessed

Time taken	*1993-94 Target* Per cent.	*1993-94 Performance to date* Per cent.
6 weeks	75	83·8

Other bills

Time taken	*1993-94 Target* Per cent.	*1993-94 Performance to date* Per cent.
6 weeks	92	95·4

Small Motor Accident Claims

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department for what reason small motor accident claims are excluded from the small claims court procedure in Northern Ireland.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The scope of the small claims procedure in Northern Ireland is a matter for the Northern Ireland County Court Rules Committee. In line with the different historical development of the procedure in that jurisdiction, motor accident claims are currently excluded from the small claims court. In the light of a recent report by the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, I understand that the Rules Committee will be invited to re-examine this issue early in the new year.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Know-how Funds

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which companies benefited from the training for investment personnel scheme in each year since the scheme's inception.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A total of 102 businesses have taken up training for investment personnel scheme grant offers under the know-how fund since 1990. A list has been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how many pre-investment feasibility studies have been carried out in each year since the know-how funds' creation; and what was the total cost in each year of the Government contribution to the cost of those studies;

(2) how many pre-investment feasibility studies have resulted in projects or investments going ahead, by year, since the creation of the know-how funds.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information is in the table.

Know-how fund: Pre-investment feasibility studies (PIFS) scheme

Year	Number of applications approved[1]	Total grant offered £	Number of reports on studies submitted to date	Number of investment operations: going ahead	not going ahead	not yet decided[2]	Number of reports awaited
1990	10	111,965	10	7	2	1	—
1991	65	1,723,467	60	33	19	8	5
1992	94	2,501,922	64	37	13	14	30
[3]1993	80	2,050,928	30	25	0	5	50
Totals	249	6,388,282	164	102	34	28	85

[1] This column excludes 24 offers of grant which were accepted, but subsequently withdrawn, by applicants, or which lapsed.

[2] ie at time of submission of report on study to FCO.

[3] To 14 December.

Investment Personnel Scheme

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many training for investment personnel scheme places have been paid for by the Government; and what was the total cost per year since the creation of the scheme.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information is as follows:

Know-How Fund: Training for investment personnel scheme (TIPS)

Year	Number of trainees	Total grant offered £
1990	35	80,147
1991	166	643,629
1992	491	1,029,808
[1]1993	460	843,594
Total	1,152	2,597,178

[1]to 14 December

Note:

The TIPS scheme finances the training of key indigenous personnel employed in British investment operations located in countries covered by the know-how fund. The training can take place either in the United Kingdom, or in-country, or—very often—both. Training in the United Kingdom is limited to small numbers of key personnel, whereas in-country training is usually spread more widely among operational staff. A priority in all cases is to identify and train indigenous trainers who can multiply and continue the training provided under the TIPS scheme. The rate and amount of grant offered varies in each case, up to a maximum of £50,000.

EDUCATION

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what arrangements are made to ensure that special advisers to Ministers in his Department do not have access to the kind of information, and are not involved in the type of business, that would be likely to create suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment.

Mr. Robin Squire: Care is taken to ensure that the special adviser does not have access to the kind of information likely to create suspicion of impropriety. The special adviser is not involved in evaluating tenders or letting contracts.

Stockport LEA

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information he has about the number of staff employed other than in schools by the Stockport local education authority; and what are the corresponding figures for earlier years.

Mr. Robin Squire: Information on the number of employees of each local education authority is compiled by the Local Government Management Board from data collected on behalf of the Joint Staffing Watch. The table shows the total numbers of teaching staff and other education staff employed by the Stockport local authority, both in schools and elsewhere. It is not possible to separate out those among them who were not employed in school.

	Teachers and Lecturers		*Education—Other*[2]	
March	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*Full-time*	*Part-time*
1990	2,511	1,356	1,021	2,468
1991	2,381	1,492	1,058	2,510
1992	2,379	1,476	974	2,823

[1] The table covers all staff in the LEA maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools sector, special and further education—including colleges which have since transferred to the new FE sector—and central administration.

[2] "Other" includes educational support, clerical, school meals and premises-related staff employed in schools and colleges, together with central services and administration within the education service.

Press Officers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many press officers his Department has employed in each year since 1983.

Mr. Boswell: Figures for the number of press officers are available only for the last four years. These are as follows:

Year	*Press officers*
1990	9
1991	8
1992	8
1993	11

National Union of Students

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many student unions are affiliated to the National Union of Students; and which student unions have opted out or have attempted to opt out of the National Union of Students in the past five years.

Mr. Boswell: Affiliation arrangements are a matter between the National Union of Students and the student unions at institutional level. Comprehensive information on student unions' affiliation decisions is not available centrally.

The NUS's annual report for 1991-92 indicates that some 800 student unions throughout the United Kingdom were affiliated. The information available to the Department is that the student unions at Edinburgh, Glasgow and St. Andrew's universities, and at King's and Imperial colleges, London, are not currently affiliated to the NUS.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish the amount of money given to the National Union of Students *(a)* directly and *(b)* indirectly by the Government in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Boswell: The National Union of Students is not supported directly from central Government funds. It is a confederation of campus student unions and depends for its main income on affiliation fees from local unions. Student unions' funds originate from a variety of sources: principally profits on their trading activities, and block grant from their parent institutions, paid out of funds deriving from a mix of public and private sources. NUS affiliation fees for 1991-92 amounted to £2·57 million, some 93 per cent. of a total NUS income of £2·76 million.

Special Needs

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many copies of his draft code of practice on the identification and assessment of special needs have been printed; to whom and how many an initial distribution was made; how many were distributed in response to requests; and if he will ensure that at least one copy will be dispatched to each maintained school in England and Wales.

Mr. Robin Squire: As of 15 December, a total of 23,000 copies of the draft code had been printed. The Department made an initial distribution of over 1,000 copies of a first print run of 2,500 to all local education authorities, social services departments and regional and district health authorities, as well as to other interested bodies, such as voluntary organisations and teacher unions.

The Department's distribution centre has distributed a further 22,000 copies of the draft code in response to requests. Our intention is, subject to Parliament's approval, to issue a revised version of the code in the early summer, to come into effect on 1 September. We shall send copies to all maintained schools and take steps to ensure that the code's messages are widely understood.

Music Education

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many hours on average of music education were available per pupil in*(a)* infant, *(b)* primary and *(c)* secondary schools in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92; and if he will make a statement on Government policy in this area.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested for infant and junior schools is not centrally available.

Information is available for 1992 for secondary schools from the secondary schools staffing surveys which collected data from representative samples of maintained secondary schools in England. The table shows the percentage of total pupil periods recorded as having been spent on music for pupils in each year group.

Year group	*January 1992*
7	4·2
8	4·0
9	3·4
10	0·8
11	0·8

Music is a foundation subject in the national curriculum. For the first time, all pupils will complete a full and rigorous course in music, up to the age of 14. After 14, schools can offer pupils the opportunity to study music if they so wish.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in each local education authority in England are or have been eligible to apply for grant-maintained status; how many in each case have held ballots; how many ballots in each case resulted in votes to seek grant-maintained status; how many of these have been subject to section 12 or 13 notices; and how many ballots in each case resulted in votes against seeking grant-maintained status.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is set out in the tables.

Results of parental ballots on self-governing status

LEA	*Primary eligible*	*Primary ballots*	*Yes votes*	*No votes*	*Primary 12/13*	*Secondary eligible*	*Secondary ballots*	*Yes votes*	*No votes*	*Secondary 12/13*
Corporation of London	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Camden	41	0	0	0	0	11	3	2	1	0
Greenwich	79	1	1	0	1	15	1	0	1	0
Hackney	70	1	1	0	1	10	1	0	1	0
Hammersmith	38	1	1	0	1	10	1	1	0	0
Islington	57	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0
Kensington	27	2	2	0	0	4	1	1	0	1
Lambeth	77	5	5	0	0	10	5	5	0	0
Lewisham	72	1	1	0	0	13	2	0	2	1
Southwark	75	5	5	0	0	14	5	5	0	1
Tower Hamlets	73	0	0	0	0	15	2	1	1	0
Wandsworth	72	5	3	2	1	10	8	7	1	1
Westminster	42	0	0	0	0	8	1	0	1	0
Barking	55	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0
Barnet	89	5	2	3	0	21	11	10	1	1
Bexley	64	4	3	1	0	17	6	5	1	0
Brent	64	4	4	0	1	13	13	11	2	2
Bromley	78	7	6	1	0	17	14	13	1	2
Croydon	98	3	3	0	0	20	9	7	2	0
Ealing	92	4	4	0	2	13	8	6	2	8
Enfield	70	4	1	3	0	17	6	5	1	0
Haringey	77	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0
Harrow	54	0	0	0	0	10	2	1	1	0
Havering	74	0	0	0	0	19	6	4	2	1
Hillingdon	72	11	11	0	0	15	15	14	1	2
Hounslow	62	0	0	0	0	14	3	2	1	0
Kingston	36	1	1	0	0	10	4	4	0	0
Merton	49	1	0	1	0	11	1	0	1	0
Newham	67	0	0	0	0	14	1	1	0	1
Redbridge	56	0	0	0	0	14	2	1	1	0
Richmond	39	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0
Sutton	43	4	3	1	0	14	8	8	0	0
Waltham Forest	61	1	0	1	0	16	2	2	0	0
Birmingham	336	11	6	5	0	79	24	17	7	0
Coventry	109	1	0	1	0	19	0	0	0	0
Dudley	83	1	1	0	0	22	9	7	2	1
Sandwell	112	0	0	0	0	20	4	1	3	2
Solihull	70	1	1	0	0	13	2	1	1	0
Walsall	106	3	2	1	0	21	11	7	4	0
Wolverhampton	101	1	0	1	1	20	6	5	1	2
Knowsley	68	0	0	0	0	11	3	1	2	1
Liverpool	198	0	0	0	0	36	5	3	2	0
St. Helens	72	1	1	0	1	12	1	0	1	0
Sefton	94	0	0	0	0	22	1	0	1	0
Wirral	106	0	0	0	0	21	4	2	2	0
Bolton	105	1	1	0	0	16	3	3	0	1
Bury	71	2	1	1	0	14	0	0	0	0
Manchester	174	0	0	0	0	28	1	0	1	0
Oldham	104	0	0	0	0	15	1	0	1	1
Rochdale	76	7	4	3	0	14	3	1	2	2
Salford	88	0	0	0	0	18	4	1	3	0
Stockport	110	0	0	0	0	14	2	0	2	0
Tameside	82	1	0	1	0	18	5	3	2	2
Trafford	78	0	0	0	0	16	6	4	2	1
Wigan	125	0	0	0	0	21	1	1	0	1
Barnsley	96	1	1	0	1	15	2	0	2	1
Doncaster	127	5	4	1	4	34	1	0	1	0
Rotherham	115	0	0	0	0	18	0	0	0	0
Sheffield	164	17	15	2	10	32	8	6	2	4
Bradford	167	5	3	2	0	88	8	6	2	0
Calderdale	91	4	4	0	0	16	7	6	1	2
Kirklees	158	2	0	2	0	34	5	3	2	1

LEA	*Primary eligible*	*Primary ballots*	*Yes votes*	*No votes*	*Primary 12/13*	*Secondary eligible*	*Secondary ballots*	*Yes votes*	*No votes*	*Secondary 12/13*
Leeds	249	3	1	2	0	46	1	1	0	0
Wakefield	130	2	2	0	1	38	0	0	0	0
Gateshead	82	0	0	0	0	13	1	0	1	0
Newcastle	82	1	0	1	0	22	1	0	1	0
North Tyne	61	2	1	1	1	26	3	2	1	2
South Tyne	58	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	0
Sunderland	105	0	0	0	0	17	0	0	0	0
Isles of Scilly	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Avon	369	5	0	5	0	60	4	2	2	1
Bedfordshire	218	3	3	0	0	71	18	11	7	1
Berkshire	275	10	7	3	0	59	12	10	2	1
Buckinghamshire	290	8	6	2	0	45	11	10	1	0
Cambridge	267	9	7	2	0	44	25	17	8	2
Cheshire	454	8	5	3	3	68	11	4	7	3
Cleveland	203	0	0	0	0	44	3	0	3	0
Cornwall	249	1	1	0	0	31	0	0	0	0
Cumbria	306	23	18	5	0	42	14	14	0	4
Derbyshire	450	13	7	6	0	61	24	14	10	4
Devon	442	8	2	6	1	64	9	6	3	0
Dorset	200	2	1	1	0	56	16	14	2	4
Durham	298	0	0	0	0	43	1	0	1	0
East Sussex	219	0	0	0	0	34	1	0	1	0
Essex	581	78	72	6	0	105	75	71	4	1
Gloucestershire	262	11	10	1	0	43	35	29	6	3
Hampshire	580	20	18	2	8	94	21	17	4	2
Hereford and Worcester	288	2	0	2	0	76	8	5	3	0
Hertfordshire	432	13	10	3	0	88	31	26	5	2
Humberside	354	5	3	2	0	60	4	0	4	0
Isle of Wight	46	0	0	0	0	21	0	0	0	0
Kent	570	25	23	2	2	136	73	69	4	12
Lancashire	605	4	2	2	0	106	16	9	7	1
Leicester	334	2	0	2	0	79	9	5	4	1
Lincolnshire	293	30	26	4	0	63	28	28	0	2
Norfolk	397	19	15	4	0	52	16	12	4	0
North Yorkshire	394	2	0	2	0	59	2	0	2	0
Northants	270	13	10	3	0	65	20	14	6	4
Northumberland	143	0	0	0	0	61	3	1	2	0
Nottinghamshire	426	1	0	1	0	82	8	3	5	3
Oxfordshire	241	1	1	0	0	44	2	0	2	0
Shropshire	214	3	3	0	2	37	7	7	0	1
Somerset	229	5	3	2	0	39	2	2	0	0
Staffordshire	414	4	3	1	0	85	10	5	5	0
Suffolk	255	0	0	0	0	77	1	0	1	0
Surrey	372	21	19	2	10	51	14	14	0	2
Warwickshire	244	0	0	0	0	37	9	8	1	1
West Sussex	246	0	0	0	0	41	3	0	3	0
Wiltshire	294	15	12	3	0	44	23	16	7	0
Totals	18,905	506	392	114	52	3,657	843	640	203	100

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what applications were received from grant-maintained schools for capital grant for the financial year 1993-94; and what has been the level of grant approved in each case.

Mr. Robin Squire: I have placed in the Library copies of papers detailing the applications and allocations of named project capital grant to self-governing—grant maintained—schools in 1993-94.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list, by local education authority, the schools which have held ballots on grant-maintained status as a result of a parental petition stating, in each case *(a)* whether the ballot resulted in a yes or no majority, *(b)* the number of registered pupils at the school and *(c)* the date the ballot closed.

Mr. Robin Squire: Information requested is set out in the table. The table does not contain details of pupil numbers for each school, which are taking a little longer to assemble. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as they are available.

Ballots on self-governing (GM) status initiated by parental petition

LEA	*School*	*Result*	*Date ballot closed*
Barnsley	Wortley CE Controlled J and I School	Yes	30 May 1991
Barnsley	Dearneside Comprehensive School	No	26 July 1990
Berkshire	Reading Girls' School (previously Southlands)	Yes	30 May 1989
Bexley	Burnt Oak Junior School	No	2 July 1993
Birmingham	Bishop Challoner RC School	Yes	14 May 1993
Birmingham	King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Girls	Yes	24 July 1992
Birmingham	Manor Park Primary School	Yes	28 October 1993
Birmingham	King Edward VI Handsworth School	Yes	24 July 1992

LEA	*School*	*Result*	*Date ballot closed*
Birmingham	Lordswood Boys' School	No	14 July 1993
Birmingham	King Edward VI Aston School	Yes	24 July 1992
Birmingham	King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Boys	Yes	24 July 1992
Birmingham	Oldknow Junior School	No	10 December 1992
Birmingham	Handsworth Grammar School for Boys	Yes	9 February 1990
Birmingham	King Edward VI Five Ways School	Yes	24 July 1992
Birmingham	Baverstock Grant-Maintained School	Yes	6 February 1989
Bolton	Crompton Fold Primary School	Yes	17 December 1991
Bradford	St. Joseph's RC Primary School	No	3 December 1993
Bradford	Killinghall First School	Yes	22 March 1993
Brent	Copland Community School and Technology Centre	Yes	27 February 1991
Brent	Claremont High School (Grant-Maintained)	Yes	3 April 1989
Bromley	Bullers Wood School for Girls	Yes	22 May 1990
Bromley	Ramsden School for Girls	Yes	17 January 1989
Bromley	Beaverwood School for Girls	Yes	22 July 1991
Bromley	Langley Park School for Boys	Yes	8 March 1991
Buckinghamshire	Wycombe Royal Grammar School	Yes	17 July 1992
Calderdale	The Crossley Heath School	Yes	19 December 1989
Calderdale	The North Halifax Grammar School	Yes	18 December 1989
Calderdale	All Saints' CE (VC) Primary School	Yes	28 June 1993
Cambridgeshire	The Park Lane Primary School	Yes	28 February 1992
Cambridgeshire	Hinchingbrooke School	No	22 March 1993
Cambridgeshire	Gamlingay (Grant-Maintained) Village College	Yes	7 May 1991
Cambridgeshire	Orton Wistow Primary School	Yes	3 July 1992
Cambridgeshire	The King's School (Peterborough Cathedral School)	Yes	6 July 1992
Camden	William Ellis School	No	6 April 1993
Cheshire	St. Joseph's RC High School	Yes	24 December 1992
Cheshire	Hassall Green Methodist Primary School	Yes	4 July 1991
Cheshire	Arley County Primary School	Yes	25 March 1991
Cheshire	Victoria Road County Primary School	No	8 January 1993
Cheshire	Kettleshulme St. James CE GM Primary School	Yes	18 February 1991
Cheshire	Culcheth High School	No	11 May 1993
Cheshire	Darwin Street County Primary School	No	8 November 1993
Cleveland	Gillbrook School	No	16 November 1992
Coventry	Potters Green Primary School	No	29 June 1993
Cumbria	Eden School	Yes	11 June 1991
Cumbria	St. Aidan's County High School	Yes	12 February 1991
Cumbria	Trinity School, Carlisle	Yes	1 November 1991
Derbyshire	Lady Manners School	Yes	25 January 1993
Derbyshire	Granville Community School	No	21 May 1993
Derbyshire	Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School	No	9 November 1992
Derbyshire	The Ecclesbourne School	Yes	28 February 1990
Derbyshire	Repton Primary School	Yes	12 October 1992
Derbyshire	Chellaston Junior Grant Maintained School	Yes	12 March 1993
Derbyshire	Silverhill Primary School	No	26 February 1993
Derbyshire	Noel-Baker Community School (GM)	Yes	3 November 1992
Derbyshire	The Dronfield School	No	4 December 1992
Derbyshire	John Port School	Yes	28 October 1992
Derbyshire	Belmont Primary School	Yes	3 July 1991
Derbyshire	Netherthorpe School	Yes	17 January 1989
Derbyshire	Chellaston School	Yes	29 June 1992
Devon	Teign School	Yes	31 July 1992
Devon	Holsworthy CE Primary School	No	25 May 1993
Devon	Torquay Boys' Grammar School (GM)	Yes	15 June 1992
Devon	Poughill CE Primary School	Yes	15 December 1992
Devon	Warberry CE (Controlled) Primary	No	7 December 1992
Doncaster	Braithwell First and Middle School	Yes	2 November 1992
Doncaster	Barnby Dun Middle School	No	14 April 1993
Doncaster	Armthorpe Comprehensive School	No	23 April 1990
Doncaster	Fishlake Endowed First School	Yes	25 January 1993
Doncaster	Warmsworth St. Peter's CE VC First School	Yes	13 August 1993
Doncaster	Brodsworth CE First and Middle School	Yes	19 April 1993
Dorset	Poole Technical High School (Ex Henry Harbin)	Yes	5 November 1992
Dudley	The Summerhill School	No	21 December 1992
Dudley	The Kingswinford Grant-Maintained School	Yes	29 October 1992
Ealing	Greenford High School	Yes	20 May 1991
Ealing	Wood End Middle School	Yes	12 April 1991
Ealing	Brentside High School	Yes	1 July 1991
Ealing	Drayton Manor High School	Yes	4 February 1991
Ealing	Dormers Wells First School	Yes	12 April 1993
Ealing	Wood End First School	Yes	25 March 1991
Ealing	Dormers Wells Middle School	Yes	28 April 1993
East Sussex	Blatchington Mill School	No	1 February 1993
Enfield	Raglan Infant School	No	26 May 1993
Enfield	Hadley Wood Primary School	No	28 September 1993
Essex	The Sweyne School	No	4 August 1993
Essex	St. Clare's RC Primary School	Yes	4 December 1992
Essex	St. Andrew's Grant Maintained CE Primary School	Yes	13 July 1992

LEA	*School*	*Result*	*Date ballot closed*
Essex	Beauchamps Grant-Maintained School	Yes	18 November 1991
Essex	Westborough County Primary School	Yes	4 August 1992
Essex	Anglo European School (Ingatestone)	Yes	26 October 1992
Essex	Edwards Hall County Infant School	No	17 August 1993
Essex	Bromfords School, Wickford	Yes	18 November 1991
Gloucestershire	Robinswood Primary School	Yes	5 November 1991
Gloucestershire	The Crypt School	Yes	30 April 1991
Gloucestershire	Stroud High School	Yes	22 May 1989
Gloucestershire	Ribston Hall High School	Yes	28 March 1989
Gloucestershire	Marling School	Yes	22 May 1989
Greenwich	Hawksmoor Primary School	Yes	18 March 1993
Hackney	St. Thomas's CE Primary School	Yes	27 October 1992
Hammersmith	Harwood School	Yes	29 January 1991
Hampshire	Boundary First School	Yes	8 June 1992
Hampshire	The Priory School	Yes	6 July 1992
Hampshire	Testwood School	Yes	15 July 1992
Hampshire	Calmore Grant-Maintained Middle School	Yes	28 July 1992
Hampshire	Purbrook CE First School	Yes	22 February 1993
Hampshire	The Burgate School	Yes	16 November 1990
Hampshire	Mill Rythe First School, Havant	Yes	20 March 1992
Hampshire	Mengham Middle School	Yes	24 April 1992
Hampshire	Mengham First School	Yes	26 March 1992
Hertfordshire	Hertingfordbury Cowper JMI School	Yes	23 December 1991
Hertfordshire	St Mary's Catholic Primary School	Yes	1 March 1991
Hertfordshire	Christ Church CE School	Yes	21 June 1991
Hertfordshire	Rickmansworth School	Yes	15 May 1989
Hertfordshire	Sir James Altham School	Yes	30 January 1989
Hertfordshire	Francis Bacon School	Yes	27 November 1989
Hillingdon	The Douay Martyrs School	Yes	3 August 1992
Hillingdon	Charville Primary School	Yes	16 March 1993
Hillingdon	Grange Park Junior School	Yes	28 September 1992
Hillingdon	Uxbridge High School	Yes	27 February 1991
Hillingdon	Grange Park Infant School	Yes	28 September 1992
Hillingdon	Queensmead School	Yes	20 December 1990
Hillingdon	Oak Farm Junior Mixed School (GM)	Yes	27 February 1992
Hillingdon	Oak Farm Infant School (Grant-Maintained)	Yes	27 February 1992
Hillingdon	Northwood School	Yes	18 April 1991
Hillingdon	Barnhill School	Yes	13 June 1991
Hillingdon	Vyners School	Yes	1 February 1991
Humberside	Barmby Moor CE Primary School	Yes	2 June 1993
Humberside	Healing Comprehensive School	No	4 January 1993
Kensington	St Charles' RC Primary School	Yes	16 July 1993
Kensington	Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School	Yes	13 March 1989
Kent	The Maplesden Noakes School	Yes	7 March 1990
Kent	Hoo St Werburgh Middle School, Kent	No	23 January 1992
Kent	The Bradbourne School	Yes	2 December 1991
Kent	Swanscombe High School	Yes	27 July 1990
Kent	Cliffe Woods Primary School, Rochester	Yes	18 February 1991
Kent	Cliffe Woods Middle School	Yes	3 August 1990
Kent	St Bartholomews RC Primary School	Yes	28 May 1993
Kent	Chaucer Technology School	Yes	8 January 1993
Kent	Senacre Technology School	Yes	7 May 1991
Kent	Rede Secondary School, Strood	Yes	3 December 1991
Kent	Queen Elizabeth's School	Yes	25 January 1993
Kent	Appledore CE Primary School	Yes	25 March 1991
Kent	Barton Court Grammar School	Yes	8 February 1993
Kent	Edenbridge Middle School	Yes	7 December 1990
Kent	Herne Bay High School	Yes	12 August 1992
Kent	Wrotham School	Yes	20 May 1991
Kirklees	Heckmondwike Grammar School	Yes	22 December 1988
Kirklees	Deighton High School	Yes	4 November 1991
Knowsley	Prescot School	No	30 November 1992
Lambeth	Archbishop Tenison's School	Yes	4 December 1992
Lancashire	Lancaster Royal Grammar School	Yes	30 May 1989
Lancashire	Lancaster Girls Grammar School	Yes	7 June 1990
Lancashire	Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School	Yes	24 February 1989
Lancashire	St Richard's RC High School	Yes	12 June 1992
Lancashire	Newton Bluecoat C of E GM Primary School	Yes	28 February 1991
Leeds	St Michael's CE (VA) Primary School	No	5 July 1993
Leeds	Lady Elizabeth Hastings CE Primary School	Yes	26 April 1993
Leeds	Abbey Grange CE (GM) High School	Yes	9 June 1993
Leeds	Bramhope Primary School	No	21 May 1993
Leicestershire	Kestrels' Field Primary School	No	29 November 1993
Leicestershire	South Wigston High School	Yes	26 November 1992
Lewisham	Turnham Primary with Nursery GM School	Yes	25 March 1991
Lincolnshire	King Edward VI School	Yes	18 June 1990
Lincolnshire	The Kings School Grantham	Yes	3 February 1989
Lincolnshire	Hartsholme County Primary School	Yes	20 March 1993

LEA	*School*	*Result*	*Date ballot closed*
Lincolnshire	Rauceby School CE GM	Yes	12 June 1991
Lincolnshire	Queen Elizabeth's GM Grammar School	Yes	30 December 1988
Lincolnshire	Queen Elizabeth's GM Grammar School	Yes	22 October 1991
Lincolnshire	Ermine Junior Grant Maintained School	Yes	16 December 1991
Liverpool	St. Mary's RC Girls High School	Yes	28 July 1993
Liverpool	St. Francis Xavier's College	Yes	27 February 1989
Liverpool	Our Lady of Fatima RC High School	Yes	5 February 1993
Manchester	Trinity CE High School	No	29 October 1992
Merton	Bond First School	No	29 October 1992
Newcastle	Walbottle School	No	26 October 1992
Newcastle	Knop Law First School	No	14 June 1993
Newham	Stratford School	Yes	26 September 1989
Norfolk	Cliff Park High School (Grant Maintained)	Yes	18 September 1992
Norfolk	Peterhouse Middle School	No	5 July 1993
North Tyneside	Coquet Park First School	No	16 April 1993
North Tyneside	South Wellfield Middle School	Yes	19 March 1993
North Tyneside	Marden High School	No	11 November 1992
North Yorkshire	Norton School	No	31 March 1993
North Yorkshire	Wheatcroft County Primary School	No	28 January 1993
Northamptonshire	Walgrave County Primary School	No	14 June 1993
Northamptonshire	All Saints Middle School	No	11 December 1992
Northamptonshire	Southfield School For Girls	Yes	3 February 1989
Northamptonshire	Woodnewton Way Infant School	Yes	11 June 1993
Nottinghamshire	The George Spencer School	Yes	16 October 1992
Nottinghamshire	Ravensdale Grant Maintained Middle School	Yes	14 May 1991
Oldham	Failsworth School	No	30 July 1990
Oxfordshire	Milham Ford Upper School	No	7 December 1992
Rochdale	Crossgates Primary School	Yes	2 March 1991
Rochdale	St. John's RC Primary School	No	12 November 1993
Rochdale	Milnrow Parish CE Primary	No	6 December 1993
Salford	Walkden High School	No	4 November 1992
Salford	St. Ambrose Barlow RC High School	Yes	15 December 1992
Sandwell	Manor High GM Community School	Yes	17 September 1990
Sandwell	Wood Green High School	No	22 November 1993
Sheffield	Bolsterstone CE J and I School, Sheffield	Yes	11 December 1991
Sheffield	Bole Hill Primary School	Yes	11 August 1993
Sheffield	Clifford CE Grant-Maintained School	Yes	12 November 1991
Sheffield	Handsworth First School, Sheffield	Yes	23 December 1991
Sheffield	Shirebrook Nursery/Infant and Junior School	Yes	7 May 1993
Sheffield	Roscoe Bank Junior and Infants School	Yes	20 December 1991
Sheffield	Carter Lodge School	Yes	7 May 1993
Sheffield	Gleadless Valley School	Yes	11 August 1993
Sheffield	Burncross Primary School	Yes	13 August 1993
Sheffield	Broomhill Infant School	Yes	2 August 1993
Sheffield	Norfolk Secondary School	Yes	9 December 1991
Sheffield	Dr. John Bingham Primary School	Yes	31 March 1993
Shropshire	The Manor School	Yes	28 October 1992
Shropshire	The Down County Primary School	Yes	24 January 1991
Shropshire	The Corbet Grant-Maintained School	Yes	5 November 1992
Shropshire	Ercall Wood School	Yes	26 November 1992
Shropshire	Ellerdine County Primary School	Yes	29 January 1991
Shropshire	Abraham Darby School	Yes	20 November 1992
Solihull	Hatchford Grant-Maintained Primary School	Yes	20 June 1991
Somerset	St. John's VC CE Primary School	Yes	21 April 1993
Southwark	The London Nautical School	Yes	9 January 1989
St. Helens	Rainhill Park Primary School	Yes	22 March 1993
Staffordshire	Codsall High School	No	20 November 1992
Staffordshire	Hollinsclough CE Primary School	Yes	5 October 1992
Staffordshire	St. Thomas More RC High School	Yes	6 July 1992
Staffordshire	St. Mildred's CE Primary School	Yes	25 September 1992
Staffordshire	Edgecliff High School	No	25 January 1993
Surrey	The Manor County First School	Yes	20 March 1991
Surrey	Blindley Heath CE First School	Yes	27 August 1991
Surrey	Alfold County First School	Yes	3 August 1992
Surrey	Hawkedale First School	Yes	3 June 1991
Surrey	Send C of E First School (Grant-Maintained)	Yes	27 March 1991
Surrey	Park Mead County First School	Yes	30 April 1992
Surrey	Dunsfold C of E First School	Yes	3 July 1992
Sutton	The John Fisher School	Yes	9 July 1991
Sutton	Cheam Fields Primary School	No	26 November 1993
Tameside	West Hill School	Yes	19 September 1992
Tameside	Audenshaw High School	Yes	5 December 1988
Tameside	Fairfield High School for Girls (GM)	Yes	20 November 1992
Tameside	Longdendale High School	No	12 February 1993
Wakefield	Southmoor Road First School	Yes	26 November 1993
Wakefield	Woolley CE First School	Yes	20 May 1991
Walsall	Streetly School	Yes	26 November 1991
Walsall	St. Thomas More RC Comprehensive GM School	Yes	7 November 1991

LEA	*School*	*Result*	*Date ballot closed*
Walsall	Aldridge School	Yes	22 February 1993
Walsall	Park Hall County Junior School	Yes	14 May 1993
Walsall	Park Hall County Infant Scool	Yes	14 May 1993
Wandsworth	Huntingfield Primary School	Yes	23 September 1991
Wandsworth	Ethelburga Primary School (Grant-Maintained)	Yes	9 July 1991
Warwickshire	The Avon Valley Grant-Maintained School	Yes	23 October 1990
Warwickshire	Alcester Grammar School	Yes	13 July 1992
Warwickshire	Queen Elizabeth School, Atherstone	Yes	5 November 1991
West Sussex	Manhood Community College	No	27 January 1933
Wigan	Hindley Park High School (Now Closed)	Yes	6 March 1989
Wiltshire	St. George's RC Primary School	Yes	28 June 1993
Wiltshire	St. Edmund's RC Primary School	Yes	22 March 1993
Wiltshire	Greendown Community School	No	5 February 1993
Wiltshire	Frogwell County Primary School	Yes	9 June 1993
Wirral	Wirral Grammar School for Boys	Yes	19 January 1993
Wirral	Wirral County Grammar School for Girls	No	11 June 1993
Wolverhampton	Valley Park School	Yes	30 November 1992
Wolverhampton	Colton Hills School	No	23 June 1993
Wolverhampton	The Bilston High School	Yes	27 July 1992
Wolverhampton	Aldersley High School	Yes	4 June 1993

Note: While information held centrally on the method of initiation covers most schools where there have been ballots, it is not fully comprehensive.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the grant-maintained schools which have sought his approval for a change of character *(a)* by extending the age range of pupils for which the school provides and *(b)* by selecting pupils according to aptitude or ability, stating in each case whether their application has been successful.

Mr. Robin Squire: The following self-governing—grant-maintained—schools have published proposals under section 89 of the Education Reform Act 1988 to make a significant change in the character of the school by extending the age range, and by the introduction of arrangements for the admission of pupils by reference to ability or aptitude.

Proposals published under section 89 of the Education Reform Act 1988 for a significant change in the character of a school by extending the age range

School	*Nature of change*	*Decision*
Havering		
The Francis Bardsley School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c[1]
Waltham Forest		
Highams Park School	11-16 to 11-18	rejected
Highams Park School	11-16 to 11-18	approved
Birmingham		
Baverstock GM School	11-16 to 11-18	approved
Small Heath School	11-17 to 11-18	approved
Dudley		
Alder Coppice GM Primary School	5-11 to 3-11	u/c
Wolverhampton		
Moseley Park GM School	11-16 to 11-18	approved
Trafford		
The New Wellington High School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
Sheffield		
Clifford First School	5-8 to 5-11	rejected
Kirklees		
Castle Hall GM School	9-13 to 11-18	rejected
Castle Hall GM School	9-13 to 11-16	approved
Cambridgeshire		
The Queen's School	11-16 to 11-18	rejected
Sawtry Village College	11-16 to 11-18	approved
Cumbria		
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School	13-18 to 11-18	approved
Derbyshire		
Chellaston School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
The Merrill Community School	11-16 to 11-19	u/c
Noel Baker Community School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
Essex		
Beauchamps GM School	11-16 to 11-18	approved
Bromfords School	11-16 to 11-18	approved
Chalvedon School	11-16 to 11-18	approved
The King John School	11-16 to 11-19	u/c
The Philip Morant School	11-16 to 11-18	rejected
Thorpe Bay High School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
West Hatch School	11-16 to 11-18	approved
Katherines Primary School	5-11 to 3-11	u/c
Gloucestershire		
Robinswood Primary School	4-11 to 3-11	u/c
Hampshire		
The Arnewood School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
The Burgate School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
Humberside		
Wold Newton GM Primary School	5-11 to 3-11	u/c
Kent		
Aylesford School	11-17 to 11-18	rejected
The Cornwallis School	11-17 to 11-18	approved
The Maplesden Noakes School	11-16 to 11-18	approved
Meopham GM School	11-17 to 11-18	rejected
Oldborough Manor Community College	11-17 to 11-18	rejected
Ringwood School (GM Comprehensive)	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
Senacre Technology School	11-17 to 11-18	rejected
Thamesview School	11-17 to 11-18	rejected
Wrotham School	11-17 to 11-18	rejected
Lincolnshire		
Gleed Girls GM School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
William Farr CE School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
Bourne Abbey (GM) Primary School	4-11 to 3-11	u/c
Norfolk		
Costessey High School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
Sheringham High School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
Surrey		
Heathside Secondary School	12-16 to 11-18	rejected
Yattendon Middle School	8-12 to 7-11	u/c
Hawkedale First School	5-8 to 3-7	rejected
The Manor County First School	4-8 to 3-7	rejected

School	*Nature of change*	*Decision*
Warwickshire		
Queen Elizabeth School	11-16 to 11-18	approved
Wiltshire		
St. Augustine's RC (GM) Comprehensive	11-16 to 11-18	u/c

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[1] u/c, under consideration.

Proposals published under section 89 of the Education Reform Act 1988 for a significant change of character of a school by the introduction of arrangements for the admission of pupils with reference to ability or aptitude

School	*Decision*
Selection wholly or in part by reference to ability	
Kirklees	
Castle Hall GM School	rejected
Berkshire	
Southlands School (now Reading School)	approved
Cumbria	
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School	approved
Dorset	
Budmouth GM School	[1]u/c
Sutton	
Cheam High School	[1]u/c
Selection by aptitude	
Kent	
Chaucer Technology School	aptitude in technology [1]u/c

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[1]u/c, under consideration.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will list the grant-maintained schools which have sought his approval for changes in their admissions policy which *(a)* constitute or *(b)* do not constitute, a significant change in character; and if he will state, in each case, whether their application has been successful;

(2) if he will list the grant-maintained schools which have sought his approval for changes in their admissions policy to introduce the selection of pupils by reference to their aptitude or ability, stating in each case *(a)* whether this constituted a significant change of character and *(b)* whether their application has been successful.

Mr. Robin Squire: The grant-maintained schools listed in table 1 have published proposals under section 89 of the Education Reform Act 1988 to make a significant change in the character of the school by extending the school's age range or by the introduction of arrangements for the admission of pupils by reference to ability or aptitude.

My right hon. Friend has approved a large number of changes to the admissions criteria of grant-maintained schools which have not required statutory proposals. Table 2 lists those agreed or under consideration which involve selection of up to 10 per cent. of the school's intake of the basis of aptitude or ability in music, sport, drama, dance, art or technology. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible giving details of all other changes that have been approved or requested.

Table 1

Proposals published under section 89 of the Education Reform Act 1988 for a significant change in the character of the admissions of a school

School	*Nature of change*	*Decision*
Havering		
The Francis Bardsley School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c[1]
Sutton		
Cheam High School	selection by ability	u/c
Waltham Forest		
Highams Park School	11-16 to 11-18	rejected
Highams Park School	11-16 to 11-18	approved
Birmingham		
Baverstock GM School	11-16 to 11-18	approved
Small Heath School	11-17 to 11-18	approved
Dudley		
Alder Coppice GM Primary School	5-11 to 3-11	u/c
Wolverhampton		
Moseley Park GM School	11-16 to 11-18	approved
Trafford		
The New Wellington High School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
Sheffield		
Clifford First School	5-8 to 5-11	rejected
Kirklees		
Castle Hall GM School	selection by ability 9-13 to 11-18 9-13 to 11-16	rejected rejected approved
Berkshire		
Southlands School (now Reading School)	selection by ability	approved
Cambridgeshire		
The Queen's School	11-16 to 11-18	rejected
Sawtry Village School	11-16 to 11-18	approved
Cumbria		
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School	selection by ability 13-18 to 11-18	approved approved
Derbyshire		
Chellaston School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
The Merrill Community School	11-16 to 11-19	u/c
Noel Community School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
Dorset		
Budmouth GM School	selection by ability	u/c
Essex		
Beauchamps GM School	11-16 to 11-18	approved
Bromfords School	11-16 to 11-18	approved
Chalvedon School	11-16 to 11-18	approved
The King John School	11-16 to 11-19	u/c
The Philip Morant School	11-16 to 11-18	rejected
Thorpe Bay High School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
West Hatch School	11-16 to 11-18	approved
Katherines Primary School	5-11 to 3-11	u/c
Gloucestershire		
Robinswood Primary School	4-11 to 3-11	u/c
Hampshire		
The Arnewood School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
The Burgate School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
Humberside		
Wold Newton GM Primary School	5-11 to 3-11	u/c
Kent		
Aylesford School	11-17 to 11-18	rejected
Chaucer Technology School	selection by aptitude in technology	u/c

School	*Nature of change*	*Decision*
The Cornwallis School	11-17 to 11-18	approved
The Maplesden Noakes School	11-16 to 11-18	approved
Meopham GM School	11-17 to 11-18	rejected
Oldborough Manor Community College	11-17 to 11-18	rejected
Ringwood School (GM Comprehensive)	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
Senacre Technology School	11-17 to 11-18	rejected
Thamesview School	11-17 to 11-18	rejected
Wrotham School	11-17 to 11-18	rejected
Lincolnshire		
Gleed Girls GM School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
William Farr CE School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
Bourne Abbey (GM) Primary School	4-11 to 3-11	u/c
Norfolk		
Costessey High School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
Sheringham High School	11-16 to 11-18	u/c
Surrey		
Heathside Secondary School	12-16 to 11-18	rejected
Yattendon Middle School	8-12 to 7-11	u/c
Hawkedale First School	5-8 to 3-7	rejected
The Manor County First School	4-8 to 3-7	rejected
Warwickshire		
Queen Elizabeth School	11-16 to 11-18	approved
Wiltshire		
St. Augustine's RC (GM) Comprehensive	11-16 to 11-18	u/c

[1] Under consideration.

Table 2

Applications by grant-maintained schools for 10 per cent. selection for ability or aptitude in art, dance, drama, music, sport or technology

School	*Nature of selection*
Approved	
Kensington and Chelsea	
Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School	Up to 10 per cent. for Music
Lambeth	
Dunraven School	Up to 10 per cent. for Music
La Retraite High School	Up to 10 per cent. for Music
Barnet	
Mill Hill County School	Up to 10 per cent. for Music
Bromley	
Beaverwood School	Up to 10 per cent. for Music or Dance
Bullers Wood School	Up to 10 per cent. of the preference for single sex provision
Cooper's School	Up to 10 per cent. for Music, Drama, Art, Dance or Sport
Havering	
Abbs Cross School	Up to 10 places for Music
Cambridgeshire	
The King's School	Up to 8 places for Music
Essex	
King Edward VI Grammar School	Up to 3 places for Choristers
Kent	
Canterbury High School	Up to 10 per cent. for Music
Langley Park School for Boys	Up to 10 per cent. for Music or Sport
Westlands High School	Up to 10 per cent. for Music
Hertfordshire	
Bishop's Stortford High School	Up to 15 places for Sport, Music or Drama
Dame Alice Owen School	Up to 10 per cent. for Music or Sport
Queen's School	Up to 10 per cent. for Music, Art or Sport
Surrey	
Heathside School	Up to 15 places for Music or Sport
Under Consideration	
Bromley	
Kemnal Manor School	Up to 10 per cent. for Technology
Essex	
Rainsford High School	Up to 10 per cent. for Music or Drama
Kent	
Chaucer Technology School	Up to 10 per cent. for Technology
Wiltshire	
Ridgeway School	Up to 10 per cent. for Music or Swimming

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many local education authorities have been required by his Department to justify the text of publications relating to grant-maintained status; how many of these publications have been found to be *(a)* misleading and subject to further action and *(b)* not misleading and hence not subject to further action; and how many local education authorities, or their officers, have been sent an apology for the unjustified suggestion that publications have been misleading.

Mr. Robin Squire: Over the past 18 months, the Department has corresponded with more than 60 local education authorities about publications relating to grant-maintained status. In nearly all cases, officials have pointed out and sought comments on potentially misleading statements in one or more documents issued by the authority. Where appropriate, local education authorities are asked to correct misleading statements and include the correct version in their future publications on grant-maintained status. The Department does not keep summary records of the outcome of this correspondence.

Primary Schools

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if primary schools, subject to local management of schools must meet the cost of administering, invigilating and staffing entrance examinations to *(a)* opted-out schools and *(b)* independent schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: Arrangements for holding entrance examinations are a matter for the schools concerned, involving the LEA as appropriate.

Sex Education

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will incorporate the advice of the British Medical Association and others contained in the document

"Confidentiality and People Under 16" in the guidelines on sex education he is sending out for consultation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: Consultative draft guidance on the new arrangements for sex education in schools in England was published on 6 December 1993, inviting comments by 18 February 1994. A copy has been sent to the British Medical Association. The draft guidance addresses issues of confidentiality as they apply to schools. Any views expressed by the British Medical Association or others will be taken into account in preparing the guidance in final form which we intend to issue to schools next spring.

Departmental Offices

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the regional and area offices of his Department, of the Office for Standards in Education, of the higher, and further education funding councils, of the Funding Agency for Schools and of other public bodies for which he is responsible.

Mr. Boswell: The Department does not have separate regional or area offices. Of the Department's 2,255 staff, 1,200 are based in London and 1,055 are on five sites in Darlington.

The Further Education Funding Council has the following regional offices:

South East—Kings Road, Reading
London—Percy Street, London W1
Northern—Amethyst Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Yorkshire and Humberside—Blenheim Court, Leeds
West Midlands—Quinton Road, Coventry
North West—Cornbrook, Manchester
East Midlands—Quinton Road, Coventry
South West—Blackbrook Park Avenue, Taunton
Eastern—Cowley Road, Cambridge
(The Council's new headquarters is also at Quinton Road, Coventry).

Other non-departmental public bodies for which my right hon. Friend has responsibility do not have separate regional offices.

In the case of OFSTED, I am asking Professor Sutherland to write to the hon. Member direct with the information.

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of correspondence received by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each of his Department's agencies receives (i) an acknowledgement within five days and (ii) a substantive reply within 15 days.

Mr. Boswell: In accordance with recommendations made in 1990 by the Government's efficiency unit, the Department no longer routinely issues acknowledgements to letters which are to be replied to by Ministers. Of the nearly 3,500 ministerial replies issued between 1 September 1993 and 30 November 1993, 76 per cent. were issued within three weeks and 90 per cent. within four weeks of receipt of the incoming letter.

The Department does not collect the data requested for incoming letters which are to be replied to by officials.

In line with the Department's approach, the Teachers Pensions Agency does not issue routine acknowledgements. Between 1 April and 30 November, the TPA replied to 98 per cent. of ministerial correspondence and 85 per cent. of general correspondence within 15 days. The figures are based on the 80 per cent. of correspondence that is subject to detailed monitoring.

Teacher Training

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will name the institution to which he referred, in a broadcast interview on the BBC programme "The World this Weekend", on 14 November, as having provided no school-based experience during the first two years of a teacher training course; and if he will describe the action he has taken to remedy the situation.

Mr. Patten: It would not be appropriate to name an individual institution on the basis of comments made to me in confidence by a constituent. I am confident that the new criteria for courses of initial teacher training which I have published in recent circulars will, when fully implemented, ensure that all student teachers receive suitable classroom experience throughout their training.

Public Meetings

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what requirements are imposed on (i) maintained county and voluntary schools, (ii) grant-maintained schools, (iii) city technology colleges, (iv) colleges of further education and sixth form colleges, (v) the Funding Agency for Schools and (vi) the further education and the higher education funding councils, to hold meetings in public of the main governing body concerned, any committees, and any sub-committees; and what rights of access the public have to agendas, minutes, and reports to such bodies, committees and sub-committees.

Mr. Boswell: All these bodies are free if they wish, but are not required by law, to admit members of the public to meetings. Governing bodies of maintained county and voluntary schools, grant-maintained schools, and further education and sixth form colleges are required to ensure that copies of agendas, minutes and reports in relation to every meeting of the governing body are made available at the institution to any person wishing to inspect them. Material relating to named pupils or students and to staff, and to any members which the governing body regard as confidential, may be omitted.

National Curriculum Council

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list *(a)* the number of staff employed by the National Curriculum Council who were made redundant as a result of the dissolution of that council, *(b)* the total sum of redundancy payments received by staff employed at the National Curriculum Council and *(c)* the cost of relocating staff formerly employed by the National Curriculum Council and now employed by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

Mr. Robin Squire: A total of 61 former employees of the National Curriculum Council—NCC—were made redundant at a cost of £1·76 million. The eventual cost of relocating former NCC staff who are now employed by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority—SCAA—is estimated at £0·7 million. These one-off costs should be set against estimated annual efficiency savings of

£1·4 million as a result of dissolving the NCC and the School Examinations and Assessment Council and establishing the SCAA.

Special Purpose Grants

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the applications received and payments made for special purpose grant—restructuring—in respect of head teacher posts in grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is not held in the form requested.

Schools (Capital Allocations)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on capital allocations for local education authority maintained schools for 1994-95.

Mr. Robin Squire: Local education authorities have today been informed of their annual capital guidelines—ACGs—for schools which, together with supplementary credit approvals to be issued later, will total £403 million in 1994-95. They have also been informed of their allocations for capital and repairs spending by the governors of voluntary-aided and special agreement schools in their areas—the overall grant to be made available in 1994-95 will be £113·6 million. Provision for both sectors reflects the continuing transfer of local authority schools to the grant-maintained sector.

In distributing ACGs, we have again given priority to the second and third year expenditure on work approved in earlier years; basic need projects to provide new school places in areas of growing demand; cost-effective projects to remove surplus places.

Allocations in the basic need and surplus place removal categories are at historically high levels, reflecting growth in pupil numbers and the success of the pressures we have put on LEAs to remove spare capacity.

ACGs do not represent the full total of resources available to LEAs for capital expenditure. Authorities are also able to spend additional sums from capital receipts and from their revenue budgets if they so choose. The substantial sum available for 1994-95 should enable LEAs to continue to make significant progress in improving the school building stock.

Of the total of £113·6 million grant for voluntary-aided schools, £45·6 million has been set aside for repairs. The remainder—£68 million—is to be provided for capital work. A total of £18 million of this will support new work to provide for new school places, cost-effective removal of surplus capacity, as well as a range of improvement and replacement projects. Twenty-three major projects have been authorised to start and a further 29 to proceed to initial design work.

Details of individual LEAs' ACGs and grant allocations have been placed in the Library.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Re-offending

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many instances of reoffending have occurred in the last three years in respect of offenders during home leave granted to prisoners who have been convicted of offences of violence.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Jonathan Evans, dated 17 December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many instances of re-offending have occurred in the last three years in respect of offenders during home leave granted to prisoners who have been convicted of offences of violence.

At present such information is not available centrally. We are considering whether and if so how such information can be available in the future.

Prisoners (Home Leave)

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of his review on the issue of home leave for dangerous or violent offenders.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Jonathan Evans, dated 17 December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the progress of the review being carried out by the Prison Service to review the operation of the home leave and temporary release schemes, particularly in relation to dangerous or violent offenders.

The Working Group set up to conduct the review has prepared a summary of its main conclusions and recommendations. These are now being considered.

Litter Louts

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many litter louts have been prosecuted under the recent legislation.

Mr. Maclean: In England and Wales in 1992 there were 811 prosecutions under section 1(3) of the Litter Act 1983 and 828 prosecutions for depositing litter under section 87 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Bail

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will make a commencement order under the Bail (Amendment) Act 1993 so as to give the prosecution a right of appeal against decisions by magistrates to grant bail.

Mr. Maclean: We hope to bring the Bail (Amendment) Act 1993 into force early in the new year.

Asylum

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the address of the centre for information, discussion and exchange on asylum and the name of its director.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The centre has no permanent address or director. Its meetings are chaired by the country currently holding the presidency of the European Union and serviced by the general secretariat of the Council.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations have taken place between institutions operating on the basis of the second pillar of the Maastricht treaty, on foreign and security policy and those of the third pillar, on justice and home affairs matters, on matters which relate to immigration and asylum policy.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It has been agreed that joint reports will be prepared under the auspices of the common foreign and security policy on the situation in third countries. These will be made available to member states via the clearing house for information, discussion and exchange on asylum set up under the third pillar.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration was given to matters concerning immigration and asylum policy at the meeting of the Justice Council which took place in Brussels at the beginning of December.

Mr. Charles Wardle: If the hon. Member is referring to the meeting of the Interior and Justice Council on 29 and 30 November, I would refer him to the reply I gave to him on 7 December, columns *165-66*.

National Alliance of Women's Organisations

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will approve in full the funding application made by the National Alliance of Women's Organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The request made by the National Alliance of Women's Organisations for funding in 1994-95 and beyond is among a number of applications currently under consideration by the Voluntary Services Unit. The outcome should be known within the next few weeks.

Refugees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements have been made to implement the decisions arising out of the December 1992 Edinburgh summit meeting on refugees from countries on which there is considered generally to be no serious risk of persecution.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is for individual member states to decide whether to take any specific action in response to this conclusion. We have no present plans to formalise a list of countries meeting the criteria it sets out.

Charity Commission

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the reason for the Charity Commission determining that some of the payments made by the Foundation for Business Responsibilities to Marketforce Communications were unjustified; how much money was involved; how this money had been spent and by whom; how many of the donors to the Foundation for Business Responsibilities between 1987 and 1990 were interviewed during the Charity Commission's investigation into the Foundation for Business Responsibilities in 1991-92, to find their motivation for giving money to the charity; and what was the involvement of Dame Shirley Porter and Michael Ivens in these payments.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: During the course of the commissioners' investigation, the trustees of the Foundation for Business Responsibilities themselves had decided that there was substance in the suggestion that some of the payments made by the Foundation to Marketforce Communications Ltd. during 1989 and 1990 were not necessarily justified having regard to the services provided by Marketforce to the foundation.

The trustees decided that all payments made by the foundation to Marketforce during 1989 and 1990, totalling £98,897·96, should be recovered regardless of whether or not some of the payments were justified. This was done and the commissioners were satisfied that any possible misapplication of charitable funds had been remedied.

Michael Ivens, then director of the foundation, authorised the payments to Marketforce. The commissioners' inquiry did not reveal any evidence of involvement of Dame Shirley Porter in the payments.

None of the Foundation's donors were interviewed during the commissioners' investigation.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the conclusion of the Charity Commission's investigation into the relationship between the Aims of Industry organisation and the Foundation for Business Responsibilities; what prompted the investigation; and in what months the investigation was carried out.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The commissioners' inquiry into payments by the Foundation for Business Responsibilities to Marketforce Communications Ltd. showed that £62,390.09 had been paid by the foundation to Aims of Industry during 1988-91.

There was no evidence to suggest that the payments to Aims of Industry were otherwise than in providing legitimate services to the foundation—namely, management services, accommodation, research and printing works.

The investigation into the payments made to Aims of Industry was carried out between March and September 1992.

Police

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has held with the Secretary of State for Transport concerning appraisal-related pay, in relation to transport-related functions of the police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None. We have made it clear that pay should be related to overall performance, which does not mean measuring it against crude indicators such as numbers of arrests or crimes cleared up, or in relation to specific police functions.

Bogus Charities

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what safeguards exist to prevent bogus charities collecting on the streets.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: If a person represents that he or she is collecting on behalf of a charity when that is not the case, this could amount to obtaining property by deception which is an offence under section 15 of the Theft Act 1968.

If in doubt about a collector's bona fides, members of the public should inquire whether or not the collector has the necessary authority by asking to see his badge or certificate. If the collection is said to be for a charity, a member of the public can ask whether the charity is registered with the Charity Commission. If someone has doubts about an organisation or collector soliciting donations, he or she should not give but should consider reporting the matter to the local authority, Charity Commission or police.

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the work of the ad hoc group on immigration will be co-ordinated with that of the co-ordinating committee established on the basis of article K4 of the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Following implementation of the treaty on European Union, the ad hoc group on immigration has been replaced by a group of senior officials, known as steering group I, covering immigration and asylum matters. Steering group I reports to the article K4 committee, whose role is to oversee and co-ordinate this and other intergovernmental work under title VI of the treaty.

Extradition (Zimbabwe)

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the extradition arrangements between the United Kingdom and Zimbabwe; and if he will list how many people have been extradited from Zimbabwe to the United Kingdom in each year since the arrangements were made.

Mr. Maclean: Our extradition arrangements with Zimbabwe are governed by the Commonwealth scheme for the rendition of fugitive offenders. There have been no extraditions from Zimbabwe since that country's independence in 1980.

Seals

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide continuing protection for seals under the Conservation of Seals Act 1970, following the expiry of the order laid under section 3(1) in 1990.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have now laid before Parliament the Conservation of Seals (England) Order 1993, which provides permanent close season protection for common seals and grey seals for three years in an area stretching along the North sea coast from the border between England and Scotland to Newhaven on the south coast. The order will come into force on 19 December, to coincide with the expiry of the order laid in 1990.

Squatters

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost to local authorities of dealing with squatters in the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Maclean: I understand from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment that this information is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimates he has as to the number of squatters there are currently in England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The nature of squatting makes it impossible to assess the number of squatters with any degree of accuracy, but estimates as to the total number of people squatting in England and Wales generally range between 30,000 and 50,000. More precise information is, however, available about the number of local authority dwellings under unauthorised occupation: on 1 April 1993 there were 2,963 local authority dwellings so occupied, of which 88 per cent. were in inner London: Hackney—1,152; Lambeth—327; Tower Hamlets—232; Camden—153; and Islington—135—being among the areas worst affected.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representatives he has received from *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* other sources in the last 12 months regarding squatters.

Mr. Maclean: During the last 12 months, we have received one representation from a local authority about squatting, and 139 representations from other sources including hon. Members, organisations supporting the homeless, retail groups and individual members of the public.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the number of incidents in the last 12 months where squatters were required to move and of the type of ownership applicable in the properties concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Squatters may be required to leave property in certain circumstances under the provisions of the Criminal Law Act 1977. No information is, however, collected centrally about the number of occasions on which this power is used.

From October 1992 to September 1993, 28,981 orders for possession were made by the civil courts as a result of actions for possession where the action was not a consequence of a default in mortgage payments. Of these, 8,203 orders were granted to private landlords, 5,715 to housing associations, and 15,063 to other social landlords, including local authorities. It is important to bear in mind, however, that these figures do not indicate how many properties were actually repossessed, as not all the orders made will have resulted in the issue and execution of warrants of possession. It should also be noted that not all actions to repossess property are in respect of squatters, and there is no information as to what proportion of the figures given in fact relate to instances of squatting.

Homicide

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* female and *(b)* male victims of homicide there were in 1992; and if he will give a breakdown in each case in terms of their ethnic origin.

Mr. Maclean: There were 240 female and 382 male victims of offences currently recorded as homicide in England and Wales in 1992 as at 27 August 1993.

A breakdown by ethnic origin is not available from the statistics collected centrally.

Departmental Offices

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the regional and area offices of his Department, Her Majesty's inspectorate of police, and of the Fire Service, of the Commission for Racial Equality, and of other inspectorates, agencies, and other public bodies for which he is responsible.

Mr. Howard: The information requested is as follows:

Organisation and regional offices

- Animals (Scientific Procedures) Inspectorate
    - Shrewsbury
    - Swindon
    - Harrogate
    - Dundee
    - Cambridge
    - Guildford
- HM Fire Service Inspectorate (Territorial)
    - Cambridge
    - Birmingham
    - Leeds
    - Swindon
- HM Fire Service Inspectorate (Crown Premises)
    - Birmingham
    - Leeds
    - Swindon
    - Woking
- HM Inspectorate of Probation
    - Manchester
- Forensic Science Service
    - Birmingham
    - Aldermaston
    - Chepstow
    - Chorley
    - Huntingdon
    - Wetherby
- Gaming Board
    - Bristol
    - Edinburgh
    - Manchester
    - Nottingham
- HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
    - Cambridge
    - Sheffield
    - Worcester
    - Bristol
    - Woking
- United Kingdom Passport Agency
    - Belfast
    - Glasgow
    - Liverpool
    - Newport, Gwent
    - Peterborough
- Women's Royal Voluntary Service
    - Lancaster
    - Manchester
    - Chester
    - Newcastle-upon-Tyne
    - Darlington
    - South Humberside
    - Leeds
    - Worcester
    - Nottingham
    - Birmingham
    - Bedford
    - Reading
    - Ipswich
    - Tonbridge Wells, Kent
    - Bristol
    - Exeter
    - London
    - Cardiff
    - Edinburgh
- Commission for Racial Equality
    - Birmingham
    - Leeds
    - Manchester
    - Leicester
    - Edinburgh

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of correspondence received by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each of his Department's agencies receives (i) an acknowledgement within five days and (ii) a substantive reply within 15 days.

Mr. Howard: Various targets are set for acknowledging and answering different types of correspondence in different areas of the Home Office and its agencies. Information in the form requested by the hon. Member is not, however, readily available for the Department as a whole, nor for individual agencies.

Richmond Fellowship

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has received from the Charity Commission concerning his investigation of the Richmond Fellowship.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that the commissioners' inquiry into the Richmond Fellowship has been concluded and that the charity appears to be on a stable footing.

Essex Police

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the strength of the Essex police force for each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is set out in the table. The latest figure available for 1993 is August:

Essex Police—Strength as at 31 December

Year	
1984	2,649
1985	2,678
1986	2,718
1987	2,725
1988	2,763
1989	2,799
1990	2,884
1991	2,878
1992	2,917
1993 (August)	2,985

Secure Training Centres

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department where the five proposed secure training centres will be sited; and if he will list the county and region in which each centre is located and the counties and region or regions to be served by each.

Mr. Maclean: No final decisions have been taken about where the secure training centres will be sited or the areas which they will serve.

Category C Prisoners

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department at what point during a life sentence or a prisoner's term of imprisonment might he or she be considered for category C status.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Jean Corston, dated 17 December 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the point at which a life sentence prisoner might be considered for category C conditions.

In the case of male prisoners, there is no fixed point at which a life sentence prisoner is considered for category C conditions. Each case is considered on its merits and in the light of reports from the establishment in which he or she is held. Factors which influence the decision to move a life sentence prisoner to a category C prison are whether the risk he or she presents is commensurate with category C security; whether the prisoner has addressed any areas of concern, such as alcohol addiction, and the timing of the first review of his or her case by the Parole Board.

Establishments for women are not categorised on the same basis as those holding men. But the same general principles for a move to less secure conditions apply.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of police expenditure is devoted to crime prevention; and what steps he is taking to increase the proportion.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Many of the 128,000 police officers in England and Wales are involved in crime prevention to a greater or lesser extent but it is not possible to identify what percentage of police expenditure this represents. Nearly 1,000 of these officers are employed as crime prevention specialists. In 1992-93 the estimated expenditure on the police increased to £5·9 billion, an increase in real terms of 83 per cent. since 1978-79.

On 13 November 1992, following consultation with the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Home Office sent a circular letter to chief officers of police with the aim of consolidating and expanding crime prevention activities through each force. The circular recommends that each force should develop a crime prevention strategy and that specialist crime prevention officers should be integrated into local command management units in order to allow greater co-ordination of crime prevention and operational policing. Chief officers are encouraged to deploy beat officers for crime prevention surveys while employing the expertise of the crime prevention specialist within crime management teams.

Crimes Committed on Bail

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many defendants have committed further crimes while on bail in each of the last seven years; and if he will provide a breakdown of the seriousness of the crimes committed in the first instance, and those committed while on bail.

Mr. Maclean: Figures on the numbers remanded on bail are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", table 8·5. These are broken down by seriousness of offence into indictable, summary, other than motoring, and summary motoring. The figures for the last seven years are shown in the following table.

Number of persons remanded on bail

(Thousands)

Offence Group	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Indictible	248·1	268·0	277·2	271·0	304·6	314·7	321·8
Summary (other than motoring)	36·9	43·8	48·7	69·9	76·0	72·8	71·0
Summary motoring	28·8	33·5	38·2	51·7	61·3	65·0	65·9
Total	314·0	345·2	364·0	392·6	441·9	452·5	458·7

Information on the numbers offending while on bail is not collected centrally. A Home Office research report, "RPU report 65, Offending while on bail; a survey of recent studies", gives some information on recent studies relating to offences while on bail. The survey concludes that, on average, between 10 and 12 per cent. of defendants are subsequently convicted of an offence committed while on bail and nowhere was the figure more than 17 per cent. A copy of this report is available in the Library of the House.

Convictions and Acquittals

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many defendants have been convicted in *(a)* the magistrates courts and *(b)* the Crown courts in each of the last seven years; how many cases have been dismissed in the magistrates courts and how many acquittals there have been in the Crown courts; and what each figure represents as a percentage of the cases brought.

Mr. Maclean: The information is given in the tables.

Table A

Persons proceeded against at magistrates courts for all offences by type of offence and result 1986-1992

England and Wales

Year/result		*Indictable*		*Summary non-motoring*		*Summary motoring*		*All offences*	
		Number	*Per cent*	*Number*	*Per cent*	*Number*	*Per cent*	*Number*	*Per cent*
1986	Prosecutions	460,152	100	501,533	100	1,166,729	100	2,128,414	100
	Found guilty	302,311	66	438,300	87	1,041,657	89	1,782,268	84
	Dismissed	14,324	3	11,471	2	14,664	1	40,459	2

Year/result		Indictable Number	Indictable Per cent	Summary non-motoring Number	Summary non-motoring Per cent	Summary motoring Number	Summary motoring Per cent	All offences Number	All offences Per cent
1987	Prosecutions	485,175	100	499,920	100	829,135	100	1,814,230	100
	Found guilty	297,696	61	425,960	85	721,675	87	1,445,331	80
	Dismissed	14,832	3	12,343	2	13,152	2	40,327	2
1988	Prosecutions	491,455	100	537,836	100	808,901	100	1,838,192	100
	Found guilty	292,581	60	451,317	84	699,618	86	1,443,516	79
	Dismissed	16,218	3	13,599	3	13,654	2	43,471	2
1989	Prosecutions	445,742	100	563,641	100	827,713	100	1,837,096	100
	Found guilty	253,646	57	466,937	83	705,905	85	1,426,488	78
	Dismissed	15,282	3	15,979	3	15,585	2	46,846	3
1990	Prosecutions	464,939	100	571,737	100	828,272	100	1,865,948	100
	Found guilty	259,412	56	461,102	81	690,273	83	1,410,787	76
	Dismissed	16,601	4	17,476	3	17,387	2	51,464	3
1991	Prosecutions	486,241	100	567,862	100	876,790	100	1,930,893	100
	Found guilty	257,512	53	448,234	79	699,156	80	1,404,902	73
	Dismissed	18,916	4	18,349	3	22,186	3	59,451	3
1992	Prosecutions	487,636	100	595,784	100	921,909	100	2,005,329	100
	Found guilty	247,282	51	465,795	78	710,227	77	1,423,304	71
	Dismissed	19,338	4	19,153	3	25,512	3	64,003	3

Note:

Found guilty and Dismissed will not total to Prosecutions which also includes "discontinuances", "discharge under section 6 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980", "charge withdrawn" and "committed for trial".

Table B

Persons tried at the Crown Court for all offences by type of offence and result 1986-1992

England and Wales

Year/result		Indictable Number	Indictable Per cent	Summary non-motoring Number	Summary non-motoring Per cent	Summary motoring Number	Summary motoring Per cent	All offences Number	All offences Per cent
1986	Tried	96,768	100	—	—	—	—	96,768	100
	Found guilty	79,444	82	—	—	—	—	79,444	82
	Acquitted	14,657	15	—	—	—	—	14,657	15
1987	Tried	103,406	100	—	—	—	—	103,406	100
	Found guilty	86,254	83	—	—	—	—	86,254	83
	Acquitted	14,759	14	—	—	—	—	14,579	14
1988	Tried	110,483	100	—	—	—	—	110,483	100
	Found guilty	90,996	82	—	—	—	—	90,996	82
	Acquitted	16,737	15	—	—	—	—	16,737	15
1989	Tried	101,700	100	1,653	100	996	100	104,349	100
	Found guilty	83,049	82	1,638	99	930	93	85,617	82
	Acquitted	16,401	16	14	1	55	6	16,470	16
1990	Tried	98,895	100	2,322	100	588	100	101,805	100
	Found guilty	80,263	81	2,299	99	587	100	83,149	82
	Acquitted	16,458	17	20	1	1	0	16,479	16
1991	Tried	96,915	100	2,347	100	624	100	99,886	100
	Found guilty	77,882	80	2,324	99	617	99	80,823	81
	Acquitted	16,893	17	20	1	7	1	16,920	17
1992	Tried	95,134	100	2,035	100	531	100	97,700	100
	Found guilty	75,556	79	2,018	99	525	99	78,099	80
	Acquitted	17,157	18	13	1	6	1	17,176	18

Note:

(a) Found guilty and Acquitted will not total to Tried which also includes "not tried".

(b) From 1989 onwards sections 40 and 41 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 allowed certain summary offences to be dealt with at the Crown court if related to a charge for an offence either triable on indictment or triable either way.

Immigration Procedures

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what effect the European Economic Area agreement will have on immigration procedures.

Mr. Charles Wardle: As from 1 January 1994, when the European Economic Area agreement enters into force, nationals of Austria, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden will benefit from European Community rights of free movement and residence. Nationals of these countries will be treated in the same way as European Community nationals for immigration purposes. This means they may work here and reside freely in accordance with Community law and they will be admitted to the United Kingdom on production of a valid passport or national identity card and may use the separate channel for EC/EEA nationals at major ports and airports.

Active Termination of Life

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what inquiries have been made by his Department in connection with the statement of 11 November by Mr. Richard Turner of the western European department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, that non-voluntary active termination of life is a practice which occurs in the United Kingdom, although it is illegal; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many cases of non-voluntary active termination of life by medical personnel have been notified to his Department in each of the last five years for which figures are available; in how many of those cases prosecutions were brought; and in how many convictions were obtained.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answers 14 December 1993]*: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to her question by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 14 December, column *574*.

Drugs

Sir Malcolm Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to publish the findings of his Department's surveys of drug usage.

Mr. Maclean: I am today publishing a report by the university of Sheffield, "Drug usage and Drugs Prevention: the views and habits of the general public"; together with a summary of that report; and "Research Findings No. 7: self-reported drug misuse in England and Wales: main findings from the 1992 British Crime Survey". Copies of all three documents are being placed in the Library.

PRIME MINISTER

Policy Objectives

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the policy objectives of the Government which have been fulfilled since the general election of 1992.

The Prime Minister: Among the more important objectives fulfilled since the last general election have been getting inflation down and keeping it down so that it now stands at 1·4 per cent., the lowest level for 26 years; the continuing fall in unemployment, for the eighth month running this year; the achievement of a successful GATT deal which will benefit industry and consumers alike; the continuing rise in retail sales and manufacturing output; reforms of the education system to provide children with a better education and a wider choice of qualifications and parents with more information; an intensified fight against crime; the continuing progress with the citizens charter, with resulting improvements in public services; and further progress with NHS reforms and an increase in the number of patients treated.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister when he received a copy of the letter signed by members of the United States Congress, the Japanese Diet and right hon. and hon. Members appealing for a public inquiry on and review of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

The Prime Minister: A copy of the letter was received in my office on Monday 13 December and has now been passed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment for consideration.

Regional and Urban Policy

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if he will detail the duties of sponsor Ministers in relation to regional and urban policy.

The Prime Minister: The duties of sponsor Ministers in relation to regional and urban policy are set out in a note placed in the Library of the House by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 4 November, *Official Report*, columns 515-24, when he announced the package of urban and regional policy measures. A copy of that note has been sent to my hon. Friend. In carrying out their duties, sponsor Ministers will liaise as necessary with hon. Members.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what is his policy towards the correction of answers given to Parliament where civil servants responsible for drafting, or Ministers or former Ministers have told the Scott inquiry that they were inaccurate.

The Prime Minister: Lord Justice Scott's inquiry is still in progress: his conclusions will be published in the inquiry's report. The Government will respond to the report when it is published and hon. Members will then be able to table questions on the report and on the Government's response.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what contact, either by written communication or telephone or telefax, his office has had with Mr. Frank Machon of Glasgow in regard to matters raised at the Scott inquiry.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Machon wrote to my office once during 1991, and once in 1992. In addition, the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) wrote on three occasions on Mr. Machon's behalf during 1992.

Ex-Ministers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to this answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *143*, if he will name *(a)* the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office who recieved a severence payment on 14 April 1992 *(b)* the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office who received a severance payment on 27 April 1992.

The Prime Minister: Lord Belstead's appointment as Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, ceased on 14 April 1992. On 27 April, Lord Cavendish resigned as a Lord in Waiting, but was erroneously referred to as Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office.

EC Directives

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister pursuant to his oral statement of 13 December, *Official Report*, column 686, if he will publish a list of the 17 directives which the European Council agreed should be repealed, withdrawn or amended.

The Prime Minister: The 17 directives are listed in an annexe to the Commission's report on subsidiarity, which has been made available to the House. The Brussels European Council on 10 and 11 December called for early action to put the report into effect.

Home and Justice Affairs

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister what matters were agreed in principle at the European Council in Brussels on 10 to 11 December concerning home and justice affairs; when such matters were debated in the House, or any of its Standing Committees; and when he expects publication of conventions of the European Union incorporating these matters.

The Prime Minister: The European Council expressed its determination to use the new provisions of the Maastricht treaty on co-operation in the field of justice and home affairs to the full. It noted the work which had already been done in these areas and approved the action plan prepared by the Interior and Justice Council, in particular in relation to a number of specific areas.

The Government followed the practice adopted for the former immigration/Trevi ministerial meetings and deposited in the Library of the House documents approved by the Interior and Justice Council on 29 and 30 November. The action plan and work programmes sent to the European Council have now also been placed in the Library.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department has made proposals for future parliamentary oversight of title VI work, which will include sending to Parliament important documents before they go to the Council. We look forward to the House's reaction to these proposals and to putting an effective scrutiny procedure in place. Any conventions that are found to be necessary to achieve the aims of the interior and justice programme of work will be dealt with in accordance with this procedure.

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Prime Minister what proportion of correspondence received by *(a)* his office and *(b)* each of his office's agencies receives (i) an acknowledgement within five days and (ii) a substantive reply within 15 days.

The Prime Minister: My office aims to acknowledge correspondence within five days and provide a substantive reply within 15 days.

South Africa

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if it is Her Majesty's Government's policy to encourage South Africa under a majority Government to join the Commonwealth.

The Prime Minister: While it will be for the new democratically elected Government in South Africa to decide on whether it should seek to return to the Commonwealth, Her Majesty's Government and their Commonwealth partners look forward to welcoming a non-racial and democratic South Africa back into the association at the earliest opportunity.

Civil Servants

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Prime Minister what Civil Service rules or guidelines exist in relation to contact between civil servants and hon. Members and their personal staff; whether there have been any recent changes to any such rules or guidelines; and if he will place copies of any such rules or guidelines in the Library.

The Prime Minister: There have been no recent changes in guidelines concerning briefing of MPs by civil servants.

It is an established principle that civil servants should not engage in activities likely to call into question their political impartiality, or to give rise to criticism that people paid from public funds are being used for party political purposes.

Accordingly, the following rules apply:

(a) civil servants in their official capacity are prohibited from attending conferences arranged by political parties;

(b) they may not attend meetings of policy or subject groups of the parliamentary parties;

(c) they may not attend all-party subject groups or committees except to accompany a Minister and to respond to factual questions;

(d) these rules need not inhibit factual briefing by officials of MPs on overseas or regional visits;

(e) Ministers may also arrange factual briefings by officials, for MPs of one party provided that a Minister attends the meeting and similar facilities are offered to MPs of other parties;

(f) Ministers should always be present when MPs are to discuss sensitive areas of public policy with officials.

Written briefing material provided by officials to Ministers may be distributed to Back-Bench Members provided that it would be released to any bon fide inquirer and that hon. Members of all parties may have access to it.

The rules do not prevent agency chief executives and managers of local offices, with the Minister's approval, from communicating with hon. Members about problems of individual constituents.

The convention governing pre-election contacts between senior civil servants and Opposition leaders was set out in my reply to a written question by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 27 November 1991, at column 527.

Post Office Privatisation

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister when he received the report from the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on the privatisation of the Post Office; and if he has now completed his consideration of it.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of papers from colleagues at the Department of Trade and Industry arising from the review of the structure and organisation of the Post Office, both before and since the departure from the Government of my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle. No decisions on the outcome of the review have been taken.

Northern Ireland

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Prime Minister if he will set out his views on the union between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister: I support it and will uphold it for so long as it remains the democratic wish of a greater number of the people in Northern Ireland.

Subsidiarity

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish the European Commission's lists of *(a)* proposals which fail the subsidiarity test and will be dropped or changed and *(b)* Community laws which the Commission believes must be simplified or abolished, to which he referred in his oral statement of 14 December 1992, *Official Report*, column 24, on the European Council at Edinburgh; and what progress has been made in the past year on each of those directives.

The Prime Minister: The lists referred to by my hon. Friend were included as an annexe to the conclusions of the Edinburgh European Council, copies of which were made available to the House. Details of progress are contained in the Commission's report on subsidiarity, which has been made available to the House.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements are made to ensure that special advisers to Ministers in his Department do not have access to the kind of information, and are not involved in the type of business, that would be likely to create suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment.

Mr. Goodlad: Care is taken to ensure that special advisers do not have access to the kind of information likely to create suspicion of impropriety. They are not involved in evaluating tenders or letting contracts.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the names and job descriptions of each special ministerial adviser employed in his Department showing any particular outputs for which each adviser is responsible.

Mr. Goodlad: The special advisers to this Department are Michael Maclay and Maurice Fraser.

Their duties vary.

European Election Boundaries

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the progress towards ratification of the new European election boundaries in each member country of the EC.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Ireland, Denmark, Belgium and Germany have notified the Council secretariat that they have completed the necessary procedures for the implementation of the Council decision increasing the number of seats in the European Parliament. All other member states have the necessary legislation in hand. They have committed themselves to completing the process in time for the European parliamentary elections in June next year.

Sudan

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures the British Government are taking to further the peace process in Sudan and bring the fighting to an end; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have welcomed the initiative of the Kenyan, Ugandan, Ethiopian and Eritrean Presidents to try to encourage dialogue between the Government of Sudan and the factions of the Sudan People's Liberation Army. With other European Union member states, we are addressing ways of putting further pressure on the parties to respond positively to mediation efforts.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures the British Government are taking to ensure that human rights are respected in Sudan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given on 16 December to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), *Official Report*, column *767*.

Entry Appeals

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when was the last date on which appeals against refusal of entry to visitors were allowed; and how many non-appeal representations he has received from those subsequently refused.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Applications for visit entry clearances decided on or after Monday 26 July 1993 do not have the right of appeal following the enactment of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993. The information about representations could not be provided except at disproportionate cost. However, there has been no discernible increase in Members' representations on entry clearance matters.

Visa Applications

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what monitoring he is carrying out to ensure that a different entry clearance officer is examining second applications for visitors' visas after a refusal of the first application; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Following enactment of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 instructions have been issued to our posts overseas that, wherever possible, a different ECO should examine re-applications from people previously refused.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many individuals have put in a second application for a visitors' visa having had the first one rejected since the coming into force of the abolition of the right of appeal contained in the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: These figures are not available centrally. The information requested could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Kenya

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his new travel advice for Kenya.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The latest travel advice for Kenya issued on 17 November and is available to the public on BBC 2 Ceefax and from the FCO's travel advice unit, telephone 071-270 4129, fax 071-270 4228. It is as follows:

"Except as indicated below, game reserves and the main tourist areas at the coast are generally safe.

Visitors should avoid North Eastern Province, the Tana River district of Coast Province and the Isiolo and Marsabit districts of Eastern Province (apart from the Samburu Game Reserve and when accompanied by tour operators, the Shaba Game Reserve). Even when escorted, traffic on the Malindi/Garsen/Lamu road is vulnerable to attack. The road should not be used.

Exercise common prudence everywhere, but especially in the main urban centres, when travelling after dark and in isolated places. In particular, do not go about Nairobi or coastal towns on foot at night, and avoid empty beaches. Muggings can take place anywhere in the country. Armed car hijackings are prevalent in the Nairobi area."

European Court of Human Rights

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the policy and legislative changes introduced by successive British Governments to comply with the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights since 1963.

Mr. Douglas-Hogg: Judgments against the United Kingdom since 1981 are listed in the attached list. Pre-1981 figures would be available only at disproportionate cost as such records are not held by any one department.

Where no Government action is shown in response to the court's finding of a violation, this is because the judgment hinged on the individual circumstances of the case and no legislation or procedural changes were found to be necessary.

The judgments against the United Kingdom since 1981 are as follows:

Date	*Name of the case*	*Government Department*	*Court's finding*	*Government action where appropriate*
13 August 1981	Young, James and Webster – Closed shop	Employment	Violation	Legislation introduced
22 October 1981	Dudgeon – Homosexuality in Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland Office	Violation	Legislation introduced
5 November 1981	X – Right to have detention reviewed	Home Office	Violation	Legislation introduced
25 February 1982	Campbell and Cosans – Corporal punishment in schools	Scottish Office	Violation	Legislation introduced
25 March 1983	Silver and Others – Prisoners' correspondence	Home Office	Violation	Prison rules amended
28 June 1984	Campbell and Fell – Prison Boards of Visitors	Home Office	Violation	—
24 August 1984	Malone – Telephone tapping	Home Office	Violation	Legislation introduced
27 May 1985	Ashingdane – Access to court for mental patient	Health and Social Security	No Violation	—
28 May 1985	Abdulaziz, Cabales and Balkandali – Immigration	Home Office	Violation	New immigration rules introduced
21 February 1986	James and Others – Leasehold reform	Environment	No violation	—
8 July 1986	Lithgow and Others – Shipbuilding	Trade and Industry	No violation	—
17 october 1986	Rees – Private life and right to marry	Home Office, Health and Social Security, General Register Office	No violation	—
24 October	Agosi – Confiscation of Krugerrands	Customs and Excise	No violation	—
2 March 1987	Monnell and Morris – Appeal Proceedings	Lord Chancellor's	No violation	—
2 March 1987	Weeks – Discretionary lifer	Home Office	Violation	—
8 July 1987	O, H, W, B and R – Parental access	Health and Social Security, Lord Chancellor's	Violation	Legislation introduced
27 April 1988	Boyle and Rice – Prisoners' complaints	Scottish Office	Violation	—
28 November 1988	Brogan and Others – Detention under PTA	Home Office, Northern Ireland Office	Violation	Derogation
30 March 1989	Chappell – Anton Piller Order	Lord Chancellor's	No Violation	—
7 July 1989	Gaskin – Access child care records	Health and Social Security	Violation	Legislation to be introduced
7 July 1989	Soering – Extradition United States	Home Office	Potential Violation	—
21 February 1990	Powell and Rayner – Aircraft noise	Transport	No violation	—
28 March 1990	Granger – Scottish legal aid	Scottish Office	Violation	Practice Note
30 August 1990	Fox, Campbell and Hartley – Arrest under Emergency Provisions Act	Northern Ireland Office	Violation	Legislation changed
30 August 1990	McCallum – Prisoner's correspondence	Scottish Office	Violation	Change in Prison Standing Orders

Date	Name of the case	Government Department	Court's finding	Government action where appropriate
27 September 1990	Cossey – Private life and right to marry	Home Office, General Register Office	No violation	—
25 September 1990	Thynne, Wilson and Gunnell – Discretionary lifers	Home Office	Violation	Change in legislation
30 October 1991	Vilvarajah – Asylum	Home Office	No violation	—
26 November 1991	Observer Guardian Sunday Times } Spycatcher	Treasury Solicitor's	Violation	—
25 March 1992	Campbell – Prisoners' correspondence	Scottish Office	Violation	Change in Prison Standing Orders
16 December 1992	Edwards – Fair trial	Home Office	No violation	—
25 March 1993	Costello-Roberts – Corporal punishment	Education	No violation	—
20 April 1993	Sibson – Closed shop	Employment	No violation	—
26 May 1993	Brannigan & McBride – Derogation under PTA	Home Office, Northern Ireland Office	No violation	—
28 June 1993	Colman – Doctors advertising restrictions	Health	No violation	—
28 June 1993	Lamguindaz – Immigration	Home Office	No violation	—
26 October 1993	Darnell – Medical discipline-length of proceedings	Health	Violation	—

Press Officers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many press officers his Department has employed in each year since 1983.

Mr. Goodlad: The number of press officers employed in the FCO news department and the ODA for the years in question is as follows:

Year	FCO	ODA
1983	11	2
1984	11	2
1985	11	2
1986	11	2
1987	10	2
1988	10	2
1989	9	2
1990	10	2
1991	10	2
1992	9	2
1993	9	2

Nuclear Proliferation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new proposals he has to improve nuclear counter-proliferation policies.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We attach the highest importance to preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. At its meeting on 9 December, the Defence Planning Committee and the Nuclear Planning Group of NATO, a copy of whose communiqué has been placed in the Library of the House, recognised the need for intensive efforts to prevent proliferation and to address and counter if necessary the associated risks to alliance security.

Iraq

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what dates and for what purposes Iraqi military personnel have been officially received in Britain since August 1990.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No such visits have been made.

Indonesia

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what monitoring of the human rights situation in East Timor is undertaken by his Department; and what representations are made by his Department to the Government of Indonesia.

Mr. Goodlad: We have consistently made clear to the Indonesian authorities our concern that human rights should be respected in East Timor. We raise our concerns whenever appropriate in the relevant international bodies and in our bilateral contacts with the Indonesian authorities. The most recent occasion was on 23 November during the visit of the Indonesian Minister of Research and Technology.

We monitor the situtaion in East Timor through reports from members of our embassy in Jakarta who have visited the territory. We also follow closely reports from others who are involved on the ground, including non-governmental organisations.

Ministerial Hospitality

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much money has been spent on alcohol in Ministers' offices by his Department since 9 April 1992.

Mr. Goodlad: Ministers in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, including the Minister for Overseas Development, have spent £54,087 on official entertainment from 1 April 1992 to date. It would involve disproportionate cost to calculate the proportion of this spent between 1 April, the beginning of the financial year, and 9 April 1992. There are no records readily available to show what proportion of this sum was spent on alcoholic drinks and how much on soft drinks, food, catering and other staff costs.

Honduras

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of Honduras concerning violation of human rights and the whereabouts of missing persons.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amery: Her Majesty's ambassador in Tegucigalpa regularly reminds the Honduran authorities of the concern in this country over human rights and is in frequent contact with the Honduran human rights ombudsman. European Union ambassadors discussed human rights with the presidential candidates before the elections on 28 November.

Western Sahara

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects the United Nations to hold the planned referendum on the future of the Western Sahara; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In his report dated 24 November 1993 the UN Secretary-General has stated that he hopes to submit a further report to the Security Council early next year, with a view to holding the referendum in mid-1994.

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of correspondence received by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each of his Department's agencies receives (i) an acknowledgement within five days and (ii) a substantive reply within 15 days.

Mr. Goodlad: Statistics showing the response time of the Foreign and Commonwealth office, the Wilton house conference centre, our only agency, and the Overseas Development Administration to ministerial correspondence are contained in the reply given by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 23 March 1993, columns *550-54*, to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). Statistics for 1993 will be published early in 1994.

It is standard practice for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to acknowledge correspondence addressed to Ministers on the day it is received. The Wilton house conference centre does not issue acknowledgements, as it normally replies immediately. The Overseas Development Administration does not issue acknowledgements.

Russia

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of the Government towards any expansion by Russia against republics that used to belong to the former Soviet Union; and if economic assistance towards Russia is dependent on full compliance with constitutional norms internally.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We, along with the international community, recognised as independent and sovereign the countries of the former Soviet Union when it broke up in 1991. The Russian Government did likewise. We have no reason to suppose that President Yeltsin intends to call that into question: the British Government would take very seriously any change in policy. We have provided economic assistance to Russia in support of democratic and economic reforms and will continue to do so on that basis. We are pleased that the Russian people have endorsed a new constitution providing a democratic framework and guaranteeing human rights.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 6 and 7 December.

Mr. Hurd: I attended the Foreign Affairs Council on 6 and 7 December. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs also attended.

The Council agreed the text of a joint declaration to be made on the occasion of President Yeltsin's visit to Brussels on 8 and 9 December, and the Commission reported on progress in negotiations for a participation and co-operation agreement between the European Community and Russia.

The Council agreed a code of conduct governing public access to documents held by the Council and the Commission, in accordance with a commitment entered into at Maastricht.

Following the Council's agreement on 4 October on a procedure for the publication of formal Council votes, the Council unanimously agreed a more automatic procedure for publishing votes on legislative acts, and a code of conduct for handling this in the Council.

The Council agreed new rules of procedure for its activities. Denmark, Greece and the Netherlands voted against. The rules have been revised to take account of the Maastricht treaty, the December 1992 Edinburgh European Council's commitment to greater openness, new procedures on CFSP and justice/home affairs, and a number of other minor editorial changes.

The Council agreed a directive which lays down detailed arrangements allowing citizens of the union residing in a member state of which they are not nationals to vote and stand as candidates in elections to the European Parliament.

Mr. Delors presented the Commission's report on subsidiarity. This was welcomed by the Council. There was some discussion of presidency proposals on the institutional changes required for accession of the EFTA countries to the union.

Mr. Delors introduced the Commission White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment which had been commissioned at the Copenhagen European Council. He stressed that the document was not aimed at increasing the powers of the Community or Commission. I and others regretted the absence of a full and substantive presentation to the Economic and Finance Council on the previous day.

The Council approved reports on the European Union's initiative to launch a pact on stability in Europe, which was subsequently confirmed at the Brussels European Council.

Ministers discussed with Lord Owen latest developments in the search for a negotiated settlement in the former Yugoslavia and the implementation of the Council's joint action on facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid to Bosnia.

The Council adopted the text for a joint action by the European Union to prepare for and monitor the elections in South Africa on 27 April next year. The Council also agreed to consider soon the future relations of a democratic South Africa with the Union.

The Council received a report from the Commission on the recent EC/US GATT Uruguay round negotiations. There was broad agreement that significant progress had been made, although it was noted that it had not been possible to reach agreement on treatment of the audio-visual sector. The Council agreed that the Commission should pursue negotiations with other parties in Geneva on the basis of the understandings reached with the United States. It was agreed that the Council should meet again as necessary in the light of developments.

The Council approved a mandate for the Commission to start talks with Morocco on an updated agreement between the European Union and Morocco. The United Kingdom underlined Gibraltar's particular interest in this agreement and that this would need to be taken into account as negotiations proceed. The Commission also presented to the Council draft negotiating mandate for updated agreements between the EU and Israel and the EU and Tunisia. The United Kingdom urged that the mandate for Israel should be agreed at the 20 December FAC; the Council agreed with this objective.

The Council agreed a text to implement a language regime for the Community Trade Mark Office.

Liberia

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what monitoring of the human rights situation in Liberia is undertaken by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Although Britain has no resident diplomatic representation in Liberia, we continue to monitor human rights through contacts with relief agencies and the UN. We lent our full support to the UN investigation into the massacre at Harbel in June. We hope that the efforts of the UN and the Economic Community of West African States to restore peace to Liberia will lead to a general improvement in the human rights situation in the country.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Press Officers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many press officers his Department has employed in each year since 1983.

Mr. Nelson: The number of press officers employed by Her Majesty's Treasury is as follows:

	Numbers
1986-87	10
1987-88	10
1988-89	10
1989-90	10
1990-91	10
1991-92	9
1992-93	9
1993-94	9

Information for the years prior to 1986-87 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Income Tax

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the net revenue forgone as a result of the reduction in personal income tax for higher rate taxpayers introduced by the Finance Act 1988 and the total number of beneficiaries in each year by region.

Mr. Dorrell: Available information is given in the table. Some regional estimates are based on small samples and all amounts are given to the nearest £50 million.

Number of taxpayers benefiting and change in tax revenue resulting from abolition of rates in excess of 40 per cent.

(£ millions)

	1988-89		*1989-90*		*1990-91*		*1991-92*	
Region of residence	*Numbers*	*Amount*	*Numbers*	*Amount*	*Numbers*[2]	*Amount*	*Numbers*[2]	*Amount*
North	20	50	20	50	30	50	30	50
Yorkshire and Humberside	50	100	60	150	80	200	70	200
North West	60	150	80	250	90	250	90	350
East Midlands	40	100	60	150	60	150	60	200
West Midlands	60	150	60	150	80	250	70	250
East Anglia	30	100	30	100	50	150	40	150
South East	490	1,600	530	1,800	630	2,150	630	2,550
South West	70	200	60	300	80	250	90	250
Wales	20	50	30	100	30	50	30	50
Scotland	50	100	70	100	80	150	80	200
Northern Ireland	10	—[3]	10	50	20	50	20	50
United Kingdom[1]	930	2,600	1,030	3,200	1,240	3,700	1,210	4,300

[1] Includes members of the forces and merchant navy and a small number of civil servants servants serving overseas who are not all allocated to regions.

[2] For 1990-91 onwards the figures relate to the number of taxpaying individuals following the introduction of independent taxation.

[3] Under £25 million.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many extra pence in the pound on the standard rate of income tax would be required in 1994-95 to replace, and raise a sum equivalent to, the total effect of the changes in taxation and spending announced in the March and November Budgets this year.

Mr. Dorrell: The total direct effect of the revenue and spending measures announced in the March and November Budgets is approximately £12 billion in 1994-95. The full-year yield from changing the basic rate of income tax by 1p is around £1·8 billion, so the basic rate would have to rise by about 7p in the pound to raise an equivalent sum.

This would be a far more damaging way of raising the funds required to get borrowing down than the measures announced by the Government in the last two Budgets.

Foreign Seamen

Ms Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time staff working for the Inland Revenue have responsibility for collecting income tax from foreign seamen working in United Kingdom waters.

Mr. Dorrell: Most of the tax due from employed seamen, who are liable to United Kingdom tax, is collected by employers via the pay-as-you-earn system. Once the PAYE procedures have been set in place, it is estimated that up to two staff units are needed to deal with the tax affairs of foreign seamen.

Ms Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the full amount of income tax collected in each month in 1993 from foreign seamen working in United Kingdom waters; and if he will make a statement; (2) if he will estimate for each month this year the amount of income tax due but not collected by the Inland Revenue from foreign seamen working in United Kingdom waters.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that this information is not available.

Ms Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give full details of the liability of foreign seamen working in United Kingdom waters for the payment of income tax.

Mr. Dorrell: Seamen who are not resident in the United Kingdom for tax purposes are liable to United Kingdom income tax on their earnings arising from duties within the United Kingdom, subject to the provisions of any double tax conventions between the United Kingdom and their home countries.

Private Finance Projects

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 8 December, *Official Report*, column *233*, if he will name the private finance projects contained in the appendix to the text of his speech to the CBI Scotland's annual dinner that have been completed, or, in the case of services, the contracts signed, and which are under construction, or, in the case of works, for which contracts have been signed.

Mr. Dorrell: The following projects have been completed or, in the case of services, the contracts for them have been signed:

Manchester Metrolink
Dartford-Thurrock River Crossing
Dialysis Centre, Sheffield Northern General NHS Trust
Relocation of Standing Committee on Post-Graduate Medical Education
Beds for the elderly, Greater Glasgow Health Board
Psycho-geriatric beds, Lanarkshire HB
Beds for the demented elderly, Lanarkshire HB
Beds for the elderly mentally infirm Grampian HB
Analyser equipment, Dundee Hospitals Trust
Welsh Development Agency joint ventures
Housing for Wales joint ventures
Local renal units, Wales

Contracts for the following projects, which are for works or leases, have been signed:

Jubilee Line Extension
Heathrow Express
Second Severn Crossing
South Yorkshire Supertram
Clinical waste incinerator, Oldham
Clinical waste incinerator, King's College Hospital
Magnetic Resonance Imager for Royal Victoria Hospital, Newcastle
Molecular Medicines Centre, Western General Hospital, Edinburgh
Nunnery Square development, Sheffield
Immigration Service detention accommodation
Royal Armouries New Museum, Leeds
Development of managed workspace, London
Belasis Hall Technology Park

In addition, development work for the Croydon Tramlink is under way on the basis of a contract signed with a group of private sector companies group.

The following projects in an active stage of preparation but contracts have not yet been signed:

Clinical waste incinerators, Plymouth and Ashford
Long-stay residential care unit, Barnet

Machinery and Plant

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements are being made to publish the legislation which gives effect to his proposals on capital allowances for machinery and plant announced on Budget day.

Mr. Dorrell: The Inland Revenue will today be making available the clauses which will implement the Chancellor's proposals on capital allowances for machinery and plant. These clauses introduce new rules which will help clarify the boundary between buildings, structures and land on the one hand and plant on the other; and new time limits for giving written notification of qualifying expenditure on machinery and plant for which a capital allowances claim may be made. The Chancellor's intention in bringing forward this legislation is to protect the Exchequer.

The legislation for these measures will be included in the 1994 Finance Bill. I will be placing a copy of the Inland Revenue press release containing the proposed legislation in the Library of the House of Commons.

Lloyd's

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give further details of his proposals for changes to the tax arrangements for members of Lloyd's.

Mr. Dorrell: The transitional administrative arrangements that will apply in the move from the present basis of assessing individual members to the new basis have now been finalised; these arrangements are subject to the legislative proposals being enacted in due course. The detail is set out in a note which is being placed in the House of Commons Library.

Civil Servants

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what was the number of staff in post in central Departments at 1 October.

Mr. Portillo: On 1 October 1993 there were 546,339 permanent staff in post in central Government, the lowest number in the post-war period. This is a decrease of 21,500 in the last year, the largest 12-monthly fall since January 1986.

Of the total staff in post, 497,783 were non-industrials and 48,556 were classified as being in industrial work. A summary staff in post by Department has been placed in the Library.

Tobacco Taxation

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue was raised from taxes on tobacco products in the last year for which figures are available.

Sir John Cope: The information available is as follows:

	Tobacco Duty receipts £ million	*VAT on tobacco expenditure £ million*
1992-93	6,041	1,520

Value added tax has been estimated from Central Statistical Office figures on consumers' expenditure on tobacco products.

Performance Measures

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what performance measures are being introduced to measure productivity gains and losses in each Government Department, non-departmental public bodies and next steps agencies.

Mr. Portillo: Measures on productivity and other aspects of performance are included in departmental reports, and in the annual reports of next steps agencies and non-departmental public bodies. Copies are available in the Library of the House. For agencies, information on these measures is also brought together in the "Next Steps Review 1993"—Cm 2430—published by the Office of Public Service and Science.

Golf Club Subscriptions

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if Customs and Excise have resolved the position over who is exempt from registration for VAT on subscription cheques for golf clubs and sports clubs; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Customs and Excise are currently considering the responses to their consultation paper on the scope of the VAT exemption for sporting services supplied by non-profit-making clubs and local authorities. In response to requests they will be holding further consultations about the detailed effects. I hope to make a further announcement in the new year.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his oral statement of 7 December, *Official Report*, column 238, what estimate he has made of the proportion of the reduction of the 1994-95 public expenditure control total that will be met by *(a)* public sector pay measures, *(b)* efficiency gain measures and *(c)* other proposals.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 16 December 1993]*: The information is not available in the form requested. The 1993 public expenditure survey set cash limits to departments' expenditure. The freezing of public sector pay and running costs will operate within those cash limits.

Taxation

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list each of the changes to national insurance contributions and income tax for each Budget since May 1979, that raise more than £5 million in revenue, in 1993-94 prices, giving for each change the full year yield in 1993-94 prices.

Mr. Dorrell: Information in terms of money of the day is available in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" and "Autumn Statement" for the years in question. Reliable estimates of the revenue effects of measures from previous Budgets for 1993-94 could be provided only at disproportionate cost. It is not appropriate simply to revalorise the orginal estimates by the change in the retail prices index because this does not take proper account of changes in incomes, profits, interest rates, and so on between the year to which the orginal estimate relates and 1993-94.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has made of the increase to the average family's tax bill when taking into account *(a)* changes in excise duties and *(b)* the imposition of indirect taxes on air travel and most general insurance premiums.

Sir John Cope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) on 16 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *842*.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much he estimates the cumulative effects of an increase in the rate of employees' national insurance contributions, the restriction in value of the married couple's tax allowance and of mortgage interest tax relief, and the imposition of VAT on fuel at 8 per cent. will cost the average family from *(a)* April 1994 *(b)* 1995.

Sir John Cope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) on 16 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *1263*.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the extra revenue the Treasury forecasts it will raise in *(a)* 1995-96 and *(b)* 1996-97 as a direct result of the proposals outlined in both this year's Budgets will be accounted for by (i) freezing personal allowances, (ii) indirect taxes and (iii) higher employees' national insurance contributions.

Mr. Dorrell: The answers are given in the table—rounded to the nearest percentage point:

Per cent

	1995-96	*1996-97*
Personal allowances	9	9
Indirect taxes	37	43
Employee NICs	13	12

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the names and job descriptions of each special ministerial adviser employed in his Department, showing any particular outputs for which each adviser is responsible.

Sir John Cope: The Chancellor of the Exchequer's special adviser is Mrs. Tessa Keswick, and the special adviser to the Chief Secretary is Mr. David Ruffley. Their duties vary.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements are made to ensure that special advisers to Ministers in his Department do not have access to the kind of information, and are not involved in the type of business, that would be likely to create suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment.

Sir John Cope: Care is taken to ensure that special advisers do not have access to the kind of information likely to create suspicion of impropriety. They are not involved in evaluating tenders or letting contracts.

Bank of England

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has now made an assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of an independent Bank of England.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is listening with interest to the many views expressed and will study with care the report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee on this subject.

Flight Tax

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which Scottish island and inter-island air services will be *(a)* affected by and *(b)* exempted from the new flight tax.

Sir John Cope: Based on details in October 1993 airline timetables, and information available about proposed changes in aircraft to be used on certain routes, but not allowing for any seasonal variations which there may be, the following Scottish island and inter-island services use aircraft which will be exempt from air passenger duty: Orkney inter-island and Shetland inter-island services and some of the services from Inverness, Glasgow or Wick to Orkney and from Edinburgh or Glasgow to Shetland. Other services from the mainland to the islands or between the islands will be taxable.

Budget Measures

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the consequences of the income tax and national insurance measures announced in the March and November budgets, for a married man with two children aged under 16 years with *(a)* an earned income of £20,000 and a mortgage of £50,000, *(b)* an earned income of £40,000 and a mortgage of £90,000 and *(c)* an earned income of £60,000 and a mortgage of £150,000 in both the 1994-95 and 1995-96 financial years.

Mr. Dorrell: The additional income tax and national insurance contribution liabilities are given in the table.

Additional income tax and national insurance liability[1] (£ per year) for married man[2] with

	Earned income =£20,000 Mortgage =£50,000	*Earned income =£40,000 Mortgage =£90,000*	*Earned income =£60,000 Mortgage =£150,000*
1994-95	348	676	676
1995-96	554	882	882

[1] Additional liability compared with 1993-94 regime. The 1995-96 figures take no account of statutory indexation of allowances and thresholds. The estimates are calculated using the current mortgage interest rate of 8 per cent., which does not take account of the reduction in base rate announced on 23 November.

[2] The presence of children aged under 16 years in a family does not affect income tax or national insurance liabilities. The figures assume that the married man has the full married couple's allowance. The effect of the March and November Budget measures on mortgage interest relief is the same for all mortgages of £30,000 or more.

American Depositary Receipts

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of stock exchange turnover by value is accounted for by American depositary receipts in United Kingdom companies.

Mr. Nelson: In the first 11 months of 1993, turnover on the London stock exchange in American depositary receipts in UK companies was £22·9 billion. Total turnover in United Kingdom equities on the London stock exchange, including ADRs, was £508·2 billion. ADRs therefore represented 4·5 per cent of the London stock exchange's total turnover.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total market value of holdings in American depository receipts issued on behalf of United Kingdom companies.

Mr. Nelson: The information requested is not readily available.

Home Income Plans

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will direct the Securities and Investments Board, under section 105(9) of the Financial Services Act 1986, to exercise its powers on the question of failed home income plans.

Mr. Nelson: The power to carry out investigations under section 105 of the Financial Services Act has been transferred to the Securities and Investments Board. I have no power to issue such directions.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what powers the Securities and Investments Board has under the Financial Services Act 1986 to intervene with building societies and life assurance companies on the question of failed home income plans.

Mr. Nelson: The Securities and Investments Board has a wide range of enforcement and intervention powers under the Financial Services Act 1986. These can be exercised, where there are appropriate grounds, against persons carrying on investment business in the United Kingdom.

European Investment Bank

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the present borrowing limits of the European investment bank; what sum they have borrowed to date; and if he will make a statement outlining the manner in which the bank raises its borrowing.

Mr. Nelson: There is no quantitive limit on the bank's power to borrow; however, it will do so only to the extent that it needs to raise money to finance its lending operations. Its total outstanding lending is limited by its statute to 250 per cent. of its subscribed capital. Since this currently stands at 57·6 million ecu, lending is limited to 144 million ecu. During 1992, the latest period for which final figures are available, the bank borrowed a total of 12,920 million ecu, and at the year end, total outstanding borrowings stood at 67,949,420,610 ecu. The bank raises the bulk of its funds from the international capital markets.

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table setting out *(a)* the amounts borrowed from the European investment bank in 1992 and *(b)* estimates for the amount borrowed in 1993 by British borrowers by category of borrower.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* The information is as follows:

EIB lending to the United Kingdom

	£ million
1 January 1992 to 31 December 1992	
Water and sewage projects in England and Wales	496·2
Private sector transport (including Channel tunnel)	264·5
Energy (power generation and North Sea oil)	520·0
Industrial investment	251·9
Local authority infrastructure (including water and sewage projects in Scotland)	263·0
Total	1,795·6
1 January 1993 to 31 December 1993 (provisional estimate)	
Water and sewage projects in England and Wales	700·0
Private sector transport (including Jubilee Line Extension)	282·0
Energy (power generation and North Sea oil)	444·7
Industrial investment	55·0
Telecommunications	300·0
Global loan (loan to Barclays Bank for on-lending to small and medium sized enterprises)	100.0
Local authority infrastructure (including water and sewage projects in Scotland)	463·5
Total	2,345·2

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor fo the Exchequer what is the number and the total value of loans from the European investment bank in 1992-93 and so far this year, giving a breakdown between loans to the private sector and public sector.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* In 1992, the bank lent a total of £1,795·6 million for 27 separate projects in the United Kingdom, of which £263 million—seven projects—was lent to the public sector and £1,532·6 million—20 projects—was lent to the private sector. The final figures for lending this year are not yet available, but the latest information we have suggests that the bank may lend about £2,345 million to some 27 projects, of which £464 million—13 projects—may be lent to the public sector and £1,881 million—14 projects—may be lent to the private sector.

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much assistance the European investment bank has given to *(a)* the second Severn crossing and *(b)* the Manchester light railway.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* The bank has provided a loan of £66 million towards the construction of the second Severn crossing, and £15 million towards construction of the first phase of the Manchester light railway.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer who is responsible for paying the interest on European investment bank loans paid to the private sector.

Mr. Nelson: *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* All borrowers from the bank are responsible for paying the interest due on their loans.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will list all the transport projects financed in whole or part by the European investment bank, giving the sum borrowed in each case;

(2) if he will list the transport projects in which loans from the European investment bank were made to the private sector, giving the sum in each case.

Mr. Nelson: *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* In 1992, the latest year for which we have final figures, the EIB lent the following amounts to transport projects in the United Kingdom:

Promoter	*Project*	*£ million*
Eurotunnel	Channel Tunnel	139·7
Severn River Crossing plc	Severn road bridge	66·0
Gwent County Council	Road schemes	30·0
West Glamorgan County Council	Road schemes	23·0
Strathclyde Regional Council	[1]Road and other	100·0
South Glamorgan County Council	[1]Road and other	50·0
Humberside County Council	Road and runway extension	24·0
Lothian Regional Council	[1]Road and other	21·0
Greater Manchester PTA and Greater Manchester PTE	Manchester Light Railway	15·0
British Airways	Renewal of long haul jet fleet	58·8

[1] NB Only a part of these loans were intended to finance transport projects. The remainder was devoted to other infrastructure works.

Merit Pay

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which Government Departments, non-departmental public bodies and next steps agencies have introduced merit pay in the past five years; and how much extra money has been allocated to cover the costs of implementing this.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government's policy is that pay systems in the public sector need to make a regular and direct link between an individual's pay and the contribution he or she makes to the organisation. Merit or performance pay has therefore been introduced widely in Government Departments and next steps agencies, and in those non-departmental public bodies with staff whose pay follows that of civil service grades. The cost of performance pay is part of the overall pay costs of each organisation.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the cost of advertising by his Department has been for each year since 1979 and for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 15 December 1993]:* The expenditure by the Department on advertising in the period 1988-89 to 1992-93 and during the past 12 months is shown in the table. Expenditure in 1985-86 was £42,000. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) on 10 December, *Official Report,* column *404.* Figures for the other years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Year	*(£)*
1988-89	49,310
1989-90	57,568
1990-91	43,610
1991-92	104,602
1992-93	174,139
1992-93	
December	17,738
January	5,656
February	10,958
March	62,283
Total	96,635
1993-94	
April	2,076
May	1,819
June	3,803
July	3,219
August	1,615
September	11,843
October	3,001
November	2,070
Total	29,436
Total 12 months	126,071

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his Department's policy is regarding the use of executive search consultants in making appointments to public bodies; and if he will *(a)* list the appointments where such consultants have been used and *(b)* list the cost in each case since April 1992.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* The use of executive search consultants is one option HM Treasury considers when making appointments to public bodies.

Executive search consultants have not been used by the HM Treasury in making appointments to public bodies since April 1992.

Debtor Countries

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in descending order the 30 developing countries with the highest percentage of debt servicing in relation to their national wealth, stating the percentage in each case.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* The 30 developing countries with the highest percentage of debt servicing due in 1993 on long-term external debt in relation to gross national product—the best available proxy for national wealth—are:

US$ millions

Country	*GNP 1992*[1]	*Principal due 1993*	*Interest due 1993*	*Total Debt Service due 1993*	*Debt Service/GNP Per cent*
1 Nicaragua	1,353	609	211	820	60·6
2 Guyana	245	64	64	126	51·4
3 Sao Tome	37	9·6	2·1	11·7	31·5
4 Congo	2,565	493	133	626	24·4
5 Guinea	219	34·1	11·6	45·7	20·9
6 Cote D'ivoire	8,692	1,098	700	1,798	20·7
7 Zambia	1,822	252	124	376	20·6
8 Algeria	43,167	7,033	1,759	8,792	20·4
9 Angola	6,207	947	288	1,235	19·9
10 Jordan	4,454	551	282	833	18·7
11 Mauritania	1,120	153	41	194	17·3
12 Jamaica	2,801	280	181	461	16·5
13 Nigeria	28,000	2,555	1,970	4,525	16·2
14 Madagascar	2,850	309	120	429	15·1
15 Somalia	835	95	28	123	14·7
16 Equatorial Guinea	149	15·6	5·2	20·8	14·0
17 Ecuador	12,029	1,176	476	1,652	13·7
18 Bulgaria	10,967	1,210	250	1,460	13·3
19 Zaire	8,257	708	366	1,074	13·0
20 Tanzania	2,502	210	101	311	12·4
21 Honduras	3,129	208	148	356	11·4
22 Morocco	27,538	1,401	1,096	2,497	9·1

Country	GNP 1992[1]	Principal due 1993	Interest due 1993	Total Debt Service due 1993	Debt Service/GNP Per cent
23 Cameroon	9,758	489	323	812	8·3
24 Liberia	1,063	65	23	88	8·3
25 Syria	16,204	1,137	196	1,333	8·2
26 Peru	21,271	882	740	1,622	7·6
27 Bolivia	5,077	208	142	350	6·9
28 Niger	2,314	96	60	156	6·7
29 Egypt	34,602	1,110	1,194	2,304	6·7
30 Panama	5,799	274	101	375	6·5

Source: World Debt Tables 1993-94

[1] or earlier if 1992 unavailable

Press Releases

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many press releases his Department has issued in each year since 1979.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* The number of press releases issued by my Department was as follows:

	Number
1979	195
1980	205
1981	192
1982	244
1983	224
1984	221
1985	181
1986	157
1987	94
1988	104
1989	101
1990	87
1991	106
1992	146

Mr. Christopher Muttukumaru

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what functions Mr. Christopher Muttukumaru has exercised and what information he has received on behalf of the Treasury Solicitor in respect of the Treasury Solicitor's shareholding in International Military Services Ltd.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply. Mr. Christopher Muttukumaru served as an assistant Treasury Solicitor between 25 January 1990 and 23 November 1992 when he was appointed as secretary to Lord Justice Scott's inquiry. By virtue of his status as an assistant Treasury Solicitor he might in theory have been asked to perform duties on behalf of the Treasury Solicitor under the Treasury Solicitor Act 1876 in relation to the Treasury Solicitor's shareholding in International Military Services Ltd. In fact, having checked the relevant files, the record shows that Mr. Christopher Muttukumaru did not during that time exercise any function or receive any information on behalf of the Treasury Solicitor in respect of the Treasury Solicitor's shareholding in International Military Services Ltd.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Copyright Library (Northern Ireland)

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals he has to establish a copyright library in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Sproat: My right hon. Friend and I plan shortly to consider with Cabinet colleagues proposals for a review of the libraries given deposit status under the Copyright Act 1911. I would expect such a review to address, also, the case for a deposit library for Northern Ireland.

Libraries

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will give the number and value of publications supplied by publishers to *(a)* the National Library of Scotland, *(b)* the National Library of Wales, *(c)* the Bodleian library, Oxford, *(d)* Cambridge university library and *(e)* the library of Trinity college, Dublin, on foot of demands from the Copyright Licensing Agency in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sproat: The information requested by the hon. Member is not held centrally. I will write to the hon. Member in due course and place a copy of my letter in the House Libraries.

Press Officers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many press officers his Department has employed in each year since its establishment.

Mr. Sproat: My Department was established in April 1992.

From April to the end of December, my Department employed seven press officers.

This year, 1993, we have the same number of press officers.

Arts Expenditure

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the aggregate spending of English and Welsh local authorities on arts and museums for 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Although no definite figures for local authority expenditure on the arts are available, it is estimated that total spending in England and Wales for 1992-93 amounted to over £200 million.

Total local authority expenditure on museums and galleries in England, as set out in my Department's annual report, is shown in the table.

	£ million
1989-90	126
1990-91	125
1991-92	134

Local authority funding for museums and galleries in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the average value of *(a)* corporate and *(b)* Government spending on the arts for 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The table shows the total departmental expenditure on the arts for the relevant years as published in my Department's annual report, together with figures for total business support and the money produced by the business sponsorship incentive scheme:

£ million

	Total arts funding[1]	*Total business support*[2]	*Total BSIS funding*[3]
1989-90	162·1	n/a	6·9
1990-91	182·6	57·1	8·4
1991-92	212·1	65·4	9·3

[1] These totals include grant in aid for the Arts Council and Crafts Council; support for the BSIS and Government art collection and other arts support, including research.

[2] Including corporate memberships.

[3] Including awards made and sponsorship matched under the scheme.

Arts Boards

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions his Department has had with the North West arts board about the preparation of a corporate plan for the board and of published policies for the support of individual art forms.

Mr. Brooke: None. These are matters for regional arts boards to take forward in discussion with the Arts Council.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what guidance is given to arts boards on their criteria in the selection of arts organisations for appraisal, and in the conduct of such appraisals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Arts Council has provided guidelines to regional arts boards on such issues. Under the arm's-length principle, my Department has no involvement in them.

Departmental Bodies

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the regional and area offices of his Department, of English Heritage, the tourist authority and boards, the Sports Council, the Arts Council, and of other inspectorates, agencies, and other public bodies for which he is responsible.

Mr. Sproat: My Department does not have any regional or area offices. Of those bodies for which my Department is responsible, English Heritage has regional offices serving the north, midlands, south-east, south-west and London; and the Sports Council of Great Britain has regional offices serving the north, north-west, Yorkshire and Humberside, the east midlands, west midlands, the east, south-east, south, south-west and Greater London regions.

The English tourist board provides funds to 11 regional tourist boards; the Arts Council of Great Britain provides funds for the Scottish and Welsh Arts Councils and 10 regional arts boards in England. From 1 April 1994 responsibility for the Scottish and Welsh Arts Councils will be transferred to the respective Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales. The Museums and Galleries Commission funds seven area museums councils.

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proportion of correspondence received by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each of his Department's agencies receives (i) an acknowledgement within five days and (ii) a substantive reply within 15 days.

Mr. Brooke: During the month of October 1993, my Department received 536 letters requiring a ministerial reply, including correspondence about policy matters relating to the work of my Department's executive agencies. Of those, 70 per cent. received a reply within 15 working days. My Department aims to acknowledge every letter from hon. Members within five working days.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage which of the appointments made to public bodies by his Department since April 1992 have been advertised.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* The only appointment made to a public body by the Department of National Heritage since April 1992 which has been advertised is the regulatory adviser for the national lottery.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what his Department's policy is regarding the use of executive search consultants in making appointments to public bodies; and if he will *(a)* list the appointments where such consultants have been used and *(b)* list the cost in each case since April 1992.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* The Department has internal guidelines on public appointments procedures which supplement the "Guide on Public Appointments Procedures" produced by the Public Appointments Unit. In respect of identifying candidates for public appointments our guidelines make it clear that there may be a small number of the most important appointments when it would be useful to use executive search consultants. All proposals to do so must be cleared in advance with the Permanent Secretary. The only appointment where such consultants were used, and the cost, since April 1992 was as follows:

Appointment	*Cost*
Regulatory Adviser for National Lottery	£19,550+VAT

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what the cost of advertising by his Department has been for 1992 and 1993 and for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* The cost of advertising by this Department in 1992-93 was £2,000. Expenditure over the last 12 months was:

	£
April 1993	12,800
June 1993	200
July 1993	800
August 1993	500
September 1993	700
November 1993	100

There was no expenditure in any of the other months.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total quantity of plutonium exported to the United States of America since 1963 in the form of experimental fast reactor fuel pins; how many fuel pins were involved; to which facilities in the United States of America they were sent; and what quantities of plutonium have subsequently been returned.

Mr. Eggar: For the period from May 1979, plutonium in experimental fast reactor fuel pins was sent by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority under international safeguards to the United States of America in financial years 1980-81, 1981-82 and 1986-87. The pins were sent for research work under the joint United Kingdom and United States fast reactor research programme which was completed in 1987. There have been no net transfers of plutonium—other than in gram quantities—between the United Kingdom and the United States arising from the programme. The specific details are a matter for the parties concerned.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has anything to add to the information conveyed to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil (Mr. Rowlands) in the letter of 27 September 1984 by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy, in regard to plutonium exports to the United States of America.

Mr. Eggar: I have nothing to add.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on stockpiling plutonium in the United Kingdom; and what information he has on the policies on plutonium stockpiling of those countries currently contracted to United Kingdom reprocessing plants for their spent nuclear fuel to be reprocessed and returned.

Mr. Eggar: The essential factors in any arrangements for holding stocks of civil plutonium, whether in the United Kingdom or overseas, are that—whatever the amounts being stored—they are held safely under international safeguards and subject to stringent internationally agreed standards of physical protection.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he first learned of the report commissioned by British Nuclear Fuels plc from Touche Ross on the economic viability of THORP; when BNFL made available to his Department a copy of the report; and what assessment he has made of its robustness.

Mr. Eggar: In view of its shareholding, my Department sees a large number of financial and commercial documents from British Nuclear Fuels plc on a confidential basis. It would not be appropriate to confirm whether particular commercially confidential documents have been made available any more than it would be for me to disclose the contents of any that have been seen. However, I can assure the hon. Member that all my Department's requests to the company for information relating to the economics of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant have been met in full.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those Ministers, Government Departments and officials to whom the Touche Ross analysis of the economics of THORP has been circulated.

Mr. Eggar: No.

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the names and job descriptions of each special ministerial adviser employed in his Department showing any particular outputs for which each adviser is responsible.

Mr. Heseltine: My special advisers are Lady Strathnaver, Dr. Alan Kemp and Dr. Walter Eltis. Apart from Dr. Eltis, who is my chief economic adviser, the advisers do not have formal job descriptions.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what arrangements are made to ensure that special advisers to Ministers in his Department do not have access to the kind of information, and are not involved in the type of business, that would be likely to create suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment.

Mr. Heseltine: Dr. Eltis has elected to be subject to the business appointment rules so that he can have full access to papers. Care is taken in the case of Lady Strathnaver and Dr. Kemp to ensure that they do not have access to the kind of information likely to create suspicion of impropriety. Special advisers are not involved in evaluating tenders or letting contracts.

Gas Market

Mr. Devlin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the future of the gas market.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is giving careful consideration to the important issues raised by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the gas market, and will announce his decision as soon as possible.

Swan Hunter

Mr. Trotter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress has been made in seeking the approval of the European Commission to the Government's proposal to provide intervention funding to Swan Hunter for the building of merchant ships.

Mr. Sainsbury: As a result of a number of discussions with directorate-general IV agreement has been reached on a proposal for making special intervention funding available for Swan Hunter, subject to certain conditions.

It is expected that this proposal will be considered by the Commission before Christmas.

I hope for a favourable decision.

Laboratory Agencies

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the resources allocated to each of his laboratories and agencies in 1992-93 and 1993-94 in both cash and standard prices; and what resources were allocated to the central scientific advice functions in each year on a similar basis.

Mr. McLoughlin: Cash expenditure incurred by the Department's agencies which are under net running cost control in 1992-93 and 1993-94 is shown in the 1992-93 Supply Estimates class IV, vote 2 sections C and L to Q and in the 1993-94 Supply Estimates class IV, vote 1 sections E to J. Forecasts of expenditure and receipts for all the Department's agencies are set out in table 23, as amended, at page 41 of Cm 2204.

Scientific advice is provided to Ministers from many sources, including management units whose budgets fall within section C of the DTI Vote—Administration—in 1993-94 and section A in 1992-93. The amounts spent on central scientific advice are not separately identified. In addition, £527,000 and £414,000 was allocated to the office of the DTI's chief adviser on science and technology in 1992-93 and 1993-94 respectively.

The Department does not calculate expenditure in "standard prices".

Animals (Cosmetic Testing)

Mr. Cox: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the number of animals used for testing cosmetics in the United Kingdom during the last 12 months.

Mr. McLoughlin: According to the information set out in the Home Office publication "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals Great Britain 1992", in 1992 there were 2,164 procedures involving animals for the purpose of evaluating the safety of cosmetics and toiletries. This represented under 0·08 per cent. of the 2,928,254 procedures undertaken in the year.

Kenya

Mr. Cox: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the value of exports and imports between the United Kingdom and Kenya during each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham: Information on the topic is regularly published in "Business Monitor MA20, Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Wind Turbines

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on progress made in the study he commissioned through "Lloyd's Register" in October of conformity assessment for wind turbines.

Mr. Eggar: The study will establish a conformity assessment system for wind turbine generators. Work began in July 1993 and is scheduled to be completed in June 1994.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the response received by his Department to the seminar "Renewable Energy—A Commercial Opportunity", sponsored by his Department in London on 3 December; and if he will set out to whom he has made available the two guides on financing renewable energies launched at the conference.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has received a very positive response to the recent seminar on renewable energy. Copies of the guides on financing renewable energy projects were made available to lenders, investors and advisers attending the seminar. Further copies are being sent to financiers who have expressed an interest in renewable energy, but who were unable to attend. The availability of the guides is also being publicised through other events and publications organised by the energy technology support unit, acting for my Department. Both guides are available direct from the inquiries bureau at ETSU and copies have also been placed in the Library of the House.

Press Officers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many press officers his Department has employed in each year since 1983.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to previous answers to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 15 January 1993, *Official Report*, column *852-53*, and to the hon. Member for the The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) on 3 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *764*. The total number of staff currently employed in the Department's press office is 34.

Radio Scanners

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce legislation to control the sale of radio scanners.

Mr. McLoughlin: Sir David Calcutt, in his review of press self-regulation, Cm 2135, recommended that the Government should give further consideration to the legislation covering interception of telecommunications with a view to identifying all significant gaps and determining whether further legislation is needed. The Government have accepted this recommendation in principle and are looking again at the details of the relevant legislation covering the use of radio equipment, such as scanners, which might be used to intercept communications. But we have no plans to place further restrictions on the sale of scanning receivers.

Electricity Supply

Mr. Loyden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the breakdown of electricity supply on Merseyside.

Mr. Eggar: I understand that a malfunction in equipment belonging to the National Grid Company led to a cut in electricity supplies in the Liverpool area to some 230,000 Merseyside and North Wales Electricity Board customers between about 13.15 and 14.30 on 13 December. NGC is conducting an inquiry and my Department's engineering inspectorate has called for a report of the incident.

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of correspondence received by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each of his Department's agencies receives (i) an acknowledgement within five days and (ii) a substantive reply within 15 days.

Mr. Heseltine: Ministers in my Department have a 10-day, rather than a 15-day, target for sending a substantive reply to ministerial correspondence. The heads of my Department's agencies have the same target for ministerial correspondence from hon. Members which is delegated to them for reply. In the first 10 months of this year, performance against the target was as follows:

Percentage of substantive replies in 10 days

	Per cent.
Department of Trade and Industry	65
Companies House	46
Insolvency Service	96
Radiocommunications	100
Accounts Services Agency	100
Export Credits Guarantee Department	83
National Physical Laboratory	100
Patent Office	100

Other agencies not listed did not have any correspondence from hon. Members delegated to them for reply during the period.

My Department does not at present send acknowledgements, but hopes to introduce such a procedure shortly.

Departmental Offices

Mr. Straw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the regional and area offices of his Department, and of inspectorates, agencies, and other public bodies for which he is responsible.

Mr. Heseltine: The information requested is published in a number of sources, for example:

Civil Service Yearbook (HMSO)
Guide for Business (DTI)
PMS Parliamentary Companion
Vacher's Parliamentary Companion

which are available in the Library of the House.

Steel Redundancies

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many made redundant from the steel industry in the Sheffield travel-to-work area have benefited from the iron and steel employees readaptation benefits scheme programme each year since its introduction.

Mr. Sainsbury: Detailed figures could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Blank Tape Levy

Mr. Page: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which countries of the EC have not yet introduced a blank tape levy.

Mr. McLoughlin: The United Kingdom has not introduced a blank tape levy; nor, to the Government's knowledge, have Ireland or Luxembourg. The Government also understand that there is no levy scheme in operation in Belgium, Greece, Italy or Portugal. However, we believe that in these four member states legislation for a levy is either planned or already in place.

Extended Warranty Schemes

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps his Department is taking to ensure that consumers are informed of manufacturers' extended warranty schemes at the point of sale.

Mr. McLoughlin: The means by which manufacturers and retailers inform consumers about the existence of extended warranty schemes is a commercial matter for them.

British Gas

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to announce his decision on the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report into British Gas.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is giving careful consideration to the important issues raised by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the gas market, and will announce his decision as soon as possible.

Toxteth (Funding)

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his Department's funding in the Toxteth area of Liverpool.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 14 December 1993]:* In the financial years from 1990 to 1993 my Department paid a total of £2 million in regional selective assistance and £113,000 in regional enterprise grant in the Toxteth area.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what his Department's policy is regarding the use of executive search consultants in making appointments to public bodies; and if he will *(a)* list the appointments where such consultants have been used and *(b)* list the cost in each case since April 1992.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* Guidance on the various ways of finding and selecting candidates for public appointments is given in the "Guide on Public Appointment Procedures" produced by the Public Appointments Unit. The use of executive search consultants is one option which may be appropriate for certain important appointments.

Dr. Wright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which of the appointments made to public bodies by his Department since April 1992 have been advertised.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* The Director General of Gas Supply, the Director General of Telecommunications and the chairman of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

British Nuclear Fuels plc

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who is responsible for the security vetting of staff at BNFL; and what special precautions are taken for staff who have access to plutonium.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* Security vetting of British Nuclear Fuels employees is the responsibility of the security directorate of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority which, in co-operation with British Nuclear Fuels, ensures employees are vetted in a manner appropriate to the nature of their work in accordance with Government policy. All plutonium is protected by appropriate security arrangements and is subject to strict conditions of nuclear materials accountancy and control.

Spent Nuclear Fuel

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many shipments of spent nuclear fuel flasks have, in the last 12 months, been transported to Sellafield and Dounreay from *(a)* Germany, *(b)* Switzerland and *(c)* Japan.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* Information about annual receipts of irradiated fuel from overseas reactors is contained in the annual plutonium figures. Specific details of shipments of spent nuclear fuel from Germany, Switzerland and Japan to Sellafield and Dounreay are an operational matter for the owners of the spent fuel transported and for British Nuclear Fuels plc and the Atomic Energy Authority.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to use private funding as a means of matching European moneys allocated to the European regional development fund.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 8 December 1993]:* United Kingdom Community support frameworks, which govern the use of grants from the ERDF and other European structural funds, already refer to contributions from private sources as well as from the public sector. Projects are being approved for ERDF grant which will be part funded from the private sector.

It is the Government's policy to encourage partnerships with the private sector for funding infrastructure investments. Government Departments will therefore give every consideration to eligible applications for ERDF grant for infrastructure projects co-financed by the private sector. ERDF grant will, however, be paid only when the economic benefit of the project in question accrues to the area concerned.

Warship Yards

Mr. Hutton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on access to EU intervention funds for United Kingdom warship yards.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* Negotiations with the European Commission have been under way since May this year to attempt to obtain access to the shipbuilding intervention fund for all warship-builders. It has become clear that the Commission will not amend the 1985 agreement, which removed warship-builders' entitlement to support for all four companies involved.

As a result of a number of discussions with directorate general IV, agreement has been reached on a proposal for making special intervention funding available for Swan Hunter, subject to certain conditions.

It is expected that this proposal will be considered by the Commission before Christmas.

I hope for a favourable decision.

DEFENCE

Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures are used by the Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation to assess *(a)* efficiency, *(b)* productivity, *(c)* product cost and *(d)* quality performance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Responsibility for this matter falls to the chief executive of the Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Captain D. Symonds to Dr. David Clark dated 16 December 1993:

1. In your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence, you asked about the measures used by the Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation (NARO) to assess efficiency, productivity, product costs and quality performance. Details of the measures are below:

(a) Efficiency is measured by comparing the time taken to complete the work with the Basic Time as defined in BS3138.

$$\text{NARO Efficiency Index} = \frac{\text{Measured Work Content}}{\text{Measured Time Taken}} \text{(Basic Time)}$$

(b) Productivity is basically a measure of output per employee and is measured by:

$$\text{Productivity} = \frac{\text{Direct Output Units Achieved}}{\text{Total Number of Employees}} \text{(DOU)}$$

where a DOU is a standard hour of work (as detailed in BS3138). (The Total Number of Employees does not include apprentices).

c. *Product Cost* is measured in 2 ways:

(1) Firstly

$$\text{Cost per DOU} = \frac{\text{Consumption Budget—Costs incurred by non NARO units}}{\text{DOU}}$$

(2) Secondly, product cost where the full cost of an item including labour, overheads and material costs are deflated using HM Treasury GNP deflator index.

(d) Quality Performance is measured by reviewing the weighted number of Allied Quality Assurance Publication non-conformances over a period.

2. If I can provide any further details I will be more than happy to do so.

HMS Malabar

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of HMS Malabar, Bermuda.

Mr. Hanley: HMS Malabar, a small Royal Navy base in Bermuda, has provided the United Kingdom with a valuable asset in what has in the past been a strategically significant location. In the changed environment, however, its strategic importance has greatly diminished, and after careful consideration, the Government have decided that the base should be closed in April 1995. The Government are most grateful to the Government and people of Bermuda for the support which they have given the base, and intend that continued visits by vessels of the Royal Navy will maintain the service's close association with the island.

Defence Exports

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the export of three combat aircraft from the United Kingdom to India as listed in the United Nations register of conventional arms;

(2) if he will make a statement on the export of 29 armoured combat vehicles, one combat aircraft and missiles and missile launchers from the United Kingdom to Saudi Arabia as listed in the United Nations register of conventional arms;

(3) if he will make a statement on the export of five combat aircraft from the United Kingdom to Zimbabwe as listed in the United Nations register of conventional arms;

(4) if he will make a statement on the export of one armoured combat vehicle from the United Kingdom to Papua New Guinea as listed in the United Nations register of conventional arms;

(5) if he will make a statement on the export of 10 combat aircraft from the United Kingdom to the Republic of Korea as listed in the United Nations register of conventional arms;

(6) if he will make a statement on the export of 25 battle tanks from the United Kingdom to Nigeria as listed in the United Nations register of conventional arms;

(7) if he will make a statement on the export of four large-calibre artillery systems from the United Kingdom to Brazil as listed in the United Nations register of conventional arms;

(8) if he will make a statement on the export of missiles and missile launchers from the United Kingdom to the United Arab Emirates as listed in the United Nations register of conventional arms.

Mr. Hanley: In accordance with the requirements of the United Nations arms register, the United Kingdom has reported a number of defence equipment exports. However, it is not our practice to comment on the detail of individual defence export contracts.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the export of eight large-calibre artillery systems from the United Kingdom to Nepal as listed in the United Nations register of conventional arms; and for what reasons this appeared in the submissions by Nepal, but not that by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hanley: No large-calibre artillery systems were transferred to Nepal in 1992.

Porton Down

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further consideration has been given to the establishment of an ethics committee for experiments involving animals at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down.

Mr. Hanley: This is a matter delegated to the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Harry Cohen, dated 16 December 1993:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what further consideration has been given to the establishment of an ethics committee for experiments involving animals at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down (Question 17, Order Paper 14 December 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. Our present arrangements for the identification and scrutiny of proposed animal experimentation at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down demonstrate that we have an essentially independent review of all proposals for animal experiments outside the line management chain which provides us with many, if not all, of the advantages of an Ethics Committee for animal experiments.

3. Under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act of 1986, CBDE is required to seek both personal and project licenses. We have just completed the first five year review of the project licenses and this has been accomplished without any difficulties although we recognise that the project licenses are now being drawn up in a more stringent way. The Home Office Inspectorate, supported by the Animal Procedures Committee, provides an independent review of our work with animals. We also comply with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons cost of practice for named veterinary surgeons employed on scientific procedures establishments and breeding and supplying establishments under the Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

4. When members of CBDE are considering a new project license, they first discuss the proposed license with their line manager and the Superintendent of their Division to confirm that there is indeed a need for animal experiments and that the information required cannot be obtained by another means. They then draft the experimental protocol that will, if approved, form the basis of the license. The next step is to discuss this with our Named Veterinary Surgeon who is free to bring any concerns she may have to the attention of my Director of Life Sciences or to myself. Our veterinary surgeon provides an independent assessment of the project in which informal discussion may take place with the Home Office Inspectorate. Following this, the project licence application is submitted formally to the Home Office Inspectorate over the signature of my Director of Life Sciences. The Home Office Inspectorate may, it they wish, submit a project license application to its own Animal Procedures Committee. I take a personal interest in all of this as the certificate holder for the Establishment under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 and I review all aspects of our work with animals at six monthly meetings.

5. In respect of our consideration as to whether to establish an ethics committee for animal experiments, we are having discussions with experts in academia concerning the pros and cons of an ethics committee; whilst there would be presentational advantages, there would clearly be additional work and potential delay imposed by the introduction of a further review process. We are continuing our discussions and at this stage have not yet decided whether an ethics committee would present significant added value over the present arrangements with the Home Office.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many laboratories under the control of his Department have ethics committees for experiments involving animals.

Mr. Hanley: None.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the Ethics Committee for experiments involving humans at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down, was first established.

Mr. Hanley: This is a matter delegated to the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Harry Cohen, dated 16 December 1993:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking when the ethics committee for experiments involving humans at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down, was first established (Question 42, Order Paper, 14 December 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment Ethics Committee was established in July 1991. This Committee follows the guidelines laid down by the Royal College of Physicians of London and its membership includes lay members, members of both sexes from the local community, a nurse and a general medical practitioner.

3. The Ethics Committee has subsumed previous arrangements for the ethical review of proposed volunteer studies. For some 30 years, a committee on the safety of human experiments had been set up at this Establishment involving all the medical officers on the staff of the Establishment whose task was to review all the protocols for proposed volunteer studies to ensure that they were as safe as possible; this committee had the right of veto. Following such reviews, protocols were then considered by an ethical sub group of the Medical Committee of the Defence Scientific Advisory Committee which involved independent experts.

Defence Imports

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the importing of 6,888 missiles and missile launchers from Germany as listed in the United Nations register of conventional arms.

Mr. Hanley: For operational reasons it is not our practice to comment on the import of missiles and missile launchers.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the importing of one armoured combat vehicle from Canada as listed in the United Nations register of conventional arms.

Mr. Hanley: The armoured combat vehicle was imported for use as a museum exhibit.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the importing of 14 large-calibre artillery systems from France as listed in the United Nations register of conventional arms.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement gave the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), *Official Report*, column *605*, on 1 December 1993.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the importing of one battle tank from the Russian Federation as listed in the United Nations register of conventional arms.

Mr. Hanley: The tank was imported for defence research and development purposes.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which British nuclear tests at the Nevada test site were carried out in association with *(a)* Los Alamos National Laboratory and *(b)* Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

Mr. Hanley: The information is given inthe table. Information is not readily available to confirm the United States host laboratory for the first three tests, namely Pampas, Tendrac and Cormorant, but it is believed that all three were carried out in conjunction with the Los Alamos national laboratory.

Event	*Date*	*US Laboratory*
Pampas	1 March 1962	
Tendrac	7 December 1962	
Cormorant	17 July 1964	
Courser	25 September 1964	LANL
Charcoal	10 September 1965	LANL
Fallon	23 May 1974	LLNL
Banon	26 August 1976	LLNL
Fondutta	11 April 1978	LLNL
Quargel	18 November 1978	LLNL
Nessel	29 August 1979	LLNL
Colwick	26 August 1980	LLNL
Dutchess	24 October 1980	LANL
Serpa	17 December 1980	LLNL
Rousanne	12 November 1981	LANL
Gibne	25 April 1982	LLNL
Armada	22 April 1983	LLNL
Mundo	1 May 1984	LANL
Egmont	9 December 1984	LLNL
Kinibito	5 December 1985	LANL
Darwin	25 June 1986	LLNL
Midland	16 July 1987	LANL
Barnwell	8 December 1989	LLNL
Houston	14 November 1990	LANL
Bristol	26 November 1991	LLNL

LANL–Los Alamos National Laboratory
LLNL–Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

Small Arms Cartridges

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column *41*, when production in the United Kingdom of manufacture of the propellant powder for small arms cartridges known as small arms nitro compound ceased; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Production in the United Kingdom ceased in December 1992.

Contracting Out

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how he proposes to safeguard military and naval security in making decisions to contract out work at the Hydrographic Office and the Military Survey.

Mr. Hanley: Private contractors undertaking work on behalf of the Hydrographic Office, the Directorate General Military Survey or any other defence agency are contractually obliged to conform to strict guidelines and to implement protective security measures, laid down by the Ministry of Defence, appropriate to the classification and sensitivity of the work undertaken. Adherence to these guidelines and directives is monitored under the Department's standard monitoring arrangements.

Depleted Uranium Shells

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what quantities of depleted uranium shells are stored at the Dundrennan and West Freugh test sites in advance of experimental test firings.

Mr. Hanley: No stocks of depleted uranium projectiles are kept at test and evaluation establishment West Freugh. No DU trials have taken place there since 1990 and we have no plans to hold any more.

The stocks held at T and EE Kirkcudbright vary depending on the nature of a particular trial and the intensity of the trials firing programme. On 15 December 1993, 111 rounds were held at the range in anticipation of a number of trials.

Beryllium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what testing facilities beryllium is used by his Department.

Mr. Hanley: Testing of beryllium is carried out at atomic weapons establishment sites.

Aldermaston

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) in what form and quantity *(a)* chromium, *(b)* acetone, *(c)* aluminium hydroxide, *(d)* ammonium persulphate, *(e)* benzene, *(f)* butyl acetate, *(g)* cadmium, *(h)* carbon tetrachloride, *(i)* chloroform, *(j)* copper, *(k)* cyanide, *(l)* 1, 2-dichloroethane, *(m)* 1, 1-dichloroethylene, *(n)* ethanol, *(o)* ethyl acetates, *(p)* ferric chloride, *(q)* hexachlorobutadiene, *(r)* hydrochloric acid, *(s)* hydrofluoric acid, *(t)* lanthanum, *(u)* lead, *(v)* lithium chloride, *(w)* manganese, *(x)* mercury and *(y)* methyl chloride are used by the atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston;

(2) in what form and quantity *(a)* methylene chloride, *(b)* methyl ethyl ketone, *(c)* molybdenum, *(d)* nickel, *(e)* nitrates, *(f)* nitric acid, *(g)* phosphoric acid, *(h)* selenium, *(i)* silver, *(j)* sodium hydroxide, *(k)* sodium nitrate, *(l)* sodium thiosulphate, *(m)* sulphuric acid, *(n)* tetrachloroethylene, *(o)* thallium and *(p)* toluene are used by the atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston.

Mr. Hanley: Like any major industrial site, university and school laboratory, AWE Aldermaston uses a wide and varied range of chemicals. It is not possible to list the form and quantity in which they are used without disproportionate cost.

Research and Development

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the spending on research and development in each of the last five years given in 1992-93 prices in his Department.

Mr. Hanley: The expenditure on research and development by the Ministry of Defence for the last five years, at constant prices, is given in table 2.3.2 of the "Cabinet Office Annual Review 1993", page 38. The base year for these figures is 1991-92. Those for 1992-93 are not yet available.

Merchant Ships

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will hold a public inquiry into the chartering of merchant ships during the Gulf war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: There is no intention to hold a public inquiry into the chartering of merchant ships during the Gulf conflict. My Department's internal auditors fully investigated all aspects of the chartering of merchant ships during the Gulf conflict and their recommendations are being implemented. In addition, the National Audit Office has issued a report into the movements of personnel, equipment and stores to and from the Gulf, which drew heavily on the internal auditors' findings. The accounting officer has given evidence to the Public Accounts Committee and publication of the PAC report is imminent. The Department will respond to that Committee's observations in the usual manner.

Staff Christmas Party

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how much of his Department's money has been authorised for the 1993 staff Christmas party;

(2) what was the cost of his Department's 1992 staff Christmas party, including man hours lost.

Mr. Hanley: Each year, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, his ministerial colleagues and the staff of the ministerial offices host a party to thank departmental officials and their military colleagues for the work and support given during the year and 1992 and 1993 were no exception. The costs of these events are met by Ministers and the staff of the ministerial offices. The events take place out of office hours and, apart from a few staff hours of preparation beforehand, no staff hours were lost.

Iraqi Military Personnel

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what dates and for what purposes Iraqi military personnel have been officially received in Britain since August 1990.

Mr. Hanley: No such visits have been made.

Ministerial Hospitality

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money has been spent on ministerial hospitality by his Department since 9 April 1992.

Mr. Hanley: Since 9 April 1992 some £105,000 has been spent on ministerial hospitality from the defence budget.

Official Cars

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many official cars are currently at the disposal of his Department; and how much of his Department's budget has been allocated for their provision in the financial year 1993-94.

Mr. Hanley: The number of staff cars in use are as follows:

Type	*Army*	*RAF*	*Navy*	*Total*
Grade A	[1]81	30	43	154
Grade B	[1]828	722	334	1,884
Grade C	[1]877	545	210	1,632
Totals	1,786	1,297	587	3,670

[1] The Army listings include vehicles held in the London district and other pools for the use of ministers and civil servants

The current grade A car is the Rover 825D, the current grade B car is the Rover Montego Diesel and the current grade C car is the Vauxhall Corsa Diesel. The estimated expenditure in 1993-94 is some £8,545,000.

Overseas Visits

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much was spent by his Department on travelling abroad by *(a)* Ministers and *(b)* officials in each of the last three financial years; and which countries were visited.

Mr. Hanley: The information is not recorded centrally in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Generals

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the ratio of officers of general and equivalent ranks to other ranks in each of the three services in 1979, 1990 and 1993.

Mr. Hanley: The ratios of senior officers—major general equivalents and above—to other ranks in each of the three services for the dates specified is as follows:

Date	*RN*	*Army*	*RAF*	*All*
1 January 1979	1:948	1:1,383	1:1,124	1:1,187
1 January 1990	1:905	1:1,578	1:1,240	1:1,285
1 January 1993	1:989	1:1,615	1:1,228	1:1,321

Other ranks are warrant officers, non-commissioned officers, ratings and equivalents. These ratios exclude locally enlisted personnel.

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of correspondence received by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each of his Department's agencies receives (i) an acknowledgement within five days and (ii) a substantive reply within 15 days.

Mr. Hanley: The Department does not maintain central records of correspondence received from members of the public, although the aim is to provide at least an initial reply within 15 working days—20 working days in the case of complaints about low flying. For letters from hon. Members, in 1993 up to the end of September, 100 per cent. received an acknowledgement within five days of receipt and 77 per cent. were answered within 15 working days.

All defence agencies aim to provide a reply within 15 working days and I understand that this is achieved in the vast majority of cases, but they are not required to maintain statistics on their performance in dealing with correspondence.

Submarine Exercises

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the *(a)* duration, *(b)* locality and *(c)* involvement of representatives of fishermen's associations in all the submarine exercises carried out off the west coast of Scotland in 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is available only for major planned exercises involving one or more submarines.

Exercise	*Duration*	*Location*
SMCC 1/93	24 May 1993 to 4 June 1993	Southern CXAs
	17 June 1993 to 22 June 1993	Northern and Southern CXAs
SMCC 2/93	18 October 1993 to 29 October 1993	Southern CXAs
	10 November 1993 to 15 November 1993	Northern and Southern CXAs
JMC 391	10 February 1993 to 18 February 1993	Northern CXAs
JMC 932	9 June 1993 to 17 June 1993	Northern CXAs
JMC 933	1 November 1993 to 3 November 1993	Southern CXAs
	3 November 1993 to 11 November 1993	Northern CXAs

SMCC=Submarine Command Course
JMC=Joint Maritime Course
CXAs=Clyde Exercise Areas

Both SMCCs were notified to fishermen at the Clyde fisheries liaison meeting on 4 December 1992 and the programmes for these exercises were widely distributed to fishermen's associations. Advance notice of all three JMCs was issued through notices to fishermen. Additionally, a detailed programme for JMC 933 was sent to fishermen's associations.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to improve the safety and reliability of British nuclear weapons.

• **Mr. Hanley:** We are confident in the safety and reliability of our in-service warheads and that Trident will enter service as a safe and reliable system. We intend to maintain the highest levels of safety and reliability.

Nuclear Transport

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if vehicles carrying nuclear warheads on public roads are obliged to display radiation hazards signs.

Mr. Hanley: Requirements for the display of such hazard signs are set out in the Radioactive Substances (Carriage by Road) Regulation 1974, as amended in 1985. Paragraph 20 of these regulations provides an exemption in the case of the carriage of nuclear weapons.

Honduras Armed Forces

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what training is offered to officers of the Honduras armed forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: No training is currently on offer to the Honduras armed forces.

Ammunition and Propellant

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which foreign companies currently supply the armed services with ammunition and propellant.

Mr. Hanley *[pursuant to the reply 8 December 1993, c. 292]:* The following firms were inadvertently omitted from the list of overseas companies which currently supply the Ministry of Defence with ammunition and propellant:

Aerospatiale—France
Rheinmetall—Germany
Raufoss—Norway
Sumdstrand Corporation—United States of America

HEALTH

NHS Management Board

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on how many occasions, during the period that he was chief executive of the NHS management board, Sir Leonard Peach signed documents indicating that he would have no personal involvement in any action of the NHS management board regarding the purchase and use of information technology systems on the ground of potential conflict of interest; and if she will provide a list of those occasions and the contracts to which they referred.

Dr. Mawhinney: I will write to the hon. Member with further details.

Orthodontic Care

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children were refused orthodontic treatment at Guy's hospital in 1993; and how many children by health authority were refused treatment in 1993 because of the limitation of extra-contractual referrals.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Guy's and St Thomas's hospital trust, Lord Hayhoe, about orthodonic treatment at Guy's hospital.

Charitable Trusts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what purposes a regional health authority is authorised to apply the charitable trust acquired by reason of the distribution of the national fund in 1974.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities that hold charitable funds on trust are required to administer them for the purposes specified in the trust instruments.

NHS Trusts (Salaries)

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table setting out the current salaries of the chief executives of all the trusts within the Greater London area, and indicating the percentage increase received by each chief executive in the course of the last 12 months.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

General Practitioners

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the number of unrestricted general practitioners in the 12 family health services authority areas which fall wholly or partly within the London initiative zone in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The available information is shown in the table:

Number of unrestricted GPs by family health services authority in London initiative zone

FHSA	*1989 October*	*1990 October*	*1991 October*	*1992 October*	*1993 April*
Brent and Harrow	291	281	263	270	272
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	379	371	370	367	372
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	217	214	194	190	189
Barking and Havering	191	186	183	181	182
Camden and Islington	209	211	221	215	218
City and East London	340	348	347	351	355
Enfield and Haringey	273	279	278	278	277
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	240	233	227	225	225
Greenwich and Bexley	216	214	210	213	213
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	416	400	402	410	419
Croydon	167	165	160	163	160
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	321	321	322	323	323
TOTAL IN LONDON IMPLEMENTATION ZONE	3,260	3,223	3,177	3,186	3,205

Notes:
1. Data are not yet available for October 1993.
2. Figures may have been affected by the introduction of statutory retirement for GPs from April 1991.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she takes in the event of a dispute between a contractor and an NHS trust to ensure that the trust has acted wholly within the law.

Mr. Sackville: Where a dispute about a national health service contract is referred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State under section 4(3) of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, my right hon. Friend may either determine the matter or appoint another person to consider and determine it in accordance with the National Health Service Contracts (Dispute Resolution) Regulations 1991.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the total numbers of chairpersons and non-executive board members of NHS trusts in England.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 16 December *Official Report*, column *817*.

Resource Management

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the expenditure in England on resource management in each year since 1988.

Mr. Sackville: The total of funds made available in the years 1988-89 to 1993-94 to regional health authorities, special health authorities, and trusts in England for resource management will be £291·813 million. The amount each year is:

Year	*£ million*
1988-89	2·300
1989-90	20·839
1990-91	68·525
1991-92	86·688
1992-93	83·294
1993-94	30·167

The amount in 1988-89 relates to funds made available to the pilot sites which were part of the resource management initiative. The resource management programme, including a regional infrastructure and the initial allocations to the first wave of acute hospital sites began in 1989-90—hence the increase in funds made available. As sites throughout England have joined the programme and have progressed through the implementation the central funds made available have reflected this pattern. A sum of less than £9 million is expected to be required from central funds in 1994-95 and a final sum of about £0·5 million in 1995-96.

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the name and job description [illegible] each special ministerial adviser employed in her Department, showing any particular outputs for which each adviser is responsible.

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has one special adviser, Mr. Richard Marsh, who advises on matters relating to health and social services.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements are made to ensure that special advisers to Ministers in her Department do not have access to the kind of information, and are not involved in the type of business, that would be likely to create suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment.

Mr. Sackville: The special adviser to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health is not given access to the kind of information likely to create suspicion of impropriety. He is not involved in evaluating tenders or letting contracts.

Departmental Offices (Heating Bills)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, by location the annual fuel heating bills for each of her Department's offices for the last four years, and for this year to date.

Mr. Sackville: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Census, Tower Hamlets

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the percentage of people answering Somali to the ethnic group question in the 1991 census by enumeration district within Tower Hamlets.

Mr. Sackville: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the figures from the 1981 and 1991 census returns for Tower Hamlets for *(a)* the method of daily travel-to-work statistics in percentages, *(b)* the hours worked on average per employed person per week and *(c)* the numbers of people who have a degree or professional/vocational qualification by type.

Mr. Sackville: The percentage of employees and self-employed people resident in Tower Hamlets travelling to work by various means of transport, as recorded in the 1981 and 1991 censuses, are shown in the table.

Means of travel to work	*Percentages* *1981*	*1991*
British Rail	1·6	2·4
Other rail (including underground)	19·1	25·2
Bus	29·3	16·8
Car: Driver	17·9	23·0
Passenger	2·7	2·9
Motor cycle	1·1	1·0
Pedal cycle	1·9	2·4
On foot	20·7	18·9
Works at home	2·2	2·5
Other means or not stated	3·4	4·9
Total employees and self-employed	100·0	100·0

The average hours worked per person per week, estimated from the results of the 1991 census for all employees and self employees and self employed in Tower Hamlets, was 36·4. In this estimate, it is assumed that those working 61 hours or more per week worked 70 hours. There are no comparable figures for 1981, as a question on hours worked was not asked in the 1981 census.

The estimated number of residents in Tower Hamlets with degrees or professional or vocational qualifications, as recorded in the 1981 and 1991 censuses, are shown in the table.

Estimated number of residents

	1981	*1991*
With higher degree	[1]—	1,440
With degree	[1]—	7,690
With diploma, etc	[1]—	3,240
Total qualified	4,800	12,370

[1] Available only at disproportionate cost.

Fluoridation

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to fluoridate all potable water supplies.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government believe that fluoridation is a safe and effective way of improving oral health and encourage the setting up of fluoridation schemes wherever it is practicable to do so. Decisions about the fluoridation of water supplies [illegible] however, properly taken at a local level.

Medical Devices Directorate

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the planned salary bill to her Department for the current financial year of the medical devices directorate, separately distinguishing the numbers of personnel employed at each salary scale.

Mr. Sackville: The directorate is responsible for ensuring that medical devices and equipment for sale or use in the United Kingdom meet acceptable standards of safety, quality and effectiveness and that these standards comply with relevant European Community directives. It is responsible for evaluation of medical devices and for good manufacturing practice standards in the field of medical devices.

The estimated cost of staff in the medical devices directorate for 1993-94, excluding temporary appointments, is £4·93 million. The whole-time equivalent number of staff, by grade, working in the directorate on 1 December 1993, excluding temporary appointments, was one grade 4; two grade 5; two senior medical officers; six grade 6; one nursing officer; three grade 7; 20·5 principal professional and technical officers; four senior executive officers; 44 senior professional and technical officers; one pharmaceutical officer 1; five higher executive officers; 25·5 higher professional and technical officers; one administration trainee; 17 executive officers; two professional and technical officers; 20 administrative officers; five administrative assistants; two senior personal secretaries; 6·5 personal secretaries.

Dentists

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many posts for salaried dentists in England have been advertised for each health authority area; how many inquiries were received for the post; how many applications were received for each post; and how many appointments have been made.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are currently 88 salaried dentists in post. The remaining information is not available centrally.

Homeless Mentally Ill People

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what consultation was undertaken with local authorities before the homeless mentally ill initiative was launched; what responsibilities local authorities have had in each year of the initiative for finding revenue support for the projects located in their areas; what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for the Environment on this subject; and if she will make a statement;

(2) how many schemes under the homeless mentally ill initiative in London have required Department of Health funding for care support; if she will list each scheme, showing the original date of application, the amount of Housing Corporation grant approved, the number of bed spaces and her Department's decision on funding in each case; and if she will make a statement;

(3) if she will make a statement on the progress of the homeless mentally ill initiative to provide housing and care support for homeless mentally ill persons in London.

Mr. Bowis: Five hostels offering temporary accommodation for homeless mentally ill people have been opened under the homeless mentally ill initiative—HMI. A further five are planned. All capital costs are being met by the Department of Health, as are the revenue costs, averaging £15,000 per bed space. No capital has been provided by the Housing Corporation for these hostels. There are plans to provide permanent accommodation for those currently in the hostels so that they can move on once they are ready to do so. The capital costs of this will be funded by the Housing Corporation. The table shows the hostels opened or planned and gives the number of spaces provided and the date of application.

Hostel	*Bedspaces*	*Date of Application*
Varden Street, E1[1]	11	28 August 1990
Argyle Walk, WC1[1]	12	16 September 1990
Shirland Road, W9[1]	18	18 March 1991
Elgin Avenue, W9	9	18 March 1991
Aberdour Street, SE1[1]	10	7 December 1990
Galleywall Road, SE15[1]	10	8 February 1991
Lambeth High Street, SE1	24	13 November 1992
Challinor Street, W14	20	3 December 1993
Grays Inn Road, WC1	14	2 August 1993
Marsh Hill, E9	16	22 September 1993

[1] Already open

Ministers in all relevant Departments, including the Department of the Environment, were closely involved in discussions during the development of the HMI and meetings were held with all statutory authorities at that crucial state. Officials at the Department of Health continue to collaborate with local authorities, in view of their duties and responsibilities arising from the National Assistance Act 1948, and they also liaise closely with colleagues in the Department of the Environment, the Housing Corporation and the regional health authorities involved in the HMI.

By 1994-95, over £20 million will have been spent in offering accommodation and psychiatric care to mentally ill people sleeping rough on the streets of London under the HMI. In addition to the provision of short-stay hostels, we have set up five multi-disciplinary community psychiatric teams who have made contact with people who many had written off as being beyond help. The initiative has raised the profile of homeless mentally ill people and, together with the Department of the Environment's rough sleepers initiative, has been instrumental in reducing numbers sleeping on the streets.

Health and Safety

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidance is given by her Department to employing bodies within the national health service on the enforcement of health and safety regulations;

(2) if she will make a statement on her Department's policy on the enforcement of health and safety regulations in the national health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: National health service management executive guidance EL(93)66 draws NHS employers attention to the importance of achieving a high standard of health and safety management at work. It refers to the serious consequences of failing to comply with health and safety legislation and gives particular emphasis to the new requirements of the regulations that came into effect in January this year. Copies of the guidance are available in the Library.

Occupational Health Services

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of consultant-led occupational health services in each region.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Tobacco Advertising

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the banning of tobacco advertising was discussed at the meeting of the EC Health Ministers on 13 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The draft European Community directive on tobacco advertising was discussed by the Health Council on 13 December and was remitted for further consideration. The United Kingdom Government continue to oppose the draft directive on the basis that it is not necessary for the completion of the single market.

Dental Handpieces

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to make it mandatory on manufacturers of dental handpieces to issue with each handpiece instructions as to its sterilisation.

Dr. Mawhinney: A European Council directive due to come fully into force in 1998 will make it mandatory for manufacturers to include information on the method of sterilisation of dental handpieces.

Research Units

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the future of *(a)* the national perinatal epidemiology unit and *(b)* all other Department of Health-funded research units.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 26 November, at columns *242-44*, and to the reply my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) gave the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) on 29 November, at columns *300-1*.

Psychiatric Nurses

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what ratio of trained psychiatric nurses to population is the agreed formula for the provision of suitable levels of care outside hospitals;

(2) what provision she intends to make for psychiatric nursing care in the community.

Mr. Bowis: There is no formula. Service providers, in discussion with purchasers, must determine the numbers and grades of staff that are deployed in the community.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many psychiatric nurses were employed in Crewe district health authority in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1990 and *(c)* 1993; and what were the numbers of redundancies among such staff in each of these years.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the South and East Cheshire health authority for this information.

St. Cross Hospital

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 14 December 1993, from how many people she has received representations about the consultation document issued by the Warwickshire health authority about the hospital of St. Cross in Rugby; and if she will list them.

Dr. Mawhinney: The recorded number of correspondents is 176. The names have been placed in the Library.

Research and Development

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the spending on research and development in each of the last five years given in 1992-93 prices in her Department.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

	£ million
1988-89	64·2
1989-90	69·4
1990-91	78·5
1991-92	[1]60·8
1992-93	[2]59·3

[1] The reduction in expenditure between 1990-91 and 1991-92 can be attributed to the termination of the locally organised research scheme (LORS) in 1991. LORS was a programme of research commissioned locally but funded directly by DH. The research work of LORS has continued at a local level.

The reduction in expenditure, when adjusted to 1992-93 prices, between 1991-92 and 1992-93 can be principally attributed to a reduction in expenditure by the National Blood Authority—formerly the Central Blood Laboratories—from £6·2 million to £1·1 million.

[2] Estimate.

These figures do not include expenditure which supports research-related activities in special health authorities and national health service hospitals. The total of NHS research and research-related expenditure is estimated currently at £320 million. Further information is available in "Research for Health", copies of which are available in the Library.

Press Officers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many press officers her Department has employed in each year since 1983.

Mr. Sackville: The available information is shown in the table.

	Numbers
1989-90	13
1990-91	14
1991-92	13
1992-93	14
1993	13

Midwives

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response she has made to the conclusions of the second report of the Health Select Committee of Session 1991-92 on maternity services—HC 29—that midwives should be responsible for their own practice and education.

Mr. Sackville: The Government's response—Cm 2018—to the Select Committee report was published in July 1992. Paragraphs 2.12.2, 2.12.3 and 2.205 et seq set out our position on these issues. The Government's response to the Select Committee announced the establishment of an expert committee to review policy on care during child birth. That work was completed in August 1993 with the publication of "Changing Childbirth". Copies of both reports are available in the Library.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received about the qualifications of university chairs of midwifery; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Departmental Offices

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the regional and area offices of her Department and of inspectorates and other public bodies for which she is responsible.

Mr. Sackville: Regional offices of the social services inspectorate are in London; Gateshead; Leeds; Birmingham; Bristol; Manchester and Nottingham.

There are six regional outposts of the national health service management executive and they are based in Manchester; Leeds; Brentwood, Essex; Craven Hill, London; Bristol and Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire.

Of the Department's non-departmental public bodies as listed in the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies", copies of which are available in the Library, the following have regional and area offices: the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work has regional offices at Pentonville road, London; Bristol; Rugby and Leeds; the English National Board of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting has offices in London; Bristol; Sheffield; Chester and York; the Public Health Laboratory Services Board has 53 area laboratories, situated in: Ashford, Kent; Bangor; Bath; Birmingham; Brighton; Bristol; Cambridge; Cardiff; Carlisle; Carmarthen; Park Royal, London; Chelmsford; Chester; Coventry; Dorchester; Dulwich, London; Epsom; Gloucester; Guildford; Hereford; Hull; Ispwich; Leeds; Leicester; Lincoln; Liverpool; Luton; Manchester; Middlesbrough; Newcastle-upon-Tyne; Norwich; Nottingham; Oxford; Peterborough; Plymouth; Poole; Portsmouth; Preston; Reading; Rhyl; Salisbury; Sheffield; Shrewsbury; Southampton; Stoke-on-Trent; Swansea; Taunton; Tooting, London; Truro; Watford, Whipps Cross, London; Wolverhampton; the National Radiological Protection Board has centres in Glasgow and Leeds, apart from its main centre in Didcot in Oxfordshire; the mental health review tribunals have four regional offices in Nottingham; Liverpool; Stanmore, Middlesex and Surbiton, Surrey; and the Health Education Authority has other premises in Canterbury and Oxford, apart from its main London headquarters.

NHS Appointments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all the appointments that she has made to posts in the national health service in the last year where there has been no advertisement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Many candidates nominated for public national health service appointments are identified as a result of advertising. The numbers are not available centrally. It is not our poicy, nor would it be economical, to advertise posts individually.

Child Hospital Patients

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children admitted to hospital have been treated on adult wards in the last year; and what percentage this represents of total children patients.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what number and percentage of children receiving intensive care in the last year were treated in adult intensive care units.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally. A survey carried out by the British Paediatric Association in connection with publication of the report "The Care of Critically Ill Children", copies of which are available in the Library, showed that, in 1991, a total of 12,822 children received intensive care, of whom 2,627—20·5 per cent.—children were treated in adult intensive care units. We are taking action to improve the availability of paediatric intensive care facilities, and we will be issuing guidance to health authorities early in the new year.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 13 December, *Official Report*, column *478*, what amounts of the fundholding allocation were retained by general practitioner fundholders in each region.

Dr. Mawhinney: Regional level information will not be available until all fundholder accounts have been audited and local arrangements for the voluntary return of savings have been completed.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the cost of reimbursing general practitioner practices for preparations to become fundholders in each region in each year to date.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 13 December, *Official Report*, column *478*, how the figure retained by general practitioner fundholders was calculated.

Dr. Mawhinney: Latest information available indicates that the total of general practitioner fundholder underspending in 1992-93 was £31·9 million, though some unaudited information is included in this. GP fundholders have already voluntarily returned £2·4 million of this and further voluntary returns are expected to result in about £28 million efficiency savings to be retained by GP fundholders.

Secure Units

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list each of the local authority secure places, and secure units in youth treatment centres, in England and Wales, indicating the number of places in each and the proposed locations of the planned 65 new secure places announced in 1991 together with tables showing the number of *(a)* old and *(b)* new places falling into each (i) county and (ii) region in England and Wales.

Mr. Bowis: There is a national network of 295 approved local authority secure places in England, to which all local authorities have access. Details of these, and the secure places in the two youth treatment centres, are shown in table A.

Because of a rise in the number of 15 to 16-year-old boys remanded to prison since 1991, a capital programme to increase the national stock of secure accommodation in England by a further 100 places is now planned. Details of proposals to provide these additional places currently brought forward by local authorities are shown in table B. Final confirmation of proposals is dependent, in some cases, on local authority agreement and on obtaining necessary planning consents.

Information about the provision of secure accommodation in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Table A

Secure accommodation by region

Regions and locations	*Managing authorities*	*Type*	*Number of places*
Northern			
New Aycliffe Royston House	Durham	Observation and Assessment Centre	14 mixed
Aycliffe Community Home Special Unit	Durham	Community Home (Education)	36 mixed
Netherton Park Elm Secure Unit	Northumberland	Observation and Assessment Centre	5 mixed
Yorkshire and Humberside			
East Moor Community Home	Leeds	Observation and Assessment Centre	27 boys
Sutton Place Safe Centre	Humberside	Community Home (Education)	10 mixed
North Western			
Redsands Centre Oak House Unit	Cheshire	Community Home (Education)	6 mixed
Redbank Community Home Vardy House	Lancashire	Observation and Assessment Centre	6 boys
Redbank Community Home Special Unit	Lancashire	Community Home (Education)	26 boys
St. Catherine's Community Home Labour House	Nugent Care Society (St. Helens)	Community Home (Education)	5 girls
Briars Hey Community Home Orchard House	Lancashire	Community Home (Education)	8 girls
Dyson Hall Community Home	Liverpool	Observation and Assessment Centre	8 boys
Park House Barton Moss Secure Unit	Salford	Observation and Assessment Centre	7 boys
West Midlands			
St. John's Safe Centre	Birmingham	Observation and Assessment Centre	8 mixed
Stoke House Sherbourne Unit	Coventry	Observation and Assessment Centre	8 mixed
East Midlands			
Kesteven House	Lincoln	Observation and Assessment Centre	4 mixed
Derbyshire Children's Centre Greenacres Secure Unit	Derby	Observation and Assessment Centre	5 mixed
Amberdale Community Home	Nottinghamshire	Observation and Assessment Centre	8 mixed
Thames Anglia			
Salters	Cambridgeshire	Observation and Assessment Centre	6 girls
Thornbury House	Oxon	Observation and Assessment Centre	3 boys
London			
Middlesex Lodge Heathlands Unit	Hillingdon	Observation and Assessment Centre	9 girls
Little Heath Lodge	Newham	Observation and Assessment Centre	6 boys
Orchard Lodge	Southwark	Observation and Assessment Centre	8 boys
Frant Court Community Home	Greenwich	Community Home (Education)	2 girls
Stamford House	Hammersmith	Observation and Assessment Centre	16 boys
Southern			
Lansdowne Children's Centre	East Sussex	Observation and Assessment Centre	5 mixed
Beechfield	West Sussex	Observation and Assessment Centre	6 mixed

Regions and locations	*Managing authorities*	*Type*	*Number of places*
Fairfield	Hampshire	Observation and Assessment Centre	3 girls
Glen House Intensive Care Unit Medina Unit	Hampshire	Observation and Assessment Centre	8 mixed
South Western			
North Community Home Atkinson Unit	Devon	Observation and Assessment Centre	12 mixed
Kingswood Secure Unit	Avon	Community Home (Education)	20 boys
Youth Treatment Centres			
St. Charles Centre, Brentwood, Essex	—	Youth Treatment Centre	30 boys
Glenthorne Centre, Birmingham	—	Youth Treatment Centre	30 mixed

Table B

Capital programme—proposals brought forward by local authorities in England

Region and authority	*Additional*
Northern	
Northumberland	5
Tyneside (location to be identified)	12
Yorkshire and Humberside	
Leeds	9
West Midlands	
Coventry	4
Staffordshire	8
East Midlands	
Derbyshire	3
Nottinghamshire	8
Lincolnshire	4
Thames/Anglia	
Cambridge	6
Leicestershire/Northamptonshire	16
London	
Southwark	8
Southern	
Hampshire	8
West Sussex	10
South West	
Devon	4

NHS Chief Executive

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will announce the name of the new NHS chief executive, and the salary for the post.

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State hopes to do so shortly. The salary offered is £82,925 plus performance-related pay, but more may be available for a candidate with exceptional qualifications or experience.

Public Meetings

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what requirements are imposed on district health authorities, regional health authorities, and health service trusts, to hold meetings in public of the main governing body, any committees, and any sub-committees; and what rights of access the public have to agendas, minutes, and reports of such bodies, committees and sub-committees.

Dr. Mawhinney: The meetings of regional health authorities, district health authorities and family health services authorities are governed by the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. This requires any full meeting of the authority, at which approval for a specific action is required, to be open to the public. But the public may be excluded from the whole or part of a meeting when confidential business is to be discussed. The provisions of the 1960 Act do not apply to committees or sub-committees of authorities, but committees comprising the full membership of the authority must meet in public unless a resolution to exclude the press and public is passed. The 1960 Act also requires authorities to supply the press, on request, with a copy of the agenda for each full meeting.

National health service trusts, and their committees or sub-committees, are not subject to the 1960 Act. Trusts are required to have one public meeting per year, in accordance with the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. Many NHS trusts have developed substantial programmes of public meetings and regular meetings with community health councils.

NHS trusts are required to publish annual reports, business plans and accounts. Regional health authorities, district health authorities and family health services authorities are not required to do so, but many publish annual reports, and their audited accounts are publicly available on request.

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of correspondence received by *(a)* her Department and *(b)* each of her Department's agencies receives (i) an acknowledgement within five days and (ii) a substantive reply within 15 days.

Mr. Sackville: The Department and all its agencies have targets for answering all correspondence within 28 days of receipt. All letters receiving a ministerial reply are acknowledged within five days of receipt. For the period 1 January 1993 to 30 November 1993, 71·5 per cent. of such letters received a reply within the target period. More detailed information on correspondence receiving a response from officials could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Asthma

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies have been done on the links between vehicle movements, exhaust emissions and asthma in Greater London; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 20 October, at column *236*.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the annual number of deaths which will result from radioactive discharges from the operation of THORP.

Mr. Sackville: No such estimates have been made. The National Radiological Protection Board—NRPB—has made an assessment of the collective radiation doses from discharges at Sellafield. The results of the NRPB work confirm that the discharges from the THORP plant will result in radiation doses much lower than natural background radiation levels. It has described the annual attributable risk to individuals in the world population as "vanishingly small".

"Keep Warm Keep Well"

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many inquiries have been made to the "Keep Warm Keep Well" initiative so far during the current winter to date.

Mr. Bowis: Since the launch of the "Keep Warm Keep Well" campaign in mid-October 1993, the freephone telephone inquiry line has received 8,783 calls for advice or information, and 28,938 individuals and organisations have requested supplies of the "Keep Warm Keep Well" brochure, copies of which will be placed in the Library.

European Year of Older People

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what representations she has received about the success of the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations;

(2) what evaluation has been made of the impact of the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations;

(3) what plans she has to work with other Government Departments to take forward programmes and ideas arising from the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations.

Mr. Bowis: The year is widely regarded as having been successful, although no formal representations on the matter have yet been received. An evaluation exercise has recently commenced to identify the key achievements of the year and its implications for future work.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in which programmes and events for the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations she has been directly involved.

Mr. Bowis: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has been directly involved in a number of initiatives, including the launch of the year in the United Kingdom at the age resource awards in London last December, in the presence of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales; an interview on BBC Television's "Primetime" in January with Lady Sally Greengross, director of Age Concern, England; opening the European year exhibition in the House of Commons in February; contributing to the regular news bulletin produced for the year; providing the foreword for a publication produced by sixth form students from the Royal borough of Kingston upon Thames; speaking at a reception hosted by Age Concern, England in October; launching the "Aging Well" pilot programme in November.

Other Ministers have also been present at a number of events during the year and, on behalf of the Secretary of State, I thanked participants at a finale event at St. Martin-in-the-Fields on 15 December, following which I hosted the closing reception.

During the United Kingdom's presidency of the Council of Ministers, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State opened a major conference on health promotion and sickness prevention for older people. These issues have been taken forward during the course of the year, both at national and at European level.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total Government expenditure on promoting the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations in the United Kingdom; and what was Government expenditure on previous European years.

Mr. Bowis: The Department of Health has funded the operation of a secretariat for the year, based at Age Concern, England headquarters, at a total cost for the period to 31 March 1994 of £330,000, including a contribution of £79,000 from the Department of Social Security. The Departments of Health and Social Security have also provided officers on secondment to the secretariat, at an approximate cost to March 1994 of £18,000.

It is estimated that the costs of publicity for the year provided through the Department of Health information division will be in the region of £130,000.

The Department of Health set up an advisory group for the year, at an approximate total cost of £8,000. The Department has two part-time officers working exclusively in connection with the year at an aggregate annual cost of £18,500. A substantial further, unquantifiable, level of staff input is also being provided by staff in the Departments of Health and Social Security and elsewhere in Government.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health launched the United Kingdom programme for the year on 17 December 1992 in the presence of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre. The Department of Health contributed approximately £14,000 to this event.

A number of other Government Departments have contributed to the promotion of the year by providing information and practical support for particular events. it is not possible to quantify the total costs.

Expenditure on previous European years is a matter for relevant Departments in each case.

Mental Health

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research or monitoring has been undertaken about the implementation of section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983, relating to aftercare for certain detained patients.

Mr. Bowis: The implementation of section 117 is monitored by the Mental Health Act Commission on its visits to hospitals and at meetings with health authorities and social services departments. In its fifth biennial report, published on 10 December, the commission notes that authorities are linking section 117 arrangements to the care programme approach. Copies of the report are available in the Library.

Section 117 requires health and local authorities to provide aftercare for patients who have been detained in hospital under the Mental Health Act 1983. The care programme approach, which we introduced in April 1991, requires that all patients about to be discharged after in-patient treatment for a mental illness, whether or not they have been detained, should be systematically assessed in respect of their health and social care needs, have an individual care programme and be allocated a named key worker. For those patients who have been detained under the Act, the requirements of section 117 will be met by proper implementation of the care programme approach.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the outcome of the comprehensive autumn round of monitoring by regional health authorities and the social services inspectorate of community care for the mentally ill.

Mr. Bowis: The monitoring suggested that authorities had made generally good progress in putting in place the basic structures and systems required. The national monitoring round did not look at services for specific client groups, but services for people with a mental illness under new arrangements are being examined as part of one of a range of special studies currently being carried out by the social services inspectorate and national health service management executive in a sample of authorities.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she proposes to take to respond to the criticisms of psychiatric services made in the recently published report of the Mental Health Act Commission; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be making a full response to the commission's report. This will be laid before Parliament.

Ashbourne Pharmaceuticals

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received regarding the pricing charges to the NHS for drugs of Ashbourne Pharmaceuticals.

Mr. Sackville: The Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee and others have made representations. We are currently carrying out an inquiry into the discounts received by dispensing doctors from their suppliers. It is hoped that the report will be available by the spring of 1994.

Nursing Staff

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* nurses and *(b)* midwives were in training in each health region in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* This information will be placed in the Library.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Information Security

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement about the operation of his Department's sensitive documents unit; how many staff are employed in its operation; and approximately how many documents per annum come within its purview.

Mr. Newton: The Privy Council Office does not have a sensitive documents unit.

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Lord President of the Council what was the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

Mr. Newton: The cost in 1990-91 was £114,755 for two vehicles.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Lord President of the Council what the cost of advertising by his Department has been for each year since 1979 and for each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Newton: The Privy Council Office incurs no costs in respect of advertising.

Press Office

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many press releases his Department has issued in each year since 1979.

Mr. Newton: On average, two.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many press officers his Department has employed in each year since 1983.

Mr. Newton: None.

European Documents

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Lord President of the Council (1) if he will tabulate in the *Official Report,* grouped under subject content, in respect of each of the European Community Documents of which note was taken by resolution of the House on Thursday 9 December *(a)* the European Council and/or Commission number, *(b)* the Command, House of Commons European Select Committee number, or other United Kingdom reference, *(c)* the title, and number of pages, *(d)* the purpose of the document and if it amends, or adds, to a previous related document, *(e)* the date first received by Her Majesty's Government, *(f)* the date first published by the originating or publishing body, *(g)* the date when placed in the Vote Office, *(h)* the date of ministerial signature on any explanatory, or supplementary explanatory memoranda, and the date if placed in the Vote Office more than three days after signature, *(i)* the date and reference numbers of published related reports of the Select Committee on European Legislation, *(j)* the date when any typescript report of the Select Committee on European Legislation not in *(i)* above was placed in the Vote Office, together with the relevant reference number of any forthcoming report, *(k)* the date of any debate in a European Standing Committee or the Floor of the House concerning that document and (1) the column number in the *Official Report* of any principal references to that document made by a Minister in the course of debate on 9 December; and if he will state the means whereby any member of the public could be informed of the existence of any of these documents of the European Community and be informed and obtain, a copy of the related ministerial memoranda;

(2) if he will provide details of the references and dates relating to the documents listed on the Order Paper of 9

December as relevant to the motion relating to European Communities, in the same manner which has been requested by the hon. Member for Newham, South in respect of the documents listed in the motion.

Mr. Newton: The information requested in regard to points *(a)* to *(j)* is set out in the table, which groups together, first, the documents included in the motion for debate, the subject of the first question, and, secondly, those shown as relevant to the debate, the subject of the second question. In regard to point *(k)*, none of the documents had been the subject of a previous debate either in European Standing Committee or on the Floor of the House. In respect of point (1), I refer the hon. Member to the *Official Report.*

Members of the public can obtain copies of published European Community documents from the European Commission's public information services. The Government's explanatory memoranda on European Community documents are made available to a number of outside organisations and libraries and can also be obtained from the relevant Government Department.

Documents included in the Motion for debate

a	*b*	*c*	*d*	*e*	*f*	*g*	*h*	*i*	*j*
EC Budget and Finance related documents									
(1) HM Treasury unnumbered EM of 6 December 1993	14938	Commission Recommendation for the broad guidelines of the economic policies of the Member States drawn up in conformity with Article 103(2) of the Treaty on European Union (informal EC text attached to EM, 5 pages)	Text of Commission Recommendation	EC document 10691/93 received 13 December 1993	24 November 1993	(1) HM Treasury unnumbered EM with text attached 6 December 1993	6 December 1993	HC 48-ii (1993-94) To be published	8 December 1993
(2) COM(93)700 (informal text)	14937	Commission White Book on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment (185 pages)	Commission paper for discussion at the European Council on 10 December 1993	6 December 1993	Not formally published yet	(2) 7 December 1993 (informal text)	3 December 1993 (HM Treasury unnumbered EM)	HC 48-ii (1993-94) To be published	8 December 1993
(3) 7665/93 (COM(93)400)	14625	Preliminary Draft General Budget of the EC for 1994 (several volumes, totalling 1,851 pages)	Commission proposal for the Community budget for 1994	15 September 1993 (Vol. 2) 2 July 1993 (other Volumes)	15 June 1993	(3) 15 September 1993 (Vol. 2) 2 July 1993 (other Volumes)	5 July 1993	HC 79-xxxvi (1992-93) Published on 5 August 1993	No MS report
(4) 9303/93 (Previously the subject of HM Treasury unnumbered EM of 18 October 1993)	14824	Letter of Amendment No. 1 to the Preliminary Draft Budget for 1994 (33 pages)	Commission amendments	25 November 1993	8 October 1993	(4) 29 November 1993	18 October 1993	HC 79-xxxviii (1992-93) Published 16 November 1993	No MS report
(5) 8012/93	14760	Draft General Budget of the EC for 1994 (7 volumes totalling 1,815 pages)	Council of Ministers' proposal for Community budget for 1994	16 September 1993	Documents undated	(5) 16 September 1993	20 September 1993	HC 79-xxxvii (1992-93) Published 16 November 1993	No MS report
(6) 9922/93 (Previously the subject of HM Treasury unnumbered EM of 5 November 1993)	14886	European Parliament's proposed amendments to the Draft General Budget for 1994 (727 pages)	See Column (c)	3 November 1993	28 October 1993	(6) 8 November 1993	5 November 1993 (HM Treasury unnumbered EM)	HC 48-i (1993-94) To be published	2 December 1993
(7) HM Treasury unnumbered EM of 22 November 1993	14898	Council Decision on European Parliament's proposed amendments and modifications to the Draft General Budget for 1994	Text of proposed Decision	Formal documents not yet received	See Column (e)	(7) 22 November 1993 (HM Treasury unnumbered EM)	22 November 1993	HC 48-i (1993-94) To be published	2 December 1993
(8) HM Treasury unnumbered EM of 2 November 1993	14864	Commission proposal for a Revision of the Financial Perspective (informal text (3 pages) attached to EM)	To revise the 1994 expenditure ceilings agreed at the Edinburgh European Council	Formal document not yet received	See Column (e)	(8) 2 November (informal text attached to HM Treasury unnumbered EM of 2 November 1993)	2 November 1993	HC 79-xxxix (1992-93) Published 8 December 1993	No MS report
(9) OJ C309 Vol. 36	14927	Annual Report of the European Court of Auditors together with replies from the Institutions (404 pages)	See Column (c)	22 November 1993	16 November 1993 (Date of OJ C309 Vol. 36)	(9) 22 November 1993	1 December 1993	HC 48-ii (1993-94) To be published	8 December 1993
Subsidiarity									
(10) COM(93)545	14941	Commission Report to the European Council on the adaptation of Community legislation to the subsidiarity principle (28 pages)	Follow-up to the Commission's review of the compatibility of EC legislation with subsidiarity	1 December 1993	24 November 193	(10) 2 December 1993	6 December 1993	HC 48-ii (1993-94) To be published	8 December 1993
Internal Market									
(11) 7194/93 (COM(93)256)	14654	(i) Commission Communication to the Council and the European Parliament entitled "Reinforcing the effectiveness of the Internal Market" (6 pages) (ii) Commission Working Document entitled "Towards a strategic Programme for the Internal Market"	Commission papers outlining, for consultation, a draft strategy for the Single Market post 1993	25 June 1993	2 June 1993	(11) 14 July 1993	14 July 1993	HC 79-xxxvi (1992-93) Published on 5 August 1993	No MS report

Documents shown as relevant to the debate

a	*b*	*c*	*d*	*e*	*f*	*g*	*h*	*i*	*j*
(1) 6203/93 (COM(93)[illegible]41)	14521	Annual Report for the Commission on the fight against fraud	Describes the work done and results achieved in 1992 in the fight against Fraud affecting the Community's financial interests and the 1993 Action Programme	7 May 1993	20 May 1993	(1) 12 May 1993	20 May 1993	HC 79-xxx (1992-93)	No MS report
(2) 8366/93 (COM(93)339) (previously the subject of unnumbered EM submitted by the MAFF on 8 September 1993)	14735	(i) Proposal for a Council Regulation (EEC) amending Council Regulation (EEC) No. 386/90 on the monitoring carried out at the time of export of agricultural products receiving refunds or other amounts (ii) Supplementary report on the application of Regulation (EEC) No. 360/90	Commission report including draft Regulation to amend the Regulation on the procedures for examining export refunds	6 September 1993	19 July 1993	(2) 10 September 1993	8 September 1993 (MAFF unnumbered EM)	HC 79-xxxvii (1992-93)	No MS report
(3) 8340/92 (SEC(92)582)	13908	Sweden—Commission opinion on the application for accession	See Column (c)	26 August 1992	7 August 1992	(3) 16 September 1992	FCO cover-note	HC 79-vi (1992-93)	No MS report
(4) 5725/93 (SEC(92)2048)	14340	Finland's application for membership—opinion of the Commission	See Column (c)	30 November 1992	4 November 1992	(4) 10 February 1993	16 February 1993	HC 79-xx (1992-93)	No MS report
(5) 7839/93 (COM(93)313) (previously the subject of unnumbered EM submitted by FCO on 16 July 1993)	14669	Commission opinion on Cyprus' application for membership of the EC	See Column (c)	22 July 1993	30 June 1993	(5) 26 July 1993	16 July 1993 (FCO unnumbered EM)	HC 79-xxxvi (1992-93)	No MS report
(6) 7838/93 (COM(93)312)	14668	Commission opinion on Malta's application for membership of EC	See Column (c)	22 July 1993	30 June 1993	(6) 26 July 1993	16 July 1993 (FCO unnumbered EM)	HC 79-xxxvi (1992-93)	No MS report
(7) 9806/93 (SEC(93)1599)	14899	Communication from the Commission to the Council promoting economic recovery in Europe (the Edinburgh Growth Initiative) Autumn 1993 review	Commission paper describing economic developments in the Community since the launch of the Growth Initiative in December 1992 and discusses possible further measures which might be taken to promote growth and employment	17 November 1993	20 October 1993	(7) 22 November 1993	2 December 1993	HC 48-ii To be published	8 December 1993

SCOTLAND

Departmental Offices (Heating Bills)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by location the annual fuel heating bills for each of his Department's offices for the last four years, and for this year to date.

Mr. Lang: The table gives the annual fuel heating bills since 1991-92 for those of my Department's offices where heating costs can be isolated from other energy costs. The Property Services Agency paid for most fuel used up to and including 1990-91.

Building	*1991-92* £	*1992-93* £	*1993* £
1 John's Place, Edinburgh	1,508·51	1,501·83	580·62
10 Keith Street, Stornoway	1,119·18	572·70	301·99
132 Seagate, Dundee	1,312·39	978·43	800·53
16-22 Picardy Place, Edinburgh	3,041·20	1,910·10	598·18
16 Waterloo Place, Edinburgh	11,351·37	8,799·42	6,153·68
161 Brooms Road, Dumfries	3,606·13	3,013·58	718·02
2 Greenside Lane, Edinburgh	1,767·40	3,907·53	1,082·93
2 St. Ninians Road, Stirling	2,064·54	2,281·19	739·37
25 Drumsheugh Gardens, Edinburgh	3,350·79	4,922·63	1,798·65
26 Victoria Road, Kirkcaldy	307·88	104·14	13·30
43 Jeffrey St., Edinburgh	13,323·46	15,500·82	9,155·41
44 York Place, Edinburgh	749·96	177·94	53·87
631 Paisley Road West, Glasgow	3,337·22	4,428·16	1,303·61
83 East High Street, Forfar	1,392·59	1,405·63	660·99
83 Princes Street, Edinburgh	—	—	81·94
Alhambra House, Glasgow	6,987·60	10,569·60	5,231·88
Atholl House, Aberdeen	6,138·56	5,019·27	2,056·00
Balloch Road, Keith	1,721·81	2,731·16	1,062·10
Bankhead Avenue, Edinburgh	932·48	1,184·60	465·76
Barrack Street, Hamilton	1,083·78	1,443·51	595·53
Bute House, Edinburgh	1,877·44	2,133·63	756·05
Calton House, Edinburgh	5,066·84	10,516·72	4,363·70
Charlotte House, Lerwick	730·74	555·38	244·79
Corunna House, Glasgow	10,205·82	5,288·86	0·00
Custom House, Stornoway	83·70	240·70	80·90
Dalrymple Street, Greenock	0·00	67·96	34·80
Dover House, London	1,508·53	763·79	2,008·00
Girnigoe Street, Wick	491·15	503·34	177·72
Governor's House, Edinburgh	1,941·49	2,497·42	591·91
Grange Street, Kilmarnock	355·97	31·60	0·00
Greyfriars House, Aberdeen	570·83	415·59	0·00
Gyleview House, Edinburgh	6,780·37	7,575·00	3,452·84

Building	*1991-92* *£*	*1992-93* *£*	*1993* *£*
James Craig Walk, Edinburgh	18,148·61	45,016·85	24,133·52
Jeanfield House, Perth	2,475·62	2,174·85	1,004·24
Keith House, Peterhead	820·06	1,017·64	651·14
Longman House, Inverness	3,975·67	4,418·46	1,863·53
Mason Street, Motherwell	350·33	105·79	0·00
New St. Andrew's House, Edinburgh	210,289·05	301,815·67	167,414·58
Pentland House, Edinburgh	18,681·58	19,679·48	7,187·06
Playfair House, Edinburgh	3,745·62	4,777·62	1,514·87
Queen Street, Buckie	33·34	167·74	—
Ruby House, Aberdeen	—	624·42	243·59
Russell House, Ayr	2,147·88	2,435·04	996·96
Saughton House, Edinburgh	18,740·12	20,878·22	11,116·74
Scorrybreck, Portree	0·00	285·12	315·92
Southlands, Elgin	3,640·68	2,373·65	1,375·27
St. Andrew's House, Edinburgh	68,551·01	56,703·71	14,713·29
St. Margaret's House, Edinburgh	5,988·96	7,597·93	478·22
Station Street, Stranraer	2,177·67	940·88	48·41
Strathbeg House, Thurso	1,972·14	2,018·05	1,498·69
Tankerness Lane, Kirkwall	2,315·74	2,230·96	1,265·82
Thainstone, Inverurie	—	—	1,472·39
The Vine, Dundee	1,657·60	628·91	—
Tormore, Dumfries	370·15	175·33	0·00
Tweedbank, Galashiels	4,118·98	4,491·62	2,427·24

Kilgarth Tip

Mr. Tom Clarke: to ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 10 December, *Official Report*, column *411*, if he will publish the correspondence relating to his decision about the application by City of Glasgow district council in respect of Kilgarth tip, Coatbridge.

Mr. Lang: I do not intend to publish the correspondence relating to my decision in the Kilgarth case. It is our normal practice to treat such papers as private matters involving only the parties directly concerned. After decision letters are issued it is for each party to decide whether, or to what extent, it wishes to disclose details of the case.

Cows and Ewes

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what according to *(a)* the most up-to-date and comprehensive data he has available and *(b)* the farm business survey, was the average number of (i) beef cows and (ii) ewes, carried on less-favoured areas livestock farms, by county and in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: The table provides information by region—county information is not readily available—on the average number of beef cows and ewes on cattle and sheep farms wholly or mainly in the less-favoured areas —LFAs—in Scotland from the agricultural census as at June 1992. As the farm accounts scheme covers only farms that are considered to be full-time commercial businesses, very small farms are excluded from the survey. The farm accounts scheme records the average number of livestock on the holding throughout the year. On LFA livestock farms, the average number of beef cows and ewes recorded by the farm accounts scheme in 1992-93 was 48 and 372 respectively. This compares with averages as at June of 46 and 364 respectively for similar farms from the agricultural census at June 1992.

Average number of cattle and sheep farms wholly or mainly in the less-favoured areas at June 1992

Region	*Beef cows*	*Ewes*
Islands[1]	10	90
Highland	18	189
Grampian	44	128
Tayside	43	505
Fife	44	197
Lothian	47	391
Borders	51	647
Central	31	457
Strathclyde	31	285
Dumfries and Galloway	50	343
Scotland	28	239

[1] Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles.

Forest Parks

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the hectarage of each forest park in the United Kingdom.

Sir Hector Monro: The area of each national forest park in Great Britain is given in the table.

Name	*Area (hectares)*
Afan	3,300
Argyll	22,100
Border	71,700
Coed y Brenin	3,100
Dean	13,700
Delamere	600
Galloway	76,100
Glenmore	2,700
Grizedale	2,400
Gwydyr	5,600
New Forest	26,700
North Riding	12,600
Queen Elizabeth	21,400
Sherwood Pines	1,000
Tay	18,200
Thetford	18,700
Whinlatter	1,200

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been sold and from which forest parks since 1981 as part of the programme to dispose of Forestry Commission land.

Sir Hector Monro: Since 1 April 1989, the Forestry Commission has sold the following areas in national forest parks:

Year	*Forest park*	*Woodland*	*Area (hectares)*
1990	Thetford	12 Acre Wood (part)	0·1
1990	Border	Stonehaugh	0·9
1992	Border	Sleetbeck	0·6

Sales of Forestry Commission land in national forest parks were not recorded separately before 1 April 1989 and the information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will name the forest parks which he has no plans to privatise.

Sir Hector Monro: Ministers will await the advice of the forestry review group before considering what action, if any, should be taken in respect of the ownership and management of Forestry Commission woodlands.

Farm Holdings

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average size of farm holding in the less-favoured areas as sampled by *(a)* the most recent farm business survey and *(b)* the most up-to-date and comprehensive data he has available, by country and in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: The table provides information by region—county information is not readily available—on the average size, in hectares, of cattle and sheep farms wholly or mainly in the less-favoured areas—LFAs—in Scotland from the agricultural census at June 1992. As the farm accounts scheme covers only farms that are considered to be full-time commercial businesses, very small farms are excluded from the survey. The average size of livestock farms wholly or mainly in the LFA as recorded in the farm accounts scheme sample for 1992-93 is 439 hectares, compared with 393 hectares for the average of similar farms in the agricultural census at June 1992.

Average size of cattle and sheep farms wholly or mainly in the LFA at June 1992

Region	[1]*Hectares*
Islands (Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles)	48
Highland	403
Grampian	148
Tayside	763
Fife	101
Lothian	273
Borders	380
Central	418
Strathclyde	278
Dumfries and Galloway	214
Scotland	254

[1] Total area of holding

Spent Fuel Store, Torness

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to *(a)* make his decision on and *(b)* publish the report of the public local inquiry into the objections to the application to build a spent fuel store at Torness.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend expects to announce a decision in the new year. The report of the public inquiry will be made available at that time.

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of correspondence received by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each of his Department's agencies receives (i) an acknowledgement within five days and (ii) a substantive reply within 15 days.

Mr. Lang: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible. Copies of my reply will be placed in the Library of the House.

Scottish Transport Group

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the board members of the Scottish Transport Group as at 7 September.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Transport Group board members at 7 September 1993 were:

Ian S. Irwin CBE (Chairman)
Ronald S. McNeill CBE
Robert S. Temple
John Stark
Archibald Douglas

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland from what source of funds the payments to former Scottish Transport Group managers, as described in a letter from Mr. A. Douglas, board member, of 7 September, are to be met.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The payments have been met from the Scottish Transport Group's cash balances.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he took on whether there was a legal obligation to offer payments in lieu of BUPA membership to former Scottish Transport Group managers; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This was a matter for the Scottish Transport Group. Legal advice obtained by the STG board was that contractual obligations existed in relation to BUPA membership.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many former members of Scottish Transport Group management have been sent letters from Mr. A. Douglas, board member, dated 7 September concerning payments in lieu of BUPA membership; and how many have responded so far.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I understand that the Scottish Transport Group sent letters to 27 individuals and that all responded.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the offer of payments in lieu of BUPA membership made in a letter of 7 September by Mr. A. Douglas was available to board members of the Scottish Transport Group.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The offer of payments in lieu of BUPA membership was available to executive board members of the Scottish Transport Group.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current value of assets owned by the Scottish Transport Group.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The value is £8·7 million.

Gas Pipeline

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions have taken place with local fishermen's associations and other maritime-interest groups concerning the installation of the gas pipeline between the south of Scotland and Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Premier Transco Ltd., a British Gas subsidiary, has conducted a series of consultations with a wide range of fishery and other maritime interest groups. This consultation is taking place prior to Premier Transco formally submitting its application to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry should the company decide to proceed with the development.

Shrieval Bench Vacancies

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications were received following the intimation for two judicial vacancies on the Shrieval bench in the "Scots Law Times;" and how many applicants were female.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Applications specifically resulting from the intimation in the "Scots Law Times" numbered 11, of which four were from female candidates.

Laurence Peterken

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will provide substantive answers to the outstanding questions from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill of 2 December relating to Mr. Laurence Peterken.

Mr. Stewart: I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Libraries of the House.

Press Officers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many press officers his Department has employed in each year since 1983.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* The table shows the number of information officer grades employed in the Scottish Office information directorate in each year since 1983:

	Number of information officer grades	*Vacancies*
1983	20·0	—
1984	20·0	—
1985	19·0	1
1986	20·0	2
1987	22·0	1
1988	23·0	1
1989	28·0	3
1990	31·5	—
1991	33·5	—
1992	29·5	2
1993	31·5	—

Agriculture Census

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the variation of the acreage listed under the heading of roads, yards and buildings in the June censuses for the years 1982 to 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The area of roads, yards and buildings is included in the category "other land" in the agricultural census. The figures in hectares for this category of land on main holdings are as follows:

	Hectares
1982	45,212
1983	45,108
1984	35,795
1985	37,025
1986	38,358
1987	38,193
1988	40,035
1989	44,314
1990	52,239
1991	47,470
1992	46,002

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total land area in Scotland as shown in the June census figures *(a)* in 1986 and *(b)* in 1987; and what was the reason for the difference.

Sir Hector Monro: The total agricultural area on main holdings in 1986 and 1987, including common grazings, was 5,967,552 hectares and 5,954,416 hectares respectively. These figures are consistent with the main holdings definition introduced in 1991. Explanations for differences in areas from year to year are not collected in census returns. However, the bulk of the change in total agricultural area reflects a change in the area of rough grazings.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the areas of Forestry Commission woods in the Clydebank and Milngavie constituency.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* The only Forestry Commission woodland in the hon. Member's constituency is part of Auchineden wood.

Harbours

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the amounts of public funds spent on each harbour during the past 10 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Files

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many files marked "Not for National Audit Office eyes" are held by the Department; and how many are marked "Not for Public Accounts Committee eyes".

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* There is a total of 263 subject files in my Department which carry the marking "Not for NAO Eyes".

The marking "Not for NAO eyes" is used in accordance with guidance from the Treasury and agreed by the National Audit Office under which documents relating to the handling of relations between Departments and the NAO are not automatically available to NAO while they are current.

The marking is removed once the subject matter is no longer current. The Scottish Office audit unit checks from time to time to ensure that the marking is being used and removed correctly.

There are no files marked "Not for PAC eyes".

New Towns

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many staff are expected to be employed in each of the new town corporations at the time of their winding up; how many will have been transferred before the winding up of each of the new towns; how many of the transferred staff will be covered by the Transfer of Undertaking (Protection of Employment) Regulation 1981 and the European Community acquired rights directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 8 December 1993]:* It is not possible to predict how many staff will be employed at final wind-up. Staff will retire or be transferred to other bodies or be made redundant at different times during the wind-up period, depending on the completion of projects, the outcome of negotiations with the bodies to receive transferees and the demands of the complex process of winding up. Whether the TUPE regulations apply to a group of staff is a matter for decision in each case, in the light of legal advice, by the body which takes over the associated function. Therefore it is not possible to predict how many staff will transfer by virtue of TUPE. Current staff members for each development corporation were given in my answer to the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram), on 6 December 1993, *Official Report,* column *84.*

Set-aside Land

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the area, in hectares, of new entrants to the five-year set-aside scheme for Scotland in the year beginning September 1991, the number of hectares which came out of the scheme in the year ending September 1991 and the number of hectares that have joined the scheme since September 1992.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 December 1993]:* The areas, as reported, in respect of the five-year set-aside scheme in Scotland are as follows:

(a) New entrants in the year from 1 October 1991: 3,765 hectares.

(b) Withdrawals in the year ending 30 September 1991: 1,720 hectares.

(c) Land entered into the scheme from 1 October 1992: 400 hectares.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what is *(a)* the 1993-94 estimated outturn and *(b)* the 1994-95 planned provision of local authority net capital expenditure in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 December 1993]:* The information is *(a)* £878 million and *(b)* £918 million respectively, resulting in an increase of over £39 million or 4·5 per cent.

The figures for both years are inclusive of capital grants. They exclude expenditure carried forward from previous years under the end-year flexibility arrangements. The also exclude capital expenditure funded from revenue and from the European regional development fund. The planned provision for 1994-95 is provisional since detailed expenditure allocations are subject to revision until final plans are published in the departmental report "Serving Scotland's Needs".

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing in 1992-93 prices, the gross public spending for each year since 1990-91 and the projected expenditure for each year to 1995-96 for each executive non-departmental public body sponsored by his Department, as listed in "Public Bodies 1992".

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 15 December 1993]:* The following table shows the amount of central Government funding received by each body in the years 1990-91 to 1993-94.

The figures for 1993-94 are expected outturn.

The expenditure allocations for future years are not decided more than one year ahead and those for 1994-95 are not yet available in all cases.

Further information will be published in the departmental report "Serving Scotland's Needs."

Expenditure in real terms (1992-93) on NDPBs under the Secretary of State for Scotland's control

	1990-91 £ million	*1991-92 £ million*	*1992-93 £ million*	*1993-94 £ million*
Edinburgh New Town Conservation Committee	0·9	0·9	0·9	0·9
Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland	2·0	3·8	2·7	2·6
Scottish Natural Heritage	..	..	33·5	35·0
National Board for Nursing	27·7	28·6	29·3	4·0
Scottish Medical Practices Committee	31·8	36·2	36·9	34·9
Scottish Council for Post Graduate Medical Education	3·1	2·4	2·8	3·2
Scottish Enterprise	..	401·6	380·7	360·8
Highlands and Islands Enterprise	0·3	61·7	62·8	58·9
Scottish Tourist Board	13·7	13·0	13·9	13·1
Craigie College	2·6	1·7	1·5	..
Jordanhill College	14·0	11·1	9·6	..
Moray House College	10·6	7·0	7·4	..
St. Andrews College	5·0	3·8	3·9	..
Northern College	7·9	5·1	5·1	..
National Galleries of Scotland	8·0	7·8	9·0	9·7
National Library of Scotland	10·7	12·5	14·9	20·4
National Museums of Scotland	13·9	14·0	16·0	16·4
Scottish Sports Council	6·1	7·3	9·8	10·0
Scottish Community Education Council	0·6	0·6	0·6	0·6
Scottish Council for Educational Technology	1·6	1·5	1·4	1·4
Scottish Higher Education Funding Council	..	..	1·8	404·8
Scottish Film Council	0·6	0·6	0·8	0·8
Scottish Vocational Education Council	..	..	0·7	1·3

	1990-91 £ million	1991-92 £ million	1992-93 £ million	1993-94 £ million
New Town Development Corporations				
Cumbernauld	233·2	12·6	13·3	3·7
East Kilbride	6·4	10·2	12·0	24·9
Glenrothes	150·5	12·5	15·7	2·8
Irvine	175·8	12·7	11·8	12·5
Livingston	209·9	64·3	25·3	34·6
Scottish Homes	253·0	468·0	566·9	299·4
Animal Diseases Research Association	4·0	3·7	4·0	3·9
Hannah Research Institute	3·4	3·3	3·6	3·5
Rowett Research Institute	6·5	12·4	7·7	6·8
Scottish Crop Research Institute	7·5	7·5	8·6	8·9
Crofters Commission	1·1	1·4	1·3	1·3
Red Deer Commission	0·4	0·4	0·4	0·4
Royal Botanic Garden	5·1	4·9	5·6	6·2
Police (Scotland) Examination Board	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Scottish Conveyancing and Executry Services Board	..	..	0·1	0·0
Scottish Legal Aid Board	77·3	86·0	112·2	116·5
Scottish Legal Services Ombudsman	..	..	0·1	0·7

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many firms were invited to tender for the public relations contract at Greater Glasgow health board; and what is the minimum number of firms that are required to be invited to ensure competitive tendering.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 November 1993]:* I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Libraries of the House.

EMPLOYMENT

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what arrangements are made to ensure that special advisers to Ministers in his Department do not have access to the kind of information, and are not involved in the type of business, that would be likely to create suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 14 December 1993 by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minster, *Official Report*, column *561*.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the name and job description of each special ministerial adviser employed in his Department, showing any particular outputs for which each adviser is responsible.

Mr. David Hunt: My special adviser is Mr. Michael McManus. His job is to advise Ministers on policy matters.

Access to Work Scheme

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what plans he has to extend the period when employers would not be expected to contribute towards the purchase of equipment or services under the access to work scheme;

(2) when the initial six-month period when employers will not be required to contribute towards the purchase of specialist equipment or services for disabled employees will commence;

(3) when he expects to make an announcement on *(a)* the level of the ceiling for employer contributions and *(b)* the level of ceiling on allocations for individual employees within the new access to work scheme;

(4) if he will outline the procedures for making needs assessments under the new access to work scheme;

(5) if he will outline the impact of the introduction of employer contributions towards the purchase of specialist equipment and services for disabled employees upon *(a)* self-employed disabled people, *(b)* part-time disabled employees, *(c)* disabled employees working from home, *(d)* disabled employees on temporary contracts of one year or less and *(e)* disabled people contracted to work concurrently for two or more separate employers;

(6) if he will make a statement on what transitional arrangements will be put in place for those disabled employees currently in receipt of equipment and services under special schemes, following the commencement of the access to work scheme;

(7) if he will make it his policy to establish a mechanism enabling disabled employees to lodge appeals against capping limits set under the new access to work scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made a statement about access to work to the House on 22 June 1993, *Official Report*, column 102. Access to work will replace and extend four of the Department's current special schemes and enable us to help more disabled people and meet a much wider range of their employment related needs. Clients' needs will be assessed by the Employment Service's placing, assessment and counselling teams in consultation with clients and their employers and buying in expert advice where necessary.

There have been a number of issues on access to work on which my right hon. Friend has still to make decisions. We are currently listening to the views of a number of interested parties and individuals. My right hon. Friend will make decisions on these areas and make an announcement as soon as possible.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment has been made by his Department of the impact of the introduction of an employers' contribution and individual employee caps under access to work upon those employees requiring new equipment or services as a result of internal promotions.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The possibility of an employee needing new help on promotion is one which we are taking into account in setting ceilings, both for individuals' entitlement and employer contribution.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what steps he is taking to prevent employers from attempting to recover the costs of employer contributions for disabled employees under access to work through reducing salaries and pay rises of the particular employees;

(2) if he will indicate what provisions are in place to assist a disabled person to keep his or her job in the event of an employer refusing to make a financial contribution towards equipment and services under the new access to work scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Placing assessment and counselling teams will work closely with employers who have employees being helped under access to work to ensure that they are fully aware of the benefits of retaining those employees. The PACTs will help the employer identify cost-effective help to ensure that any necessary contribution is minimised. In addition, the maximum contribution will be capped at a modest level. We believe that employers will be willing to pay a reasonable contribution to retain the services of valued existing employees, but employers who do deduct pay in these circumstances may face claims under the Wages Act 1986.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the disability organisations he has met to date to discuss the requirement upon employers to pay a contribution towards the purchase of special equipment and services for disabled employees as set out in the access to work proposals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has met representatives of the Royal National Institute for the Blind, MENCAP, the Spinal Injuries Association, the Royal National Institute of Deaf People, RADAR, Deaf Accord and the Employers' Forum on Disability, to discuss the new scheme, access to work, about which he made a statement to the House on 22 June 1993, *Official Report,* columns *102-03.* My noble Friend Lord Henley has also met representatives from the National Federation for the Blind in the United Kingdom and from the Homeworkers Action Group for Blind and Partially Sighted People.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the average amount of time spent in assessing the needs of disabled employees under each of the current special schemes for employment for each of the last three years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not available in the form requested.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what costs have so far been incurred by the Health and Safety Executive in the course of its pay and grading review, including both the costs of external consultants and in-house staff.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Up to 14 December 1993 the Health and Safety Executive had incurred costs of £178,010·72 in connection with its pay and grading review. This figure includes purchase of software, consultants' fees, and associated travel and subsistence expenses. The cost in terms of in-house staff is not available and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost. Staff throughout the organisation are involved in aspects of this initiative.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many factory inspectors were employed in the Health and Safety Executive on 1 June; and what proportion of these were in the class II grade.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: On 1 June 1993 the Health and Safety Executive employed 722·5 factory inspectors. Of these 29 per cent. were in the class II grade.

Figures given are full-time equivalent counts; part-timers are counted as half units.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people occupied posts in the Health and Safety Executive at grade 4 level and above on 1 April 1990 and on 1 December 1993.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: On 1 April 1990 the number of posts occupied by the Health and Safety Executive at grade 4 level and above was 12; on 1 December 1993 it was 14.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what imbalances in grade mix had been identified by the Health and Safety Executive in the period up to April 1990; and what action the Health and Safety Executive had taken to reduce these imbalances.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No imbalances in grade mix were identified by the Health and Safety Executive in the period up to April 1990, or have been since.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff in the Health and Safety Executive, and in what grades, have been identified as surplus.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Executive has not identified any as being surplus.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what customer satisfaction surveys have been conducted by the Health and Safety Executive; and what were the results of these surveys in terms of percentage of respondents who identified the service they received from the Health and Safety Executive as good or excellent.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Executive carried out customer satisfaction surveys in 1992, and 1993 as part of its commitment to the citizens charter. Results for 1993 show that 85 per cent. of people were satisfied with the way HSE responded to inquiries, and 95 per cent. described the service obtained as good or excellent.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what grant in aid was paid to the Health and Safety Executive in 1991-92, 1992-93, and 1993-94 to date; and what sums are due to be paid in 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1997-98.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Executive received £157·7 million grant in aid in 1991-92 and £171·3 million in 1992-93. For 1993-94, up to 30 November 1993, HSE had received £118·2 million. Information about provision for HSE in future years, will be published in the departmental report.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what recruitment of staff is planned by the Health and Safety Executive before 1994.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Executive is considering plans to announce recruitment competitions for certain groups of specialist inspectors such as railways inspectors. The timing of any such recruitments has not been decided.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of accidents reported at work are investigated by the Health and Safety Executive; and what are the criteria for deciding which accidents to investigate.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Provisional figures for the financial year 1992-93 show that 6·4 per cent. of the total number of workplace injuries reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 and associated legislation were investigated.

All fatalities are investigated and the proportion of other injuries investigated varies according to the severity of the injury incurred, the magnitude of the hazard and the potential risk to workers or the public. Other criteria taken into account include the likelihood that a serious breach of the law has occurred, whether the accident appears to be one of a series of recurring events and whether investigation will provide better information about a new process.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff in the Health and Safety Executive were approached to take early retirement in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1993-94 to date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of staff who took early retirement from the Health and Safety Executive in the relevant years are as follows:

	Numbers
1990-91	33
1991-92	27
1993 to date[1]	45

[1] 15 December 1993.

The reasons for early retirement are varied, including medical and compassionate grounds. Records do not distinguish between self-nomination and invitation. None of the posts from which these staff retired had been identified as surplus.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many agricultural inspectors were employed in the Health and Safety Executive on 1 June; and what proportion of these were assistant agricultural inspectors.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: On 1 June 1993 the Health and Safety Executive employed 185 agricultural inspectors. Of these 29 per cent. were assistant agricultural inspectors.

Figures given are full-time equivalent counts, part-timers are counted as half units.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what impact the surpluses of staff in the employment group as a whole will have upon the staffing levels and grade mix in the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Executive has offered, and will continue to offer, vacancies which arise to suitable surplus staff from the Employment Group. This has had no impact on staffing levels or grade mix within the executive, nor is any foreseen in the future.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the Health and Safety Executive's staff were employed on 1 December on deregulation initiatives from either himself or the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: On 1 December, the Health and Safety Executive had a deregulation unit with three staff. It also had four staff working on the Health and Safety Commission's review of regulation. However, staff throughout the organisation are involved in aspects of this initiative.

Health and Safety Commission

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the composition and accountability of the members of the Health and Safety Commission.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Commission is currently composed of a chairman and nine members. The members are appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in accordance with section 10(2) of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974.

The accountability of the commission to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, and via him to Parliament, laid out in paragraphs 14 and 15 of schedule 2 to the HSWA.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future role of the Health and Safety Commission in the introduction of, and repeal of, health and safety legislation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974, Ministers have the power to make health and safety regulations for the general purposes of the Act. These are, in essence, to secure the health, safety and welfare of people at work and of others affected by work activities. Such regulations must be made either on the basis of proposals submitted by the Health and Safety Commission, or after consultation with the commission.

This procedure applies both to the introduction of new health and safety legislation and to regulations which repeal or modify existing legislation.

Focus Project

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current cost to the Health and Safety Executive of the FOCUS project; when the system will be introduced; and whether it has fulfilled all the objectives set for it.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The cost of the FOCUS project was £4·42 million at 30 November 1993, the latest date for which information is readily available.

The Health and Safety Executive plans to introduce the system in stages, commencing in April 1994.

Objectives relating to the increased efficiency of text production have been met. Objectives which relate to the use of improved intelligence cannot be met until the system is fully operational and contains significant amounts of data.

Manufacturing Jobs

Mr. Khabra: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list by parliamentary constituency in London the number of manufacturing jobs lost since April 1992.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not available. The latest employment information for parliamentary constituencies is for 1989 and 1991, from the periodic censuses of employment. This can be used to estimate the net change in the number of employees in employment. Information from these censuses, for manufacturing industry and by parliamentary constituency, can be obtained from the NOMIS database available in the Library.

Education and Training

Dame Angela Rumbold: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has for maintaining the national targets for national education and training until the target date of 1996.

Miss Widdecombe: The Government endorse the national targets and have established the National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets to monitor progress towards them and to give advice on policies affecting that progress. Towards the end of 1994, the council plans to begin consulting on a review of the targets.

Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what decisions were made at the Brussels summit of 10 and 11 December affecting the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The European Commission, in its report to the Council, stated its intention to bring forward a proposal to amend the acquired rights directive —77/187/EEC—in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 give effect to the directive in the United Kingdom.

The European Council asked the Commission to submit formal proposals in this and other subject areas at an early date, for adoption as quickly as possible.

Departmental Offices

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the regional and area offices of his Department, and of inspectorates, agencies and other public bodies for which he is responsible.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The regional and area offices of the Department are given in the following table:

Employment Department

Function	*Regional Office*	*Area Office(s)*
Industrial Tribunals	Birmingham	Exeter
	Bristol	Exeter
	Bury St Edmunds	Bedford
	Cardiff	Shrewsbury
	Leeds	Sheffield
	London (North), WC1	
	London (South), Croydon	Ashford
	Manchester	Liverpool
	Newcastle-upon-Tyne	
	Nottingham	Leicester
	Southampton	Brighton
		Reading
Redundancy Payments Offices	Birmingham (South West, Midlands and Wales Group)	
	Manchester (Northern Group)	Manchester Edinburgh
	London and South Eastern Counties, Watford	
Race Relations Employment Advisory Service	Birmingham	
	Leeds	
	London	
	Manchester	
	Nottingham	
Wages Inspectorate	London NW1	
	Newcastle-upon-Tyne	
Employment Agency Licensing Offices	Watford	
	Birmingham	
	Leeds	
Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate	Birmingham	
	Manchester	
	Basingstoke	
	London WC1	
	Nottingham	
	Newcastle-upon-Tyne	

Function	*Regional Office*	*Area Office(s)*
	Manchester Bristol Leeds Cambridge	

Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service

Regional Office

Birmingham
Bristol
Cardiff
Aldershot
Glasgow
Leeds
Manchester
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
London, NW1

Health and Safety Executive

Regional Director housed at	*Area Office*
Cardiff	Bristol Cardiff
Luton	Basingstoke Chelmsford Luton
Southwark, London SE1	East Grinstead Barking Southwark, London SE1
Birmingham	Northampton Birmingham Newcastle-under-Lyme Nottingham
Leeds	Sheffield Leeds Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Manchester	Manchester Bootle Preston
Edinburgh	Edinburgh Glasgow
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	Newcastle-upon-Tyne Middlesbrough Washington Durham
Leeds	Bradford Sheffield Hull Wakefield Leeds
Nottingham	Derby Northampton Leicester Norwich Nottingham
London WC1	Luton London EC3 Reading Colchester London SW1 Fareham Canterbury London SE1 London NW1 Bromley Goodmayes Wimbledon Hayes Shoreham-by-Sea London W4
Bristol	Bristol Truro Exeter Bournemouth Gloucester
Cardiff	Wrexham Swansea Newbridge Pontypridd
Birmingham	Birmingham Kidderminster Coventry Newcastle-under-Lyme West Bromwich Wolverhampton
Manchester	Warrington Liverpool Cockermouth Rochdale Preston Worsley Bootle
Edinburgh	Kilmarnock Inverness Glasgow[2] Edinburgh Hamilton Dundee

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of correspondence received by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each of his Department's agencies receives (i) an acknowledgement within five days and (ii) a substantive reply within 15 days.

Miss Widdecombe: For correspondence received from members of the public, the information is not available in the form requested. Such correspondence is dealt with by officials who are required to clear all letters within 10 working days. However, no central records are kept of the proportion that are cleared within this target.

For correspondence received from Members of Parliament from 1 January 1993 to date, 85 per cent. received a substantive reply within 15 working days. The Department does not routinely send acknowledgements. However, where it is not possible to reply within 15 days, an interim letter is sent explaining the reason for the delay.

The chief executive of the Employment Service provided hon. Members with substantive replies to 97 per cent. of letters received in the same period. The Employment Service acknowledges all letters received from hon. Members within five working days.

Public Meetings

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what requirements are imposed on training and enterprise councils to hold meetings in public of the main governing body, any committees and any sub-committees; and what rights of access the public have to agendas, minutes, and reports of such bodies, committees and sub-committees.

Miss Widdecombe: Training and enterprise councils are accountable to their local communities in a number of ways. Their contract requires that they hold a public meeting at least annually, make publicly available their corporate plan and publish an annual report and audited statement of accounts.

However, TECs are private companies and access to their meetings and to matters relating to these meetings is entirely for them to decide.

North Norfolk Action

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the extra cost of North Norfolk Action over and above the benefits previously paid to participants and the overall saving from those who have left the unemployment register due to moving directly from North Norfolk Action to regular employment or from ceasing to claim benefit after interview for North Norfolk Action participation; and what was the overall saving made in the first six months.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Sir Ralph Howell, dated 17 December 1993:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question about the extra cost of North Norfolk Action and the overall saving from those who have left the unemployment register due to moving from North Norfolk Action to employment or ceasing to claim benefit.

The extra cost of North Norfolk Action in addition to the cost of the benefit previously paid to participants up to 30 November 1993 is £167,300. The breakdown of how the expenditure was made up is as follows:

	£
(a) Provider Fees	111,101
(b) Allowances £10 per week per participant	17,780
(c) Fares to work	3,436
(d) Publicity	1,500
(e) Running cost (including management of the programme contract and administration of the caseload element)	33,483

As I have previously explained, it is not possible to estimate the benefit savings made as a result of North Norfolk Action. This is because only through a proper evaluation exercise is it possible to take into account the effect of such factors as "deadweight" and "substitution". Evaluation results will be available later next year.

I hope this is helpful.

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which organisations have tended to manage job clubs in Scotland and the north-east of England under his market-testing initiative; which have been shortlisted; and when a decision will be made to award contracts.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Alan Milburn, dated 17 December 1993:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about which organisations have tended to manage Jobclubs in Scotland and the North East of England under his market-testing initiative; which have been shortlisted; and when a decision will be made to award contracts.

A total of 168 organisations expressed an interest in bidding to run Employment Service (ES) Jobclub Services in Scotland and 102 in the ES Northern region, under the Employment Service's market testing programme. A list of these organisations is attached. In addition, a further 48 organisations expressed an interest in bidding in two or more ES Regions. A list of those organisations is also attached. These may or may not have bid for Jobclub Services in Scotland and ES Northern Region; this information is not available without considerable research which would be at disproportionate cost.

There was no shortlisting undertaken for the Jobclubs market test and therefore all organisations on the attached list were bidders and were evaluated against strict criteria involving performance assessment, commercial assessment and risk assessment.

The decision on award of contracts for this market test is currently being discussed, and results will be announced early in the New Year.

I hope this is helpful.

Market Testing: Jobclub Services (Northern)

Action Community College Ltd.
Administration Management Ltd.
Aker Contracts plc
Apex Trust (N/NW/Y and H)
Ashwood House Associates
Aycliffe (ITEC) Ltd.
B. B. Training 7 Enterprise
Beam Ltd.
British Coal Enterprise (Northern)
Castle Training
Central Employment Agency
CICT Ltd.
City of Sunderland
COTEC Training Services Ltd.
CRA Accredited Trainers
Crosby Training
CTF Training (3)
CTF Training (North Shields)
Cumbria Training Company Ltd.
D.I.S.C. Ltd.
D. W. Associates Ltd.
Employment Service (Northern)
F. A. M. Helliwell
Finchale Training College
Flagstaff Services
FPAC
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council
Gordon Hill
Graduate into Enterprise North East
Grangetown Primary Services Ltd.
Grangetown Primary Services Ltd. (J)
Guisborough Community Resource Centre
Hands Business Support Ltd.
Hartlepool Borough Council
Hartlepool College of Further Education
Highland Training and Development
ICI Chemicals and Polymers Ltd.
Initiative Management (North East) Ltd.
Jobclub IHB (Alnwick)
Jobclub IHB (Ashington 1)
Jobclub IHB (Ashington 2)
Jobclub IHB (Cramlington 1)
Jobclub IHB (Cramlington 2)
Jobclub IHB (Crook)
Jobclub IHB (Darlington)
Jobclub IHB (Durham)
Jobclub IHB (Gateshead 1)
Jobclub IHB (Gateshead 2)
Jobclub IHB (Middlesbrough 1)
Jobclub IHB (Middlesbrough 2)
Jobclub IHB (Newcastle 1)
Jobclub IHB (Newcastle 2)
Jobclub IHB (Newcastle 3)
Jobclub IHB (Peterlee)
Jobclub IHB (Redcar)
Jobclub IHB (Stanley)

Jobclub IHB (Stockton)
Jobclub IHB (Sunderland 1)
Jobclub IHB (Sunderland 2)
Jobclub IHB (Wallsend 1)
Jobclub IHB (Wallsend 2)
Jobclub IHB (Wallsend)
Johnstone Wintrip Associates Ltd.
Key Training Ltd.
LL Associates
Mantech Training
Microcom
Midas Management
Nowbray Park Hotel
N C T C
Neeta Ltd.
Neil Chapman
Neta Training Trust
Northumberland College of Arts and Technology
Northumbrian Industrial Mission
Peterlee College
Pole Positions
Positive People Development
Primat Recruitment
Project North East
R D Recruitment Ltd.
S Y C G Training Ltd.
Shaw Project
South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council
Specialised Technical Services Ltd.
Stenvenson College
Stockton and Billingham College
Taylor Nash Wilmington
Team Moore
Tedco
Teesside Chamber of Commerce and Industry
The Business Club
The Lamb Inn
The Northern Training Trust
Training Advice Centre
Training Co Ltd.
Training Developments
Tyne and Wear Enterprise Trust Ltd.
Tyne and Wear Chamber of Commerce
Van Hee
Walker Hall Associates

Market Test Jobclub Services (Scotland)

A. S. A. International Ltd.
Aberdeen Business and Computer Training
Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce
Action for Workers
Adam Associates (Strathclyde) Ltd.
Adult Community Training (Dundee) Ltd.
Aker Contracting plc
Balvenie House Ltd.
Best Ltd.
Blackness Training Company
Brag Enterprises Ltd.
Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise Co.
Central Regional Council
Central Training Consultants Ltd.
CHT Training Services
Ciel
Clyde Marine Consultants Ltd.
Coatbridge College
Comhairle Nan Eilean
Cumbernauld Chamber of Commerce
Cumbria Training Company Ltd.
Dave Edwards
Development Options
Directions
Drumchapel Opportunities
Drummond and Company
Dundee and Tayside Chamber of Commerce
Dundee Enterprise Trust
Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce
Edinburgh University Settlement
Employment Service (Scotland)
Enable
Facilities Support Services
Fairweather Associates
Fife Marketing
Fife Regional Council
FT Training Centre Ltd.
Fyrish Ltd.
Glasgow Opportunities Enterprise Trust
Glenrothes College
Grampian Regional Council (Grampian TRG)
Greater Easterhouse Development Company
Hamperhill Associates
Heat Development Dundee Ltd.
High Profile PR
Highland and Perthshire Development Co.
Highland Regional Council
Highland Training and Development
Hotel and Leisure Management Services
Human Resources Management Services
I. M. S. (JC)
Ipedex UK Ltd.
James McGillivray
JCS Training Services Ltd.
Jobclub IHB (Aberdeen)
Jobclub IHB (Airdie 1)
Jobclub IHB (Airdie 2)
Jobclub IHB (Aniesland 1)
Jobclub IHB (Aniesland 2)
Jobclub IHB (Ayr)
Jobclub IHB (Coatbridge 1)
Jobclub IHB (Coatbridge 2)
Jobclub IHB (Cumbernauld 1)
Jobclub IHB (Cumbernauld 2)
Jobclub IHB (Dalkeith)
Jobclub IHB (Dumfries)
Jobclub IHB (Dundee 1)
Jobclub IHB (Dundee 1)
Jobclub IHB (East Kilbridge 1)
Jobclub IHB (East Kilbridge 2)
Jobclub IHB (Easterhouse 1)
Jobclub IHB (Easterhouse 2)
Jobclub IHB (Edinburgh 1)
Jobclub IHB (Edinburgh 2)
Jobclub IHB (Elgin 1)
Jobclub IHB (Elgin 2)
Jobclub IHB (Galashiels)
Jobclub IHB (Greenock)
Jobclub IHB (Invergordon)
Jobclub IHB (Inverness)
Jobclub IHB (Irvine)
Jobclub IHB (Kilmarnock 1)
Jobclub IHB (Kilmarnock 2)
Jobclub IHB (Kirkaldy 1)
Jobclub IHB (Kirkaldy 2)
Jobclub IHB (Livingston)
Jobclub IHB (Maryhill 1)
Jobclub IHB (Maryhill 2)
Jobclub IHB (Paisley)
Jobclub IHB (Parkhead 1)
Jobclub IHB (Parkhead 2)
Jobclub IHB (Peterhead)
Jobclub IHB (Poterbello)
Jobclub IHB (Renfrew)
Jobclub IHB (Wester Hailes)
Johnstone Winstrip Associates Ltd.
Kirkcaldy District Council
Lagta Ltd.
Lauder College
Leap
Lews Castle College
Link Training (Ayrshire)
Link Training (Clydebank)
Link Training (Glasgow)
Link Training (Grampian)
Link Training (Lanarkshire)
Link Training (Lothian)
Link Training (Tayside)
Link Training Centre
Livingston Development Corporation
Lothian Management Training
M.D.S. Ltd.
M.I. Technologies Ltd.
Margaret L. F. Miller

Melville Craig Selection
Mentor
Microcom
Mid-Argyll Friends of A.R.M.S. Ltd.
Midas Management
Morrision (T and C)
Nailet
Nevis Training Centre
Nicola Brown
North East Fife District Council
Oilfab Group Ltd.
Paisley/Renfrew Enterprise Trust Ltd.
Perth College
Peter Gunn Associates
Petrology Ltd.
Primat Recruitment
Queen Margaret College
Ross and Cromarty District Council
Royal National Institute for the Blind
Scot West Training Services Ltd.
Scottish Association for Mental Health
Scottish Business Services
Scottish Council for Spastics
Scottish National Council for YMCAS
Sight and Sound Education Ltd. (2)
Specialised Technical Services Ltd.
Step Ahead
Stevenson College
Strathkelvin District Council
Strathkelvin Enterprise Trust
Support Training Ltd.
Support Training Ltd. (Mainland)
Tank Refurbishment Ltd.
Tayside Regional Council
Tayside Training Company Ltd.
Teleford College
Tell Training Ltd.
The Cuplan Recruitment Agency
The James Dey Consultancy
The Scottish Training Foundation
The Wise Group
Training Co Ltd.
Training Enterprise Cumberland Ltd.
Training Exchange Services
Unity Enterprise
University of Strathclyde
Vera Farquhar
Vistol Limited
Weir, O'Neill Partners
Wellpark Consultancy Services
William M. Irving
WLR Associates Ltd.
Workwise Ltd.

Market test: jobclubs national

Adia Prime Candidates
AGCAS
Aintree Training Services
Apex Trust
Association of British Chambers of Commerce
Brook Street
Cepec Ltd.
Charlstone Training Services
Choice Training Services
Chusid Lander Consultants
Community Industry (2)
Computer and Banking Consultancy Selection
Cornwall College
CRA Accredited Trainers (National)
Enhancement Ltd.
Grand Metropolitan Community Services
H.D.A.
JHP Training Ltd.
JIL Training Services
Joblink Trust
Jobworld
Learn a Living Ltd.
Link Training (HO)
Mack
Margaret Bardsley
Methven Career Development Ltd.
Microtech Computer Services (N.W.) Ltd.
Nacro
NES International Ltd.
Northavon Enterprise Ltd.
P O C Associates Ltd.
Pauline Hyde and Associates
Pauline Hyde and Associates Ltd.
Psychology at Work
Right Associates
Rite Associates
Royal National Institute for the Blind
Sanders 7 Sidney plc
Scott-Grant Management Services Ltd.
Shaw Trust
Sight and Sound Education Ltd.
Skills Training 2000
Technology Project Services
The Brettonwood Partnership Ltd.
The Training and Factory Business
Training Network Ltd.
University of Strathclyde (National)
Y Training Services (JC)

Expressions of interest:=48

Health and Safety Legislation

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consideration he has given to consulting *(a)* the insurance industry and *(b)* the Employment Medical Advisory Service on the Health and Safety Commission review of health and safety legislation; and what were his reasons in each case for his decision on whether they should be consulted.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State does not expect to receive the Health and Safety Commission's final report on its review of health and safety regulations until April 1994. He will then consult widely and welcome any representations.

Tree Removal, Wanstead

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which health and safety regulations applied in the continued use of heavy machinery with protesters still chained to it, trying to prevent the felling of the chestnut tree at George Green, Wanstead.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 15 December 1993]:* Health and safety legislation is not generally intended to afford protection to protesters who seek to disrupt work activity through civil disorder.

I understand that the police attended the incident referred to and that they have a duty in common law to preserve the peace.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Parry: To ask the Attorney-General what assessment he has made as to the effectiveness of co-operation between the Crown Prosecution Service and the Merseyside police; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: There is excellent co-operation between the Crown Prosecution Service and the Merseyside police. However, if the hon. Member is concerned about any particular cases, he is welcome to bring them to my attention.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases forwarded by the police to the Crown Prosecution Service were not proceeded with during each of the last seven years.

The Attorney-General: I refer my hon. Friend to my answer to him on 13 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *454-55*.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases the Crown Prosecution Service has dropped because the defendant could not be traced for each of the last seven years; and what has been the gravity of the crimes with which the defendants were charged.

The Attorney-General: The Crown Prosecution Service does not drop cases because the defendant cannot be traced. But such cases cannot proceed since the defendant's whereabouts are unknown, summonses and adjournment notices cannot be served, and bench warrants cannot be executed. Where the defendant is eventually found, proceedings will normally be reinstated. The number of cases falling into this category has only been recorded centrally since April 1991. The numbers are:

	Defendant not traced	*Bench warrant not executed*
1991 (April—December)	16,422	24,966
1992	22,145	43,246
1993 (January—September)	17,468	49,400

No information is held centrally about the nature of the offences in these cases.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases have been adjourned sine die at the request of the Crown Prosecution Service in each of the last seven years; and what were the reasons for the requests.

The Attorney-General: The number of cases adjourned sine die has been recorded centrally only since April 1991. The figures are:

	Number
1991 (April to December)	13,148
1992	21,830
1993 (January to September)	14,594

No information is held centrally about the reasons for requesting that cases are adjourned sine die, but the most common reason is likely to be because the defendant is being proceeded against for other more serious charges in another court.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Attorney-General what has been the cost in real terms of the Crown Prosecution Service for each of the last seven years for which figures are available.

The Attorney-General: The cost of the Crown Prosecution Service as measured by gross expenditure, converted to real terms using the GDP deflator figures published in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95", was:

	£000
[1]1986-87	106,363
1987-88	182,264
1988-89	200,202
1989-90	219,710
1990-91	235,658
1991-92	251,993
1992-93	273,748

[1] Part year.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Attorney-General how many claims have been brought against the Crown Prosecution Service for costs, following cases in which the defendant was acquitted; and what were the costs of the claims.

The Attorney-General: Full records of the number of awards of costs made against the Crown Prosecution Service have been recorded centrally only since April 1991. The number of such awards and expenditure by the service on awards of costs during each of the last two financial years is:

	Number of Awards	*Expenditure on Cost Awards £*
1991-92	721	229,915·20
1992-93	682	477,788·39

The information held centrally does not reveal the number of occasions on which a claim for costs was rejected by the court, nor whether an award for costs was made after the defendant had been acquitted or convicted.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases were dropped by the Crown Prosecution Service because the defendant had died in each of the last seven years for which figures are available.

The Attorney-General: The number of cases in which the Crown Prosecution Service has been unable to proceed because the defendant has died has only been recorded since April 1991. The available figures are:

	Number
1991 (April-December)	654
1992	758
1993 (January-September)	533

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Attorney-General how many part-time staff have been employed by the Crown Prosecution Service in each of the last seven years for which figures are available.

The Attorney-General: Comprehensive figures on the numbers of part-time staff employed by the Crown Prosecution Service are available for each of the past three years only.

In August 1991 the Department employed 333 part-time staff, or approximately 5·9 per cent. of total staff in post. By April 1992, this figure has increased to 410—6·5 per cent.—and by 30 June 1993 the total had reached 480—7·3 per cent. The total, as at 16 December 1993, stands at 521, or approximately 7·9 per cent. of staff in post.

Departmental Offices (Heating Bills)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list by location the annual fuel heating bills for each of his Department's offices for the last four years, and for this year to date.

The Attorney-General: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. George Staple

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Attorney-General (1) what plans he has to replace Mr. George Staple as head of the Serious Fraud Office;

(2) when Mr. George Staple's term of office expires.

The Attorney-General: (1) None. (2) Mr. Staple's present term of office expires on 20 April 1997.

Roger Levitt

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Attorney-General what opportunity was given by Mr. Justice Laws to Crown counsel to justify his acceptance of the plea on the basis of only the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association charge in the Levitt case; and what response was made.

The Attorney-General: The judge questioned whether the Crown's decision to accept the plea required his approval and was satisfied by prosecuting counsel, on the authorities, that it did not.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Attorney-General what considerations underlay the decision by the Serious Fraud Office not to pursue the charges relating to Mr. Frederick Forsyth in the Levitt case.

The Attorney-General: The plea tendered by Mr. Levitt encompassed his use of forged documents presented to FIMBRA, including documents purporting to show monies obtained from Mr. Forsyth and his agents as genuine income of TLG Ltd.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Attorney-General what consideration Crown counsel in the Levitt case gave to appealing against the judge's ruling of 19 May on the limits in law of the offence of fraudulent trading.

The Attorney-General: Having considered all the curcumstances, prosecuting counsel advised against an appeal.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Attorney-General what assessment was made by the Serious Fraud Office of whether the plea on the basis of misleading the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association only offered by Mr. Roger Levitt and accepted by the Crown adequately reflected the criminality of his case.

The Attorney-General: The Serious Fraud Office took the view that the plea tendered by Roger Levitt reflected the criminality of his conduct and conferred sufficient sentencing power on the trial judge.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Attorney-General what account the Serious Fraud Office took of the result of the Terry Ramsden case before accepting Roger Levitt's guilty plea.

The Attorney-General: The result of the Terry Ramsden case was not regarded as relevant to the decision whether to accept the plea.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Attorney-General what options on pleas to the charges were offered to Mr. Roger Levitt prior to the Crown opening speech.

The Attorney-General: I refer my hon. Friend to my earlier answer today. However, I have been assured by prosecuting counsel that, although potential pleas may have been discussed on a counsel-to-counsel basis, no offers were made by the Crown to Mr. Levitt. Mr. Levitt's plea was accepted on 22 November. Counsel have also told me that they would not regard any approach by them to the defence as constituting an offer unless they had firm instructions to accept an affirmative response.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Attorney-General what possible pleas each of the Crown counsel, suggested or discussed with counsel for Roger Levitt before 22 November.

The Attorney-General: I refer my hon. Friend to my earlier answers today.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Attorney-General what consultations Mr. David Cocks, QC, had with any person in his Department before writing his article of 7 December in *The Times* in relation to the Levitt case; and what guidance was given on the line such an article should take.

The Attorney-General: None.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Attorney-General what Crown Counsel were told by Mr. Levitt's counsel about their intentions to cite precedents in seeking a non-custodial sentence before accepting his guilty plea to only the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Association charge.

The Attorney-General: I am informed by counsel that they were not informed of any such intention.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Attorney-General for what reasons Crown counsel, Mr. Fisher, asked the judge through his clerk on 9 November not to sit the following day in the Levitt case.

The Attorney-General: I am informed that Mr. Fisher made no such request. He acquiesced in a request made by leading counsel for Mr. Levitt.

Reed, Price and McNamara

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Attorney-General on what occasion prior to the Crown opening speech, counsel offered to counsel for any of the co-defendants Reed, Price or McNamara an arrangement as regards pleas falling short of the full offence of fraudulent trading as both particularised in court 1; and if he will give details.

The Attorney-General: It would not be appropriate for me to answer questions about counsel-to-counsel discussions of such a nature.

Crown Counsel

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Attorney-General what restrictions are imposed on QCs engaged as Crown counsel on writing newspaper articles on the cases in which they have been engaged.

The Attorney-General: Such issues are governed by the code of conduct for the Bar of England and Wales. Counsel appearing for the Crown are not subject to any special restrictions.

Bail

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Attorney-General if he will publish the criteria used by the Crown Prosecution Service when deciding whether to object to bail.

The Attorney-General: If a Crown prosecutor decides to object to bail he will need to satisfy the court that grounds exist under the Bail Act 1976 for a remand in custody. The criteria which he will apply, in deciding whether to object to bail, therefore mirror those set out in the Act which the court will consider in hearing an application for bail.

Incitement to Racial Hatred

Mr. Shore: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases of incitement to racial hatred under the Public Order Act 1986 were referred to him by the Crown Prosecution Service in each year since 1987; how many were not proceeded with *(a)* through insufficient evidence, *(b)* because prosecution was judged not to be in the public interest and *(c)* for other reasons.

The Solicitor-General *[pursuant to his reply, 3 December 1993, c. 748]:* In each of the years since 1987, the Crown Prosecution Service has referred cases to the Attorney-General asking for consent to prosecute offences contrary to part III of the Public Order Act 1986 in respect of the following numbers of persons:

	Numbers
1987	0
1988	3
1989	1
1990	2
1991	8
1992	3
1993	1

Consent to prosecute was withheld twice on evidential grounds and twice on public interest grounds. Proceedings were commenced by the CPS against 13 defendants, and in the final case although consent was originally granted it was later withdrawn on public interest grounds.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Fisheries

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list each of the last three years and the current year the number of *(a)* salmon, *(b)* grilse and *(c)* sea trout taken by commercial fishing engines in (i) estuaries, (ii) coastal netting stations and (iii) drift nets; and if he will indicate the numbers of such nets and number of licences issued in those years, the number of persons employed in Northern Ireland in such activity indicating the number of full-time and part-time fishermen and the value and number of fish taken from the Foyle Fisheries Commission—FFC—area and the fisheries conservation area.

Mr. Ancram: (i) Commercial salmon catch returns do not differentiate between salmon and grilse and the statistics sought are not available in the form requested. The only information available in the FFC area relates to catch statistics by class of commercial fishing engine and is contained in the commission's annual reports, copies of which are available in the Library. The only information available in the Fisheries Conservancy Board area is shown in the table. Information relating to 1993 is not currently available.

		Method		
Year	*Total salmon caught*	*Coastal netting stations*	*Drift nets*	*Others*
1990	10,214	7,580	252	2,382
1991	7,513	5,058	838	1,617
1992	10,049	7,414	2,267	368

(ii) The number of nets in use is equivalent to the number of licences issued. This information is available in the annual reports of the Foyle Fisheries Commission and the Fisheries Conservancy Board, copies of which are in the Library. The number and type of licences issued in 1993 are shown in the table:

	Number
FFC	
Drift sea	20
Drift lough and sea	80
Drift lough	12
Draft A-R Foyle	62
R Roe	1
Fixed engine	1
Total	176
FCB	
Bag nets	14
Fixed	6
Drift	9
Draft	4
Salmon	4
Total	37

(iii) Accurate figures of full-time and part-time fishermen are not available. It is estimated that there are 83 part-time fishermen in the Fisheries Conservancy Board area and 400 part-time fishermen in the Foyle Fisheries Commission area. There are no fishermen engaged in salmon fishing on a full-time basis.

(iv) The number and estimate value of salmon and grilse taken are shown in the table. There are no figures available for sea trout.

	FFC[1]		*FCB*	
	Number	*Estimated value £*	*Number*	*Estimated value £*
1990	22,210	309,100	10,214	132,638
1991	12,908	191,901	7,513	104,738
1992	21,129	292,312	10,049	146,579

[1] These figures represent half the total catch of salmon in the Foyle Area which for statistical purposes in equally divided between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

Mr William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for each of the last three years and the current year the number of *(a)* salmon, *(b)* grilse and *(c)* sea trout taken in each river by anglers in Northern Ireland; and what are the totals for the Foyle

Fisheries Commission areas in (i) Northern Ireland, (ii) the Irish Republic and (iii) in the area covered by the Fisheries Conservancy Board.

Mr. Ancram: Separate records for salmon and grilse are not available. The total catch by anglers is not known. The only rod catch statistics available are contained in the annual reports of the Foyle Fisheries Commission and Fisheries Conservancy Board, copies of which are available in the Library. No figures are currently available for 1993.

Roads

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sums he intends to spend on new roads in Northern Ireland in the next financial year; how much of this is available for the construction of new bypasses; and which bypass projects he intends to go to contract in that year.

Mr. Atkins: It is currently estimated that approximately £22 million, including £9·2 million on the cross harbour road link, will be spent on new roads in the 1994-95 financial year. Of this, approximately £4·1 million will be spent on new bypasses. Precise estimates will depend on the final determination of the 1993 public expenditure round. During 1994-95, it is intended to go to contract for Newry bypass, stage 3, roadworks.

A21

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland with which organisations he consulted before his decision to downgrade from A21 to unclassified that section of roadway in Francis street, Newtownards from Castle place to its junction with Zion place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I shall write to the right hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the volume of traffic in Newtownards at *(a)* route A21 from Georges street to New road and *(b)* the unclassified roadway at Francis street from Castle place to its junction with Zion place.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is as follows:

(a) approximately 15,700 vehicles per day;
(b) approximately 13,900 vehicles per day.

Departmental Offices (Heating Bills)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by location the annual fuel heating bills for each of his Department's offices for the last four years, and for this year to date.

Sir John Wheeler: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Press Officers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many press officers his Department has employed in each year since 1983.

Sir John Wheeler: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Glass-fronted Fires

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take steps to ensure that a comprehensive investigation into the safety performance of glass-fronted fires in public sector houses is carried out.

Mr. Atkins: There are no grounds that I am aware of at present for such an investigation.

I am assured by the chief executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive that all new appliances are tested to an approved standard and existing appliances are inspected and maintained in a planned maintenance cycle.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what investigations have been carried out to investigate the safety of glass-fronted fires in public housing stock.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chief executive that, while there have been no specific investigations, the Housing Executive is satisfied with current measures in place to ensure the safe operation of these appliances.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many fires have occurred in each of the past five years in public sector houses; and in how many cases the causes were related to glass-fronted fires.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chief executive that while no records are held centrally of the number of fires in public sector houses, it is not aware of any where the causes were specifically related to glass-fronted room heaters.

House Fires

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many individuals have been killed or injured as a result of house fires in Northern Ireland Housing Executive properties in each of the last five years.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chief executive that detailed information of this nature is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ward and Bed Closures

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list the wards which have been closed in each hospital in the Southern health and social services board area in each of the past five years;

(2) how many hospital beds have been closed in each hospital in the Southern health and social services board areas in each of the past five years.

Mr. Ancram: Information about the wards closed in individual hospitals and the number of hospital beds that have been closed is not collected centrally. The table shows the average number of available beds in each hospital within the Southern health and social services board area in each of the last five years.

Average number of available beds in hospitals in the Southern Health and Social Services Board

Hospital	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Armagh Community	55	41	26	18	16
Ballyards Castle	36	36	36	22	—
Banbridge	116	111	111	71	70
Cowan Heron	24	24	24	23	20
Craigavon Area	460	445	364	358	362
Craigavon PNU	—	—	80	80	80
Daisy Hill	295	302	300	295	293
Drumglass House	25	25	17	—	—
Loane House	60	60	60	60	60
Longstone	235	229	201	219	235
Lurgan and Portadown	163	161	156	156	156
Manor House	45	45	45	28	36
Mourne	48	41	40	40	40
Mullinure	—	43	72	72	72
Navan House	20	20	20	20	6
South Tyrone	243	241	217	213	212
Spelga House	—	—	—	38	23
St. Lukes	409	409	385	350	350
Tower Hill Special Care	62	34	34	32	28
Tower Hill Maternity	4	—	—	—	—
Tower Hill General	65	26	—	—	—

Nurses

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many full-time or part-time nurses have been laid off by the Southern health and social services board in each of the past five years.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

	Numbers
1989	8
1990	2
1991	1
1992	6
1993	11

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many nurses employed on a temporary basis by the Southern health and social services board have not had their contracts renewed, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

	Numbers
1989	74
1990	81
1991	68
1992	57
1993	114

Farm Holdings

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average size of farm holding in the less-favoured areas as sampled by *(a)* the most recent farm business survey and *(b)* the most up-to-date and comprehensive data he has available, by county and in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The farm business survey does not contain very small farms and data are not available at county level. The only farm type identified by their less-favoured area status are those on which cattle and sheep are the dominant enterprises. The average size of farm in these categories in the 1992-93 survey was 93 hectares.

In the June 1993 agricultural census in Northern Ireland, the average sizes of all active holdings in the less-favoured areas were:

County	*All farms in the LFA Average size (ha)*	*All cattle and sheep LFA farms Average size (ha)*
Antrim	43·8	45·7
Armagh	22·2	20·2
Down	27·8	25·3
Fermanagh	34·9	34·5
Londonderry	42·9	44·5
Tyrone	36·0	35·4
Northern Ireland	35·2	35·0

For farms similar to those covered in the farm business survey, the average size was 63 hectares.

Cows and Ewes

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what according to *(a)* the most up-to-date and comprehensive data he has available and *(b)* the farm business survey, was the average number of (1) beef cows and (2) ewes, carried on less-favoured areas livestock farms, by county and in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The farm business survey does not cover very small farms and data from it are not available at county level. The only farm type identified by its less-favoured area status is that on which cattle and sheep are the dominant enterprises. For farms in these categories in the 1992-93 survey the average number of beef cows was 34 and the average number of ewes was 155.

In the June 1993 agricultural census in Northern Ireland, the average number of beef cows and ewes on all cattle and sheep LFA holdings in the less-favoured areas were:

All cattle and sheep LFA farms

County	Average number per farm Beef cows	Ewes
Antrim	17	102
Armagh	11	21
Down	10	67
Fermanagh	18	19
Londonderry	14	101
Tyrone	13	53
Northern Ireland	14	58

For farms similar to those covered in the farm business survey, the average number of beef cows was 27 and the average number of ewes was 126.

Lisnevin Training School

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the research conducted by the Northern Ireland Office, completed in 1993, into the Lisnevin training school, will be published.

Sir John Wheeler: In 1990, the Northern Ireland Office commissioned an independent researcher to carry out a study of young offenders released from all training schools. The researcher submitted a draft of his report for comment in October 1993, to which the office responded in November. The researcher is, we understand, now working on the final version of this report.

While the Northern Ireland Office does not normally itself publish evaluative reports of this kind, it does in principle support the dissemination of research findings from commissioned projects. Any proposal by the author to offer papers based on this research for publication in appropriate journals would, accordingly, be sympathetically considered.

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion of correspondence received by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each of his Department's agencies receives (i) an acknowledgement within five days and (ii) a substantive reply within 15 days.

Mr. Ancram: Information regarding general correspondence could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

It is no longer standard practice to acknowledge incoming correspondence. Information in respect of ministerial correspondence for the Northern Ireland Office and NI Departments can be obtained from chart 11.4 of the Northern Ireland expenditure plans and priorities, a copy of which is held in the Library. My right hon. Friend will write to the hon. Member about correspondence received by departmental agencies.

Policing Structures

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on policing structures in Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Following my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary's examination of policing structures in England and Wales and the report of the Sheehy inquiry, I have examined the operation of the tripartite policing structure in Northern Ireland and believe that some change is necessary.

The present arrangements date back almost a quarter of a century and were designed for very different circumstances. In present conditions, they make it difficult to ensure the police are fully accountable to the concerns and needs of the community as a whole, and to achieve the most effective and efficient use of the considerable resources allocated by Government to the police service in Northern Ireland.

The Government believe that substantial improvements can be achieved in the effectiveness and responsiveness of policing in Northern Ireland by strengthening and rationalising each part of the structure. I accordingly intend to publish a paper setting out views on how to redefine the roles and responsibilities of each of the parties and strengthen lines of accountability, in line with the principles of the citizens charter. The Government are firmly committed to the continuance in Northern Ireland of a tripartite structure of policing, to sustaining the operational independence of the RUC in exercising responsibilities for law enforcement and to ensuring that the Chief Constable is properly accountable to the community in Northern Ireland and is able to make the most effective use of all the resources allocated to policing, without unnecessary beauracracy and duplication.

The Government's aim is that the revised arrangements should create a new and stronger partnership between the police, the community and the Government, working with commitment and efficiency to serve the whole community of Northern Ireland better.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what the cost of advertising by his Department has been for each year since 1979 and for each of the last 12 months.

Sir John Wheeler: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many mothers are no longer living on social benefits as a result of intervention by the Child Support Agency on their behalf.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available. In the long run, we estimate that increased payments of child maintenance under the Child Support Act 1991 will result in some 60,000 to 80,000 lone parents moving off income support. It is expected that the majority of these will move on to family credit. Of lone parents already on family credit, we estimate that around 10,000 will move off this benefit in the long run. These estimates are based on 1987-88-89 family expenditure survey data.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the budget for the Child Support Agency for each of the next three years; and how much public expenditure they expect to release through work in *(a)* tracking down fathers who never paid maintenance for their children and *(b)* upgrading the contributions that parents living with another partner on income support make for the welfare of their children.

Mr. Burt: Agency budgets from this year's public expenditure settlement have not yet been finalised. However, planned expenditure in the 1992 settlement is in the table.

£ million

	1993-94	*1994-95*	*1995-96*
Running costs	109	128	130
Capital	7	3	2
Other	5	4	4
Total	121	135	136

Source: DSS Departmental Report 1993.

No decisions have yet been made about the benefit savings targets for the Child Support Agency next year.

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether it is the practice of the Child Support Agency to send to ex-wives the agency's assessment of the wages of the ex-husband; and how this complies with the agency's obligations of secrecy under the Data Protection Act 1984.

Mr. Burt: Regulation 10 of the Child Support (Maintenance Assessment Procedure) Regulations 1992 provides for a maintenance assessment notification, which is sent both to the parent with care and to the absent parent, to show the details of both parents' assessable income, so that both have the information necessary to enable them to ask for a review or appeal should they believe there are grounds for this. The Data Protection Act 1984 allows for the disclosure of information which is provided for under other legislation.

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he proposes to announce his conclusions after his study of the work and operations of the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: I have been examining comments and concerns raised about some aspects of the child support arrangements and their implementation, and am considering the first report of the Social Security Select Committee on the operation of the Child Support Act. I shall make an announcement as soon as possible.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures the Child Support Agency is taking to speed up the process by which all cases referred to it are handled.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, dated December 1993:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking about the measures the Child Support Agency is taking to speed up the processing of cases.

In the light of operational experience over the first three months of activity, we decided there were benefits in terms of productivity in increasing the involvement of our field offices in the processing of cases. The initial part of this process, involving the issuing of maintenance application and enquiry forms has already been transferred from our regional centres to field offices.

The Agency is committed to keeping processing times to a minimum, and we will continue to monitor and evaluate our performance as the business develops.

I hope you will find this reply helpful.

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the cases dealt with by the Child Support Agency since the inception involve the reassessment of maintenance payments by fathers already paying maintenance; and how many cases involve fathers who have previously not paid maintenance; and how many cases involve payments to women who are in receipt of income support.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Mike Hall, dated 17 December 1993:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking questions about the operations of the Child Support Agency.

To the end of October, the Agency has processed over 107,000 cases. Of these 56,800 have resulted in the assessment of maintenance. Figures are not kept on the proportion of these cases in which a maintenance arrangement was already in operation. We estimate, however, that about 50 per cent. of cases taken on by the Agency were already receiving maintenance.

You also asked how many cases involve payments to women who are receiving income support. The Agency does not collect information on the number of assessments made, split by the status of the parent with care of children, so it is not possible to say in how many cases the parent with care was receiving income support.

I hope you will find this reply helpful.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many inquiry packs were printed by the Child Support Agency; and at what total cost.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 17 December 1993:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking for details about the enquiry packs.

The number of maintenance enquiry packs printed in the first year of operations of the Child Support Agency is 1,110,500. These packs contain a maintenance enquiry form, together with a leaflet about the Agency, helpnotes, and, since October 1993, a leaflet explaining the standards a client can expect from the Agency. The total cost was £692,752·82 inclusive of Value Added Tax.

I hope that you find this information useful.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many officials are employed in the Child Support Agency; and what is the current total salary bill.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 17 December 1993:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking for details about the number of staff employed in the Child Support Agency and the total of their salaries.

At the end of October 1993, the Agency had 4,794 members of staff. The current allocation for staff salaries is £73,780,000.

I hope you find this information useful.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement as to the location of each Child Support Agency in the United Kingdom and give details of the office space used, rent paid and, the accommodation has been purchased, if it is freehold or leasehold.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 17 December 1993:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking for details about Child Support Agency accommodation.

The Agency has six major operational centres supported by a network of field staff co-located with Benefits Agency district offices and specialist Headquarters staff in London and Newcastle.

Accommodation for headquarters staff in Newcastle and for field staff in Social Security offices is funded centrally by the Department of Social Security, and is not charged separately to the Agency.

I am pleased to attach information on the remainder of the accommodation as an Annex to this letter.

Annex

Child Support Agency Accommodation

Location	*Space sq. ft.*	*Rent sq. ft. £*	*Status*
Falkirk	77,825	11·63	Leased building
Belfast	74,578	10·29	Leased building
Birkenhead	79,717	9·53	Leased building
Dudley	84,956	10·90	Leased building
Hastings	103,275	4·15	Crown property
Plymouth	82,903	9·81	Leased building
Millbank Tower London	18,522	25·58	Leased building

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how quickly the Child Support Agency varies its assessment of wages when evidence can be produced that an earlier assessment of wages is too high.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to my right hon. Friend.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Paul Channon, dated 17 December 1993:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how quickly the Child Support Agency will reassess a case when evidence is produced that the earlier assessment was based on wages which were too high.

The Child Support Officer (CSO) has a legal requirement, when conducting a review, to notify both parties to the maintenance assessment. Both parties are then allowed to submit evidence to the CSO, and are then given the opportunity to comment on the review. Because of the necessity of gathering a great deal of information to ensure the review is carried out accurately, it is not yet possible to set specific clearance times for reviews. I am happy to reassure you that Agency staff are aware of the need to complete reviews as quickly as possible given the circumstances of each case.

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements are made to ensure that special advisers to Ministers in his Department do not have access to the kind of information, and are not involved in the type of business, that would be likely to create suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment.

Mr. Scott: Care is taken to ensure that special advisers do not have access to the kind of information likely to create suspicion of impropriety. They are not involved in evaluating tenders or letting contracts.

Benefit Cuts

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people he estimates will be affected by the proposed cuts in invalidity benefit and unemployment benefit announced in November's Budget.

Mr. Scott: All new claimants to incapacity benefit who would have been entitled to invalidity benefit under the current scheme will be affected. Existing invalidity benefit recipients will experience no cash reduction at the point of change; about 200,000 may lose entitlement to incapacity benefit over the first two to three years of the new scheme through application of the new medical test. The number affected by proposals to introduce the new job seeker's allowance will depend on the level of unemployment and the rates of benefit in 1996-97. Our current estimate is that about 250,000 people may at any one time find they would have been better off under the unemployment benefit scheme.

Equal Pensions (Appeal)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of the likely impact on the national insurance fund of the appeal to the Court of Appeal in the case of Secretary of State for Social Security and Rose Graham if the appeal by the Secretary of State is dismissed: and how these figures are affected by the announcement on 30 November that the retirement age for both sexes is to be equalised at age 65.

Mr. Hague: The effect on the national insurance fund would depend on the precise terms of the ruling. The latest estimates are shown in the table. Under our proposals, the phased implementation of equal state pension ages will not begin until 2010, and will not affect these estimates.

Estimated cost to National Insurance Fund[4]

Financial year	*£ million*
1993-94	[2]105
1994-95	80
[1]1995-96	[3]100

[1] Estimates for later years are not available.

[2] Estimates for 1993-94 include arrears from 1 April 1992, the date of the commissioner's decision.

[3] Estimates for 1995-96 take account of the proposed introduction of incapacity benefit from April 1995.

[4] All estimates are expressed in constant 1994-95 benefit rates, and are rounded to the nearest £5 million.

Appointed Day Requirements

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to introduce the appointed day requirements as set out under the Social Security Act 1990.

Mr. Hague: The appointed day requirements in the Social Security Act 1990 refer to the limited price indexation—LPI—of salary-related occupational pensions. The implementation of LPI is one of the many issues for the Government to consider in the light of the recommendations in the Pensions Law Review Committee report "Pension Law Reform" and the responses to our series of discussion papers on non-state pensions issued on 3 December.

European Court of Justice

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the outcome of recent European Court of Justice cases affecting his Department's policies.

Mr. Hague: Since the beginning of April 1993, three such cases have been decided, but none has required a change of policy. In the first case, the European Court of Justice ruled that survivors' benefits in occupational pension schemes should be equal for men and women. It also confirmed that its earlier ruling in the Barber case, requiring equality in occupational pensions, applied only in respect of pensionable service after 17 May 1990. In the second case, the court upheld the validity of national time limits for payment of benefit relating to periods before the date of claim. In the third case, the court held that in certain circumstances occupational "bridging pensions" could be paid to men between the ages of 60 and 65.

Press Officers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many press officers his Department has employed in each year since 1983.

Mr. Hague: Information for the years 1983 to 1988 is not available in the form requested. The Department of Social Security did not exist independently until August 1988.

The figures for 1988 onwards are in the table. They include the Benefits Agency, Contributions Agency and Child Support Agency where indicated.

	Headquarters	*Benefits Agency*	*Contributions Agency*	*Child Support Agency*
August 1988 to April 1989	8	—	—	—
April 1989 to April 1990	8	—	—	—
April 1990 to April 1991	8	—	—	—
April 1991 to April 1992	8	1	—	—
April 1992 to April 1993	[1]10	2	1	—
April 1993	[1]10	3	1	3

[1] Includes one press officer on long-term secondment to Motability.

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of correspondence received by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each of his Department's agencies receives (i) an acknowledgement within five days and (ii) a substantive reply time within 15 days.

Mr. Hague: Correspondence to Ministers from hon. Members is registered and an acknowledgement produced on the day of receipt. The departmental target for substantive replies is 20 working days. This has been achieved in 77 per cent. of cases this year to date.

Letters to Ministers from members of the public are not acknowledged due to the large number involved. The target reply is again 20 working days.

The chief executive of the Benefits Agency—BA—tells me that all correspondence received from hon. Members is acknowledged within 24 hours of receipt. The latest available figures show that 51 per cent. of all such letters receive a substantive reply within 15 working days and 84 per cent. within 20 working days.

The BA charter sets out a commitment to reply to correspondence from customers within 10 working days. If only a partial reply is possible within that time, the customer should be told how long it will be before a comprehensive reply can be made.

Of the replies sent by the chief executive of the Contributions Agency—CA—to hon. Members, 46 per cent. were sent within 15 working days and 70 per cent. in 20 working days.

The CA's target is to dispatch either a full reply or an informative response to 95 per cent. of all customer inquiries within 10 working days. In 1992-93, this target was surpassed, with 98·5 per cent. of responses being within this time scale.

All letters from hon. Members to the chief executive of the Child Support Agency—CSA—are now acknowledged on the day of receipt. The agency has a target to reply within 20 working days. The CSA has received 2,027 letters in a short space of time. To date, 458 have received replies. Of these, 63 per cent. were within 15 working days and 75 per cent. within 20 working days.

Letters from members of the public are usually referred to CSA centres to respond on individual cases. Their target is to acknowledge letters within two working days, which has been successful in 90 per cent. of cases, and to send a full reply within 10 working days. This has been achieved in 65 per cent. of cases.

The chief executive of the Information Technology Services Agency received only 15 letters last year. All were acknowledged within five days and 14 of the 15 replies were sent in 15 days.

Departmental Offices

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the regional and area offices of his Department, and of inspectorates, agencies, and other public bodies for which he is responsible.

Mr. Hague: In view of the length of this reply, I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Child Support

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the formula for phasing in child support maintenance; if he will limit the increase in maintenance payments in cases of an existing court and order.

Mr. Burt: The existing provisions for phasing in child support maintenance payments apply where an absent parent with a court order or written maintenance agreement has a second family and a new liability of less than £60 a week which is over £20 more than his previous liability. In these circumstances the amount of any increase will be limited to £20 for the first 12 months. The Social Security Select Committee has recommended an extension of these arrangements. I am still considering the Committee's report and shall make an announcement as soon as possible.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the decision not to restore disability living allowance to Daniel Mark Hadlow, JJ 57 29 82 C.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Tony Laurance to Mr. Barry Field, dated 16 December 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is the responsibility of Mr. Michael Bichard to answer questions about relevant operational matters. However, as Mr. Bichard is away on annual leave at the moment, I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security. This was about the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) claim for D. Hadlow.

I should explain that all claims to DLA are decided by independent adjudicating authorities who are specially appointed for this purpose under legislation approved by Parliament. They are responsible for deciding if the conditions for entitlement are satisfied. Neither Ministers nor officials of the Benefits Agency can influence or alter decisions made by these authorities.

In order to provide you with the full details personal to this case I have written separately to you.

Pensioners

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of people over state pension age are expected to qualify for *(a)* basic state pension at the full rate, *(b)* basic state pension at a reduced rate, *(c)* an element of state earnings-related pension scheme and *(d)* an element of income support in the tax years (i) 1993-94, (ii) 1998-99, (iii) 2003-4 and (iv) 2008-9.

Mr. Hague *[holding answer 29 November 1993]:* The information is in the table.

Estimated proportion of people over state pension age expected to be entitled to:

	Full-rate basic retirement pension Per cent.	*Less than full-rate basic retirement pension Per cent.*	*Some SERPS Per cent.*	*Income support Per cent.*
1993-94	66	28	40	16
1998-99	67	28	53	—
2003-04	67	29	67	—
2008-09	68	29	80	—

Note:

No figures readily available for income support entitlement for 1998-99, 2003-04 and 2008-09 but the analysis which underpins "The Growth of Social Security" for 1999-2000 is consistent with a relatively unchanged percentage to the end of the century.

Source: GAD/DSS Analytical Services.

Benefits

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the saving in the whole range of social security benefits, including exemption from prescription charges and other associated benefits, if everybody were deemed to have earned £100 per week between the ages of 18 to 65 years who was fit and able to work.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 6 December 1993]:* The information is not available in the precise form requested. It is estimated that if everybody between the ages of 18 to 65 who was fit and able to work earned £100 per week gross of tax and national insurance contributions there would be a reduction in expenditure on social security benefits and on welfare foods and free school meals for social security benefits recipients of approximately £17 billion in the financial year. It is not possible to estimate what effect this change would have on the NHS low-income scheme which exempts those on low incomes from prescription, dental and optical charges.

Any savings would, of course, be offset by future expenditure arising from entitlement gained to retirement pension and other contributory benefits.

Occupational Pensions

Mr. Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he is yet in a position to publish the discussion papers on occupational pensions issues to which he referred in his statement to the House on 3 November, *Official Report,* columns *354-65.*

Mr. Hague *[pursuant to his reply, 3 December 1993, c. 817]:* The final two discussion papers will be published today. Copies of the papers will be placed in the Library.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Forestry Commission

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list all Forestry Commission woods in the Newbury constituency.

Mr. Jack: The only Forestry Commission woodland in the hon. Member's constituency is part of Cake wood, near Hungerford.

Milk Industry

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how she proposes to compensate those milk producers who choose not to join Milk Marque, the successor to the Milk Marketing Board, for resources employed by the Milk Marketing Board in seeking to establish Milk Marque as the dominant force in the milk industry.

Mr. Jack: Expenditure by the Milk Marketing Board on promoting its proposed successor body, Milk Marque, has been approved by the EC Commission under state aid rules. The board's reorganisation scheme makes no provision for repayment of part of the sum in question to producers who choose not to join the successor body. Nor, so far as I am aware, does the board have plans to do so outside the framework of the reorganisation scheme. It is not for Government to make proposals in this regard.

Fisheries Conservation

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment she has made of the alternative conservation document prepared by the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, a copy of which has been sent to her; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: As I informed the House in the annual fisheries debate on 14 December, *Official Report*, columns 894-936, valuable work has been done by the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations on technical conservation. I will discuss these ideas with the industry and will wish to see what part it can play in balancing conservation and fishing effort and meeting our Community obligations.

Slaughtermen

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the average number of units per year one slaughterman is able to deal with in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Northern Ireland for the most recent year in which figures are available.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is not available in the format required.

Equine Industry

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her reply of 6 December, *Official Report*, column 262, if she will make a statement on her meeting of 9 December with representatives of the equine industry; and what action has been taken and will be taken by her Department to combat and eliminate equine viral arteritis.

Mr. Soames: I had a useful discussion on 9 December with representatives of the equine industry on possible ways of providing horse owners with increased protection from infection with equine viral arteritis, particularly from "carrier" stallions. I undertook to prepare proposals for further consultation with the industry, while making it clear that the Government cannot undertake any liability for compensation in connection with this disease.

Forestry, Hillsborough

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list all Forestry Commission woods in the constituency of Sheffield, Hillsborough.

Mr. Jack: The only Forestry Commission woodland in the hon. Member's constituency is part of Wharncliffe wood.

Less-favoured Areas

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the average size of farm holding in the less-favoured areas as sampled by *(a)* the most recent farm business survey and *(b)* the most up-to-date and comprehensive data she has available, by county and in England.

Mr. Jack: The table provides information on the average size, in hectares, of cattle and sheep farms, wholly or mainly in the less-favoured areas—LFAs—in England from the agricultural census as at June 1992. As the farm business survey covers only farms that are considered to be full-time commercial businesses, very small farms are excluded from the survey. The average size of cattle and sheep LFA farms in England as estimated from the farm business survey sample for 1992-93 is 159 hectares, compared with 130 hectares for similar farms in the agricultural census at June 1992. Results from the farm business survey are not available by county.

Average size[1] of cattle and sheep farms, wholly or mainly in the LFA as at June 1992

County	*Hectares*
Cleveland	73
Cheshire	61
Cornwall	49
Cumbria	107
Derbyshire	67
Devon	60
Durham	91
Hereford and Worcester	47
Lancashire	71
Northumberland	195
Shropshire	62
Somerset	97
Staffordshire	30
Greater Manchester	42
South Yorkshire	63
North Yorkshire	111
West Yorkshire	35
ENGLAND	86

[1] Total area of holding.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the autumn review of hill livestock compensatory allowances statistical tables and charts draws on information published in the annual farm business survey; and what other sources of information are used to establish farm size, livestock and numbers and farm income indices.

Mr. Jack: The data on farm incomes which is presented in the statistical tables and charts are derived from the farm business survey in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

and the farm accounts system in Scotland. Data on livestock numbers are derived from the agricultural census and from records of the claims for hill livestock compensatory allowances. When average survey results of two or more groups of sample farms are combined, the results for each group are given a weight proportional to the total number of holdings in that group recorded at the June agricultural census.

Departmental Offices

Mr. Straw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the regional and area offices of her Department, and of inspectorates, agencies, and other public bodies for which she is responsible.

Mr. Jack: The information requested by the hon. Member is included in the publications "At the Farmers' Service", section 10, and "Public Bodies 1992". Copies of both publications are lodged in the Library of the House of Commons.

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of correspondence received by *(a)* her Ministry and *(b)* each of her Ministry's agencies receives (i) an acknowledgement within five days and (ii) a substantive reply within 15 days.

Mr. Jack: The Ministry keeps central records of the time taken to reply to Ministers' correspondence, but does not have a central record in relation to letters replied to by civil servants.

This Department's target is for Ministers to reply within 21 days of receipt to letters from hon. Members and noble Lords. In the past 12 months, Ministers received 11,053 of these letters and 7,516—68 per cent.—were replied to within 21 days. Our records do not indicate how many replies were sent within 15 days and correspondence is not generally acknowledged.

Correspondence dealt with solely by executive agencies is a matter for which responsibility is delegated to them and I have therefore asked the chief executives to reply to the hon. Gentleman direct.

Letter from Guy Stapleton to Mr. Michael Meacher, dated 17 December 1993:

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about the speed of the Intervention Board's replies to correspondence.

The Agency's target when letters require an answer from the Chief Executive is for me to reply within 10 working days of receiving a letter. Correspondence is not routinely acknowledged. The percentage of replies within this deadline in the last year was 89·7 per cent.

Letter from Dr. Julian Walsh to Mr. Michael Meacher, dated 16 December 1993:

The Minister has asked me to reply to part (b) of your question concerning acknowledgements and replies of correspondence.

The ADAS Agency keeps central records of the time taken to reply to Chief Executive's correspondence with MPs but does not have central records related to letters replied to by its staff.

The ADAS target for despatch of reply to Chief Executive correspondence with MPs is ten working days. The percentage of such letters replies to within this deadline in the last year was 100 per cent. If it is anticipated that a substantive reply will take more than five working days to despatch, all correspondence is routinely acknowledged.

Letter from Dr. P. I. Stanley to Mr. Michael Meacher, dated 17 December 1993:

In its Charter Standards Statement the Central Science Laboratory (CSL) stated its aim to answer correspondence within three weeks of its receipt. Where a full reply cannot be given within this time scale an interim response is sent as soon as possible within the three week period and the reason for the delay is given together with the name and telephone number of the person dealing with the correspondence.

CSL's Charter Standards Statement was published in July 1993. All staff were alerted to the need to adhere to this standard and office procedures have been introduced to ensure that correspondence is dealt with efficiently. Our records do not indicate how many replies were sent within 15 days and we do not acknowledge correspondence as a matter of routine.

Letter from T. W. A. Little to Mr. Michael Meacher, dated 17 December 1993:

The Minister has asked me to reply to your question about the Ministry of Agriculture and its Agencies response time for correspondence.

The CVL carries out the majority of its work on a contract basis for MAFF and other Government and commercial customers. Enquiries tend to be technical, specific and to a named individual. No central record is kept of this. However, the Agency has recently set a target for replies to general enquiries relating to our work. Our aim is to provide a full reply within fifteen working days. If it becomes evident that a delay is likely we advise the correspondent immediately.

Since this arrangement is a new procedure we do not yet have the historical records to judge our performance against this target. These will be available in 1994.

Letter from G. K. Bruce to Mr. Michael Meacher, dated 17 December 1993:

The Pesticides Safety Directorate aims to deal efficiently and helpfully with all correspondence received. The central Information Section received 3,567 written enquiries in the period 1 April to 30 November and 96 per cent. of these were acknowledged within five days. Our records to not indicate how many substantive replies were sent within 15 days but every effort is made to respond quickly.

Our Policy Group deals with Ministers' correspondence for MAFF on pesticide issues and observes the standards set by the Ministry in respect of response times. We do not have central records of other correspondence dealt with by the staff of the Agency.

Letter from J. M. Rutter to Mr. Michael Meacher, dated 16 December 1993:

The Minister of State has asked me to reply for the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) to your Question about the response time for correspondence in the Ministry's Agencies.

The VMD receives approximately 11,500 items of external correspondence each year. Unless an immediate reply is appropriate, all should receive an acknowledgement within five days. The length of time taken to provide a substantive reply where one is required will vary dependent on the nature and complexity of the issues raised. For those letters sent on behalf of Ministers, in the last year 97 per cent. received a reply within 21 days. Our records do not indicate how many of these replies were sent within 15 days.

Thames Cockle Fishery

Mr. Channon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when there will be a public inquiry into the proposed regulating order for the Thames cockle fishery.

Mr. Jack: A public inquiry will be held if the objections which have been made in relation to the Kent and Essex sea fisheries committee's proposed regulating order are not withdrawn. I understand that the committee has not yet ruled out the possibility of meeting the objectors' concerns.

Agriculture Council

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Agriculture Council held in Brussels between 13 and 16 December; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting of the Agriculture Council, which took place from 13 to 17 December.

The Council reached agreement on changes to the regionalisation and set-aside rules under the arable regime; on measures to implement the agreement between the European Community and the United States on oilseeds; on changes to the agrimonetary system; on a one-year rollover of the sugar regime; and on a number of other issues. With the exception of oilseeds, all measures were agreed unanimously.

The Council had been considering set-aside since July and decisions were long overdue. The agreement met the United Kingdom's two key aims. The set-aside requirement for mixtures of rotational and non-rotational set-aside in the United Kingdom will be 18 per cent. of a farm's arable area, the same as for non-rotational set-aside, not 20 per cent. as originally proposed. Farmers finishing a five-year set-aside scheme will be able to enter all the land in that scheme into arable set-aside for a further five years, including, for those who finished five-year agreement this autumn, any land already cultivated for harvest in 1994.

It was also agreed that there will be changes to alleviate the impact of the overshoot of the main arable base area in Scotland. This will be widely welcomed there.

In addition, the Commission will examine the relationship between set-aside and land withdrawn from production for woodland or environmental purposes. While this does not go as far as I would like, it represents an important step forward.

On oilseeds, the Council decided that any cuts in aid arising under the agreement with the United States should fall on those member states in which the area of oilseeds exceeds a level calculated by reference to the 1989-91 average area, but with certain adjustments. I regarded this as unsatisfactory and, with Portugal, voted against.

The changes agreed to the agrimonetary system will reduce the likelihood of green rate revaluations. The Council did not, however, accede to the request by some member states to extend the potentially costly switchover mechanism to floating currencies.

The sugar regime will be extended for a further year, until the end of June 1995. This will enable it to be revised from 1 July 1995 to take account of the Community's new obligations under the GATT and other factors.

The Council agreed to maintain the current level of imports of butter from New Zealand for 1994, pending the implementation of the GATT agreement. The Council also approved voluntary restraint agreements on the import of sheepmeat from third countries during 1994 which will broadly continue 1993 quantities.

Agreement was reached on the abolition of the headage limit on the annual ewe premium and on provisions permitting member states to attach environmental conditions to the payment of the ewe premium and the beef special premium. These were measures particularly sought by the United Kingdom and the ending of headage limits will be especially welcomed by producers.

Agreement was reached on a measure to improve the welfare of animals at slaughter. But I refused to support proposals on the welfare of animals during transport since, in their present form, they would have allowed unacceptably long intervals between feeding and watering and minimum rest periods that were too short. These proposals clearly need further discussion.

The Council decided that the current moratorium on the use of bovine somatotrophin should be extended for one further year instead of for the longer period proposed by the Commission. It also reached agreement on a proposal on harmonised charging arrangements for the veterinary inspection of fresh meat and on a Community system for inspection of meat from third countries.

I drew the attention of the Council to the serious implications for United Kingdom glasshouse lettuce and other vegetable growers of a proposed Commission measure to control nitrate levels in lettuce. I pointed out that the Scientific Committee for Food was, in any case, still considering the advice it should put forward on the intake of nitrate from vegetables. I am glad to say that the Commissioner accepted the need to examine this issue in the light of both the public health and the economic implications. He confirmed that the Commission would act in the light of the further advice that it expected from the scientific committee.

Welfare of Battery Hens Regulations 1987

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement about the implementation of the Welfare of Battery Hens Regulations 1987.

Mr. Soames: Many questions have been raised on the application of the Welfare of Battery Hens Regulations 1987, which come fully into force on 1 January 1995. It is our intention that the regulations should be applied sensibly and consistently. A paper has been prepared by the Agriculture Departments in order to provide detailed guidance to producers on the approach which it is intended to follow. The paper has been placed in the Library of the House and copies will be made available to producers and any others with an interest.

Forests, Honiton

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the Forestry Commission woods in the Honiton constituency.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 13 December 1993]:* The Forestry Commission is preparing such a list and I shall send a copy to my right hon. Friend as soon as possible. I shall also arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

Farm Incomes

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the average net farm income and average cash income per livestock farm in the less-favoured areas and per lowland livestock farm for each year since 1982.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 15 December 1993]:* Estimates of net farm income and cash income based on results of the farm business survey are provided in the tables. The method of farm classification has been changed and results are only available on the new classification from 1986-87 onwards. Estimates for lowland cattle and sheep farms for 1992-93 are not yet available.

Year-to-year comparisons can best be made by reference to the indices shown in the tables, which are based on results from constant samples of farms.

Table 1

Average net farm income and cash income on LFA cattle and sheep farms in England

Year[1]	*Net farm income*		*Cash income*	
	£'000 per farm	*Indices*[2]	*£'000 per farm*	*Indices*[2]
1986-87	6·7	80	7·1	67
1987-88	9·4	113	10·8	101
1988-89	12·7	145	11·0	101
1989-90	9·1	103	14·1	92
1990-91	6·6	78	13·2	91
1991-92	8·8	119	14·3	117
1992-93[3]	12·9	174	18·4	151
1993-94[3]	16·4	221	22·0	180

Table 2

Average net farm income and cash income on lowland cattle and sheep farms in England

Year[1]	*Net farm income*		*Cash income*	
	£'000 per farm	*Indices*[2]	*£'000 per farm*	*Indices*[2]
1986-87	3·3	121	6·6	59
1987-88	6·3	227	10·8	97
1988-89	7·5	226	11·9	100
1989-90	5·0	120	14·5	94
1990-91	2·4	61	15·6	108
1991-92	4·8	120	16·7	98

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[1] Accounting years end of average in February.

[2] Average of 1989-90—1991-92=100.

[3] Provisional and forecast figures at the time of the 1993 Autumn Review of the economic conditions in the hills and uplands.

WALES

Special Advisers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements are made to ensure that special advisers to Ministers in his Department do not have access to the kind of information, and are not involved in the type of business, that would be likely to create suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment.

Mr. Redwood: Care is taken to ensure that special advisers do not have access to the kind of information likely to create suspicion of impropriety. They are not involved in evaluating tenders or letting contracts.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the name and job description of each special ministerial adviser employed in his Department showing any particular outputs for which each adviser is responsible.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on Thursday 4 November, *Official Report,* column *334.*

Departmental Offices (Heating Bills)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by location the annual fuel heating bills for each of his Department's offices for the last four years, and for this year to date.

Mr. Redwood: Reliable information on fuel costs is available only from 1 April 1990, when my Department assumed responsibility for direct payment of fuel bills.

The required information from 1990-91 is given in the following table.

Welsh Office annual fuel[1] expenditure by property

£s

Property	*1990-91* £	*1991-92* £	*1992-93* £	[2]*1993-94* £
Cathays Park, Cardiff	250,886	283,155	293,810	201,302
Pontllanfraith	1,412	449	1,491	[3]—
St. Davids House, Cardiff	726	3,316	2,593	[3]—
Curran Road, Cardiff	4,483	2,919	4,021	3,417
Norbury Road, Cardiff	1,041	539	182	[3]—
Pontfaen Road, Lampeter	4,981	4,627	2,462	2,832
Barn Street, Haverfordwest	3,288	3,408	2,465	541
Picton Terrace, Carmarthen	15,309	19,176	15,720	8,588
Spa Road East, Llandrindod Wells	12,846	15,332	12,152	6,408
Canal Road, Brecon	3,367	3,766	2,416	756
Trawsgoed, Aberystwyth	86,890	80,762	41,658	12,873
Arran Road, Dolgellau	2,221	2,374	2,368	1,614
North Penrallt, Caernarfon	15,049	13,715	13,420	7,469
Gwydyr House, London	6,968	9,179	7,219	7,867
Gelliwasted Road, Pontypridd	[3]—	413	1,186	[3]—
Gnoll Park Road, Neath	1,314	2,384	2,131	[3]—
Bryn Adda, Bangor	17,809	11,854	[3]—	[3]—
Colchester Avenue, Cardiff	528	385	509	[3]—
Cardiff Road, Newport	1,043	1,039	685	[3]—
Morgan Street, Tredegar	647	1,096	1,116	[3]—
Ynys Street, Port Talbot	1,626	2,414	2,668	[3]—
Unit K, Llanelli	512	532	784	[3]—

£s

Property	1990-91 £	1991-92 £	1992-93 £	[2]1993-94 £
Jobs Wells Lane, Carmarthen	20,893	26,071	25,695	14,968
Williamson House, Cardiff	398	288	540	419
Golate House, Cardiff	1,077	1,631	1,708	729
Bessemer Road, Cardiff	Nil	Nil	84	50
Hamilton Terrace, Milford Haven	430	586	551	348
Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells	288	406	206	136
Y Buarth, Aberystwyth	8,399	10,971	10,123	7,,613
Bolero Camp, Ruthin	1,208	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
Station Road, Ruthin	13,014	14,269	8,848	3,283
New Dolanog House, Welshpool	[3]—	96	93	[3]—
St. Agnes Road, Cardiff	1,364	7,237	3,024	361
Ty Glas Road, Cardiff	64,681	73,602	70,493	28,347
Angel Street, Bridgend	852	964	951	[3]—
Grove House, Swansea	415	324	274	[3]—
Caradog House, Cardiff	9,011	10,684	3,916	835
Ty Nant, Swansea	2,520	2,958	3,131	139
Dinerth Road, Colwyn Bay	3,010	4,612	8,375	2,851
Regent Street, Wrexham	336	614	689	[3]—
Chester Street, Wrexham	1,247	1,598	749	[3]—
High Street, Bangor	259	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
Companies House, Cardiff	275	[3]—	2,032	Nil
Park Street, Newtown	2,152	2,738	736	141

[1] 'Fuel' embraces all forms of energy used in Welsh Office buildings i.e. liquid fuel as well as electricity and gas.

[2] to end of November.

[3] Not in occupation/vacated.

Health Services

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many posts for salaried dentists in Wales have been advertised for each health authority area; how many posts have been requested by each family health service authority; how many inquiries were received for the posts; how many applications were received for each post; and how many appointments have been made.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: 1. The number of salaried dentists posts requested by family health services authorities in Wales are as follows:

Clwyd—two applications under consideration.

Dyfed—four, of which two were approved.

Gwynedd—26 of which four were approved. The other applications will be reviewed when the approved vacancies are filled.

Powys—two, of which one was approved and another is under consideration.

2. The number of posts advertised, inquiries and applications received and appointments made to date are:

	Post advertised	Enquiries received	Applications received	Appointments made
Dyfed	1	13	6	1
Gwynedd	4	6	2	1
Powys	1	2	0	0

Public Bodies

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many appointments he has made to non-departmental public bodies in Wales where one of the nominators was an hon. Member representing a Welsh constituency.

Mr. Redwood: Since becoming Secretary of State for Wales, I have appointed one member of a national health service body who was referred to the Department by an hon. Member representing a Welsh constituency; there have been no such appointments to executive non-departmental public bodies.

Cows and Ewes

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what according to *(a)* the most up-to-date and comprehensive data he has available and *(b)* the farm business survey, was the average number of (1) beef cows and (2) ewes, carried on less-favoured areas livestock farms, by county and in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: Information on the average number of beef cows and ewes on cattle and sheep farms, wholly or mainly in less-favoured areas in Wales, according to the agricultural census of June 1992 is shown in the following table. The farm business survey is a sample survey of only those farms which are considerd to be full-time commercial businesses and excludes very small farms. Also, unlike the census it records the average number of livestock on the holding throughout the year. On livestock farms wholly or mainly in the less-favoured areas the average numbers of beef cows and ewes recorded by the farm business survey on farms in Wales in 1992-93 were 20 and 643 respectively. The equivalent information at county level is not available.

Average number on cattle and sheep farms wholly or mainly in less-favoured areas as at June 1992

	Beef cows	Ewes
Clwyd	11	421
Dyfed	9	213
Gwent	7	208
Gwynedd	11	337
Mid Glamorgan	13	400
Powys	17	440
South Glamorgan	5	0
West Glamorgan	15	213
Wales	12	332

Farm Holdings

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the averge size of farm holding in the less-favoured areas as sampled by *(a)* the most recent farm business survey and *(b)* the most up-to-date and comprehensive data he has available, by county and in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: The farm business survey is a sample survey of only those farms which are considered to be full-time commercial businesses and excludes very small farms. The average size of cattle and sheep farms in Wales, wholly or mainly in less-favoured areas, as recorded in the farm business survey for 1992-93 is 125 hectares. The equivalent information at county level is not available. The June agricultural census covers all main holdings and the average size of cattle and sheep farms, wholly or mainly in less-favoured areas, according to the census of June 1992, is shown in the following table:

Average size[1] of cattle and sheep farms wholly or partly in less-favoured areas as at June 1992

	Hectares
Clwyd	68·6
Dyfed	47·8
Gwent	38·3
Gwynedd	83·1
Mid Glamorgan	66·9
Powys	75·4
South Glamorgan	27·1
West Glamorgan	58·0
Wales	65·7

[1] Total area of holding

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schols in each local education authority in Wales are or have been eligible to apply for grant-maintained status; how many in each case have held ballots under section 61 of the Education Act 1988; how many ballots in each case resulted in votes to seek grant-maintained status and how many of these have been subject to section 12 or 13 notices; and how many ballots in each case resulted in votes against seeking grant-maintained status.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

Local education authority	*Number of primary schools eligible for GM status*	*Number of primary schools that have held ballots*	*Outcome of ballot* For GM (number subject to S12-13 notice)	*Outcome of ballot* Against GM	*Number of secondary schools eligible for GM status*	*Number of secondary schools that have held ballots*	*Outcome of ballot* For GM (number subject to S12-13 notice)	*Outcome of ballot* Against GM
Clwyd	243	3	2	1	29	7	4	3
Dyfed	313	0	0	0	31	0	0	0
Gwent	213	1	1	0	31	4	4	0
Gwynedd	190	1	1	0	23	0	0	0
Mid Glamorgan	305	1	1	0	42	0	0	0
Powys	107	1	1	0	13	1	0	1
South Glamorgan	158	1	0	1	25	3	3	0
West Glamorgan	164	0	0	0	26	3	1	2

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each grant-maintained school in 1993-94 *(a)* the direct annual maintenance grant and *(b)* the central annual maintenance grant.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

School	*Direct AMG* £	*Central AMG* £
Cwmcarn Comprehensive	767,868	92,448
Bishop Vaughan Comprehensive	2,009,465	300,708
Brynmawr Comprehensive	1,157,403	133,258
Emrys ap Iwan Comprehensive	2,075,410	314,569
Maelor Comprehensive	1,069,140	146,009
Stanwell Comprehensive	1,884,510	215,833
Caergeiliog Primary	310,238	53,694
Derwen Primary[1]	132,403	23,117
Eirias Comprehensive[1]	1,150,134	178,802
Llanerfyl Primary[1]	36,399	2,630
Pen-y-Bryn Primary[1]	174,697	32,718

[1] Schools incorporated as grant maintained with effect from 1 September 1993.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what applications were received from grant-maintained schools for capital grant for the financial year 1993-94; and what has been the level of grant approved in each case.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In addition to the formula-related capital grant for the purchase of equipment or small-scale capital projects, which grant-maintained schools receive automatically, applications have been received in respect of the following specific projects:

School	*Project Details*
Ysgol Emrys ap Iwan, Clwyd	1. General rebuilding*
Maelor, Clwyd	1. Conversion of Science Block* 2. Extension to Technology Suite
Brynmawr, Gwent	1. Refurbishment of Science Block and Technology Buildings*
Cwmcarn, Gwent	1. Replacement of roof on Arts and Science Block* 2. General landscaping 3. Refurbishment of heating system
Ysgol Caergeiliog, Gwynedd	1. Provision of 4 classrooms*
Stanwell, South Glamorgan	1. Rebuilding Science Block* 2. Refurbishment/rebuilding of 4 storey tower block* 3. Refurbishment of 3 storey tower block

School	*Project Details*
Bishop Vaughan, West Glamorgan	1. Replacement of curtain wall and roofing of 4 storey block* 2. Replacement of main building's roof 3. Refurbishment of heating system

* Those marked with an asterisk have received approval in principle and schools have been invited to submit firm estimates and tenders. It is not possible therefore, at present to provide details of the final levels of grant involved.

Cwm Carn School

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the headteacher of Cwm Carn school left his post; what the grounds were for his departure; and who is responsible for the payment of severence costs involved.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I understand that the resignation of Mr. Frank Elliott, the head of Cwmcarn grant-maintained school, is to take effect from 31 December 1993. The reasons for his departure are a matter between him and his employers, the governing body of the school. The responsibility for any financial settlement is that of the governing body, although my Department is making a contribution through a special purpose grant for staff restructuring.

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of correspondence received by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each of his Department's agencies receives (i) an acknowledgement within five days and (ii) a substantive reply within 15 days.

Mr. Redwood: The available information is as follows:

Departmental correspondence received since 1 January 1993

	Ministerial Per cent.	[1]*Official Per cent.*
Acknowledged within five days	100	100
Substantive reply within 15 days	82·3	[2]—
Cadw		
Acknowledged within five days	100	100
Substantive reply within 15 days	[3]—	99

[1] Official correspondence transferred from another Department is not acknowledged on receipt to the Welsh Office.

[2] The Department has a target for replies to issue within 15 working days. Each division monitors its performance against the target; information is not collected centrally.

[3] This figure is included in the Department's total and cannot be identified separately.

Power Cuts

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet representatives of electricity distributors in Wales to discuss what measures are required to prevent power cuts caused by the deposit of salt on electricity supply cables.

Mr. Redwood: I have no plans at present. However, I understand that MANWEB's Gwynedd district is investing over £2·4 million annually on overhead line refurbishment and insulator redesign in an effort to relieve the problem.

Local Government Review

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date the draft ward boundaries proposed for the planned unitary authorities were sent to local councils; and if he will place a copy of the boundaries in the Library.

Mr. Redwood: I shall consult Welsh local authorities on proposed electoral areas soon and I will place a copy of my proposals in the Library.

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what funds will be made available to Cardiff Bay development corporation in the next financial year.

Mr. Redwood: During 1994-95 my Department will make available to Cardiff Bay development corporation grant in aid of £48·2 million.

National Health Service

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what funding he proposes to make available to the national health service in Wales in 1994-95 and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Spending on the NHS in Wales will increase by £100 million from £1,975 million to £2,076 million, which represents a cash increase of over 5 per cent. —well ahead of retail inflation and pay increases—or an extra £35 for every man, woman and child in Wales. This will bring expenditure up to £716 next year for every person in Wales, or nearly £3,000 for an average family.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing in 1992-93 prices, the gross public spending for each year since 1990-91 and the projected expenditure for each year to 1995-96 for each executive non-departmental public body sponsored by his Department, as listed in "Public Bodies 1992".

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 15 December 1993]:* The information requested is shown in the following table. The figures for cash spend have been deflated using the GDP deflator, which is currently estimated to be running at a much higher level than the RPI or pay increases. These figures can therefore mislead on the true real value of the cash sums.

	1990-91 £000s	*1991-92 £000s*	*1992-93 £000s*	*1993-94 £000s*	*1994-95 £000s*	*1995-96 £000s*
Agricultural Wages Committee	1,639	2,355	1,960	1,937	1,863	1,795
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation	41,629	34,267	36,400	44,939	[3]—	[3]—
Countryside Council for Wales	519	15,172	17,362	19,272	19,270	19,202

	1990-91 £000s	*1991-92 £000s*	*1992-93 £000s*	*1993-94 £000s*	*1994-95 £000s*	*1995-96 £000s*
Curriculum Council for Wales[1]	1,421	1,507	1,555	1,651	[3]—	[3]—
Development Board for Rural Wales	22,665	22,576	24,593	25,426	25,502	24,061
Housing for Wales	112,291	118,615	162,650	125,443	113,019	[3]—
Land Authority for Wales	10,325	9,656	9,516	9,879	9,499	[3]—
National Library of Wales	6,062	6,229	6,443	6,245	[3]—	[3]—
National Museum of Wales	20,003	18,356	16,561	14,918	[3]—	[3]—
Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales	1,018	953	1,132	1,170	1,243	1,200
Sports Council for Wales	7,8744	7,830	8,291	9,021	[3]—	[3]—
Wales Tourist Board	14,819	13,642	15,287	15,056	14,975	14,434
Wales Youth Agency[2]	[3]—	[3]—	383	365	359	352
Welsh Development Agency	164,738	164,377	162,200	166,005	155,582	[3]—
Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting	9,211	9,517	9,871	1,249	1,230	1,212

Notes:

Figures for 1995-96 are dependent on the outcome of future public expenditure surveys.

[1] The Curriculum Council will be replaced by the Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales in 1994-95.

[2] The Wales Youth Agency was first established in 1992-93.

[3] Not available.

NHS Salary Costs

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report,* column *151,* on national health service salary costs, (1) if he will update the figures to include 1992-93;

(2) if he will update the table on national health service salary costs to include 1992-93 figures.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *[holding answers 13 December 1993]:* The information requested is as follows:

	1992-93 £000s
a. Administrative and Clerical	91,237
b. Managerial	20,127
c. Nursing	424,937

Source: Health authorities' annual accounts
Pembrokeshire NHS trust accounts

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Government Car Service

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the annual cost to the Department of the car service for Ministers in 1990-91; and how many vehicles were involved.

Mr. David Davis: The cost in 1990-91 to the then Office of the Minister for the Civil Service for use of the Government car service by its departmental Minister and the Government Whips was £243,931.

Charters

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much has been paid out in financial compensation for the failure of *(a)* the British Rail passengers charter, *(b)* London Underground customers charter, *(c)* Northern Ireland Railways passengers charter, *(d)* Contributions Agency contributors charter, *(e)* Contributions Agency employers charter and *(f)* the Benefits Agency customer charter, to meet their stated targets.

Mr. Waldegrave: British Rail, London Underground Ltd. and Northern Ireland Railways have paid an estimated £4,590,000 in financial compensation as a result of failure to meet stated targets. This is broken down as follows:

Charter	*Compensation paid (nearest £'000)*	*From*	*To*
British Rail passengers charter	4,427	April 1992	November 1993
London Underground customers charter	162	August 1992	8 December 1993
Northern Ireland Railways passengers charter	1	November 1992	30 November 1993

In addition, the Contributions Agency and Benefits Agency have paid an estimated £4,147,000 in special payments, broken down as follows:

Charter	*Compensation paid (nearest £'000)*	*From*	*To*
Contributions Agency contributors and employers charters[1]	76	April 1991	March 1993
Benefits Agency customer charter	4,071	April 1992	March 1993

[1] Separate figures are not available for the Contributions Agency contributors and Contributions Agency employers charters. The figures represent payments made from April 1991, four months before the Contributions Agency charters were introduced.

NORWEB

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what were the reasons for the award to NORWEB of a charter mark.

Mr. Waldegrave: NORWEB was awarded a charter mark because it was able to demonstrate to the Prime Minister's advisory panel on the citizens charter, by reference to its nine charter mark criteria, that it had achieved the required high degree of excellence in its services to the public.

Special Advisers

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what redundancy terms apply to Ministers' specialist advisers.

Mr. Waldegrave: Appointments of special advisers automatically terminate with the end of the Administration, or on the day after polling day in a general election, or when their appointing Minister leaves his or her present post, or if they resign to take part in national political activities or for other reasons. In some of those circumstances, they may be reappointed. Otherwise, severance payments, subject to tax and national insurance, are made in accordance with the scale in the following table.

	Number of months pay in lieu of notice for those aged:		
Years of service	*Under 34*	*34*	*35 and above*
Less than two	3	3·0	3
Two but less than three	3	3·5	4
Three but less than four	3	4·0	5
Four and over	3	4·5	6

All special advisers, regardless of age, are entitled to one month's severance pay if their appointment is made within six months of the latest date by which a general election must take place, or if they resign to take part in national political activities within six months of their appointment.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what arrangements are made to ensure that special advisers to Ministers in his Department do not have access to the kind of information, and are not involved in the type of business, that would be likely to create suspicion of impropriety in relation to subsequent employment.

Mr. David Davis: Care is taken to ensure that special advisers do not have access to the kind of information likely to create suspicion of impropriety. They are not involved in evaluating tenders or letting contracts.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the name and job description of each special ministerial adviser employed in his Department showing any particular outputs for which each adviser is responsible.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have appointed Mr. David Rutley to be my political adviser. Mr. Rutley will take up his appointment on 4 January 1994. His duties will vary. Dr. John Nicholson provides me with expert advice on a range of issues relating to public sector management.

Market Testing

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will detail the estimated cost of market testing by each Department in the current financial year; and what was the actual cost to each Department at current prices in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Waldegrave: The 1992-93 "Competing for Quality" programme ran from April 1992 to September 1993. The 1993-94 programme runs from October 1993 to September 1994. It is not possible, from centrally held information, to detail the cost of market testing by Department for the current and 1992-93 financial years.

The cost of market testing by Department for the 1992-93 "Competing for Quality" programme will be published in the citizens charter second report.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which government Departments, non-departmental public bodies and next steps agencies are undergoing market testing at present; and which are planned to undergo market testing in the near future.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the "Citizen's Charter First Report"; the supporting material to my announcement of 4 November 1993 to the House of Commons *Official Report,* columns 526-37, on the "Competing for Quality" programme; and the "Market Testing Bulletin", all of which have been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of correspondence received by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each of his Department's agencies receives (i) an acknowledgement within five days and (ii) a substantive reply within 15 days.

Mr. Waldegrave: Correspondence received by my office from 1 January to 30 November 1993 has generally been acknowledged within five working days, with the exception of write-in campaigns. For correspondence receiving a ministerial reply, 67 per cent. received a substantive reply within 15 working days, which is the departmental target. For correspondence receiving an official reply, 71 per cent. received a substantive reply within 20 working days, which is the departmental target. No record is kept against a 15-working-day target for official replies.

The above figures include correspondence passed to agencies for replies to be drafted for ministerial signature. The position for correspondence received direct by agencies and answered by them is as follows:

Chessington Computer Centre
From 1 January to 30 November 1993 100 per cent. of written enquiries were acknowledged within 10 working days. 97 per cent. received a substantive reply within one calendar month. No records are kept against other targets.

Civil Service College
Correspondence from customers concerning courses has a target reply time of 24 hours. General correspondence has a target of 15 working days, with as much as possible answered within five. The College keeps no records against these targets.

Occupational Health Service
No records kept of reply times. However, all correspondence usually replied to within 15 working days. Acknowledgements are not usually sent.

Recruitment and Assessment Services
All letters are acknowledged within five working days and receive a substantive reply within 15 working days.

Her Majesty's Stationery Office
From 1 January to 30 November 1993, of MPs' letters passed to the chief executive to reply, 100 per cent. were replied to within five working days. 97 per cent. of correspondence for the chief executive was acknowledged, by letter or telephone, within five working days and 94 per cent. received a substantive reply within 15 working days. No records are held centrally of other correspondence received by HMSO.

Central Office of Information
All correspondence to the chief executive receives a reply within 15 working days. No records of other correspondence are held centrally.

Public Bodies

Mr. Straw: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what record is kept of the number of individuals who hold multiple positions on public bodies: and what is the policy in respect of their remuneration.

Mr. Waldegrave: Responsibility for the 42,000 appointments to public bodies rests with individual Ministers and their Departments. No central record is kept of those appointed.

The majority of public appointments are part time and unpaid. Those which are paid are the more senior public appointments which place greater demands on the individual, in terms of the size of the task and the time commitment. The remuneration for such appointments recognises this, and the Cabinet Office "Guide on Public Appointments Procedures" makes clear that in setting remuneration appropriate account should be taken of any existing paid public appointments.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Church Closures

Mr. Bates: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, how many churches in the diocese of Durham have been closed since 1984; and for what reasons.

Mr. Alison: Since 1 January 1984, nine out of some 310 churches in the Durham diocese have been declared redundant under the provisions of the Pastoral Measure 1983. Two had not been used since 1964, one was replaced by a new place of worship and the remaining six were no longer required as parish churches or chapels of ease. We have been notified of one further new place of worship opening in the same period.

Theological Colleges

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what funding the Church Commissioners provide to support theological colleges in England.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners have advanced loans totalling £3·75 million, on an equity-sharing basis, to theological colleges and courses to assist in the provision of housing for staff and students.

TRANSPORT

Departmental Offices (Heating Bills)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by location the annual fuel heating bills for each of his Department's offices for the last four years, and for this year to date.

Mr. Norris: The Department holds information only for the last three financial years. A breakdown of the figures could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The heating bills were:

	£
1990-91	898,569
1991-92	1,036,760
1992-93	909,408

Figures for the year to date are not held centrally.

Marchioness Disaster

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what statements have been made since 8 December, other than by proceedings in Parliament, by Her Majesty's Government in relation to the Marchioness disaster.

Mr. Norris: The Department has responded to various sections of the media to the effect that the Channel 4 TV programme "Dispatches" broadcast on 8 December has not produced any material evidence on the loss of the Marchioness which was not considered by the marine accident investigation branch inquiry in 1989.

Transport Projects

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the public transport projects the Government are planning to invest in outside London.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to the Secretary of State for Transport's reply on 15 December 1993 to the hon. Member for Dartford about the allocation of grant and credit approvals for roads and public transport in 1994-95. Tables 4 and 5 detail the package bids and local public transport projects to which resources will be allocated in 1994-95. A large part of the future public investment in the railway industry will also take place outside London.

A560, Stockport

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his current plans for the improvement of the junction of the A560 at Stockport road west and Ashton road at Bredbury, Stockport.

Mr. Key: We plan to improve the junction as part of our proposals for the A6(M) Stockport north-south bypass and hope to publish plans for public comment in spring 1994.

Public Transport

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was expenditure on public transport in each region for 1992-93.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the expenditure on public transport in Greater London and the south-east for 1992-93.

Mr. Norris: In 1992-93, current and capital expenditure by London Transport, docklands light railway and Network SouthEast totalled £4 billion. Expenditure on buses operating outside London in the south-east is not available.

Nuclear Materials

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report,* column *136,* if he will set out the reasons why his Department failed to provide a substantive reply within the statutory time limit of two months as set out in the Environmental Information Regulations 1992.

Mr. Key: Most of the time was taken in considering the legal aspects of the application.

M65

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the social and economic cost of safeguarding land for the possible eastwards extension of the M65.

Mr. Key: None. Any safeguarding has been a local authority matter.

Press Officers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many press officers his Department has employed in each year since 1983.

Mr. Norris: Details of staff in post in the Department's press office from 1984, including adminstrative support, are as follows:

Year	*Total staff in post*
1984	12
1985	11
1986	11
1987	10
1988	10
1989	12
1990	12
1991	13
1992	13
1993	15

Before 1984 the information division was a common service of the Department of Transport, Department of the Environment and Property Services Agency. Figures before 1984 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Traffic Management

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what staffing resources he has allocated to the monitoring and compliance of enforcement and traffic management duties undertaken by the police.

Mr. Key: In the first instance, it is the responsibility of individual chief officers of police to monitor the performance of their force. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has the statutory duty of promoting the efficiency of police and there is constant liaison between his officials and mine about all the aspects of traffic policing. It is neither necessary nor appropriate for any of my officials to undertake any systematic monitoring of the way in which the police perform their traffic duties.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all enforcement and traffic management duties arising out of transport legislation which are currently the responsibility of the Home Secretary.

Mr. Key: Chief officers of police have responsibility for a wide range of traffic management and enforcement duties. A complete list could be provided only at disproportionate expense.

Parking on Pavements

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures his Department is taking to raise public attention to the problems and dangers of parking on pavements.

Mr. Key: The Department has issued numerous posters and leaflets on this subject and has sent out the leaflets with the reminders issued to motorists when they need to tax their vehicles. We have also revised the section on parking in the new edition of the "Highway Code" so that it makes it clear that vehicles should not be parked on the pavement.

A13

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he received, or expects to receive, the report from the inspector into the proposals for an underpass at the junction of the A13 Newham way and Prince Regent's lane, Newham, and when he expects to announce his decision concerning these proposals.

Mr. Norris: The inspector's report is not expected before early next year. The Secretary of State's decisions will follow as soon as possible thereafter.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he is giving to routing the channel tunnel rail link to King's Cross/St. Pancras in a deep tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Union Railways' report, which we received on 29 October, includes a tunnel alternative to the surface route to St. Pancras along the north London line corridor. We are considering the information contained in the report, together with the many comments we have received during the consultation process, and will announce our decisions early in the new year.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many letters he has received from Islington residents in support of a deep tunnel link of the proposed channel tunnel link between Stratford and King's Cross/St. Pancras.

Mr. Freeman: In response to Union Railways' latest proposals we have received some 980 letters—and petitions with a total of 340 signatories—in support of a tunnel alternative to the surface route to St. Pancras along the north London line corridor.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the number of Islington residents on the route of the surface channel rail link who will be affected by noise and vibration *(a)* during construction and *(b)* during train operation.

Mr. Freeman: Union Railways' specialist consultants have assessed the scale of the noise and vibration impacts as part of their comparative appraisal of the options presented in Union Railways' report. Their work formed part of Union Railways' report to Government and will be published when the Government's decisions are announced.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many Islington residents live within *(a)* 25, *(b)* 50, *(c)* 100 or *(d)* 250 m of the proposed channel tunnel surface link to King's Cross-St. Pancras.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not available.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies have been undertaken by his Department into the value of houses along the route of the proposed channel tunnel link in Islington; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Union Railways is aware of the value of properties affected by the rail link which may have to be taken or which are seriously affected and has taken this into account in estimating the cost of various options.

London Buses

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what meetings he has held with the board of London Buses to discuss route tendering and contracts; what conditions he has laid down for *(a)* London Buses and *(b)* private operators in the provision of licences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Secretary of State and I meet the chairman of London Transport regularly to discuss topics of mutual interest, including the development of a programme for tendering all LT's bus routes, whether currently operated by London Buses Ltd. subsidiaries or private operators, on a net cost basis. LT will announce the form and scope of the new arrangements in the new year.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many London Buses staff have been made redundant in 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94 to date; and what was the cost to London Buses and the Government in each of those years.

Mr. Norris: London Buses Ltd. has advised that it has made the following staff redundant, and incurred the following costs:

Financial Year	*Staff Numbers*	*Cost*
		£ million
1991-92	568	15·8
1992-93	1,874	35·0
[1]1993-94	320	7·8

[1] 5 November 1993

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of correspondence received by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each of his Department's agencies receives (i) and acknowledgement within five days and (ii) a substantive reply within 15 days.

Mr. MacGregor: All correspondence received by my Department and replied to by Ministers receives an acknowledgement which is dispatched within two days. In 1993, up to the end of November, 65 per cent. of ministerial correspondence received a substantive reply which was dispatched within 15 days. Some 19,023 ministerial letters were answered in this period.

Information about executive agencies' correspondence is not held centrally. This is a matter for the chief executives concerned.

Severn Tunnel

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures have been taken to improve safety in the Severn tunnel following the accident in 1991.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail has implemented several measures to improve the detection of faults and maintenance of equipment. Interested parties are continuing to look at ways of improving liaison and site arrangements for the emergency services.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures have been taken to improve safety throughout the British rail system following the Severn tunnel accident in 1991.

Mr. Freeman: Where appropriate, the improvements being implemented at the Severn tunnel will be applied at other locations on the British Rail network.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the Seymour inquiry report on the Severn tunnel accident which occurred in October 1991.

Mr. Freeman: The Health and Safety Executive expects to publish the Severn tunnel accident inquiry report by March.

In the meantime, British Rail has taken steps, with the support of the railway inspectorate, which should prevent a recurrence.

Public Bodies

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the regional and area offices of his Department, and of inspectorates, agencies, and other public bodies for which he is responsible.

Mr. Norris: The Department and its agencies have numerous offices of varying size throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. These have been listed separately and copies of the information requested have been placed in the Library.

Aviation

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the latest position reached in the bilateral talks on aviation matters with the United States Government.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* The United Kingdom made an offer at talks on 7 to 9 December which provides for a much more liberal agreement with immediate benefits to passengers, airlines, airports and local communities on both sides of the Atlantic.

There are still a number of major obstacles which it is the function of these talks to overcome and we look forward to continuing the dialogue in January.

Shipping Accident, Arran

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will arrange for the marine accident investigation branch to carry out an investigation into the incident involving the fishing vessel Ocean Gem and the US Navy Ship Nitro off the coast of Arran on 10 October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* The incident is reported as having occurred on 10 December. In accordance with normal practice, the case has been classified by the marine accident investigation branch as a hazardous incident and referred to the marine directorate for appropriate action.

Heathrow and South-West Quadrant Report

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of the Heathrow west and south-west quadrant orbital movements study report.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* Yes. Copies of the Heathrow access and south-west quadrant study report have now been placed in the House Library.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what consultations he had with the national marine safety steering committee before the Ministry of Defence decision on search and rescue provision on 7 December;

(2) how many representations he made in respect of the Ministry of Defence review of search and rescue provision in south-west England and west Wales;

(3) when he was informed that the Ministry of Defence was reviewing its decision of October 1992 on search and rescue provision in south-west England and west Wales;

(4) what part his Department played in the review of search and rescue provision in south-west England and west Wales before the announcement made by the Ministry of Defence on 7 December;

(5) what consultations he had with the Wales district marine safety sub-committee before the Ministry of Defence decision on search and rescue provision of 7 December;

(6) when he was informed of the decision of the 1993 Ministry of Defence review of search and rescue provision in south-west England and west Wales.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* In October 1992, the MOD announced the decision to transfer Sea King coverage in the area from RAF Brawdy to RAF Chivenor, as part of the future provision of RAF search and rescue helicopters. In March this year, the Ministry of Defence informed the Department of Transport that a review of RAF training establishments was being carried out by RAF Support Command, which would include the future of RAF Chivenor. Officials in my Department discussed the implications of this for civil search and rescue. The Minister for Aviation and Shipping was informed on 6 December of the outcome of the MOD review of flying establishments and that the 1992 SAR decisions would stand. The United Kingdom search and rescue committee is responsible for reviewing the general arrangements for civil maritime and aviation search and rescue. Since the committee accepted the decisions in the 1992 open government document, there was no need to refer the conclusions of the review of training establishments to the committee.

Suppliers List

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the Italian company Arc-Sipra seeking to be included on his Department's approved list of suppliers; what has been his response; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 9 December 1993]:* We have not received any communication from the company Arc-Sipra.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Review

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many meetings he has had with representatives of the trading standards organisations in respect of the local government review.

Mr. Baldry: I shall be meeting Sir Gordon Borrie and my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden, (Mr. Mills), on behalf of the Institute of Trading Standards Administration, on 12 January 1994.

Urban Regeneration

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the initiatives through which urban regeneration funds have been made available and the amount that his Department provided.

Sir George Young: Several Government Departments contribute to urban regeneration through a wide range of programmes. My Department's main targeted urban group programmes are:

City Challenge/Urban Programme
City Grant/English Partnerships (URA)
Derelict Land Grant
Urban Development Corporations
Inner City Task Forces
City Action Teams

Figures for total public expenditure under these initiatives were provided in my reply to the hon. Member on 29 November, *Official Report*, column *381*.

From 1 April 1994, the single regeneration budget will bring together 20 existing Government programmes worth over £1·4 billion in 1994-95.

Homelessness

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evaluation he has made of the number of people likely to be homeless over Christmas.

Sir George Young: My Department makes no estimates of the number of households likely to become homeless. In the three months to 30 September 1993, local authorities in England accepted 33,690 households as statutorily homeless. This is some 1,910—5 per cent.—fewer than in the same period last year; the total of acceptances for the latest 12 months has now fallen in each of the last six quarters.

As part of the £86 million rough sleepers initiative, the Government are funding the voluntary sector to run seven winter shelters for single people sleeping rough in central London. Around 360 bed spaces are being provided from 1 December to 31 March. A further 280 places are available at short notice in the event of particularly severe weather.

Sunday Shopping

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evaluation he has made of the magnitude of increased emissions of air pollutants that would arise as a result of increased traffic and electricity consumption created by full deregulation of Sunday shopping.

Mr. Yeo: No specific evaluations have been carried out. However, my Department's monitoring programme indicates that concentrations of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide are currently on average lower on Sundays than on weekdays by 16 to 26 per cent. in London.

Air Pollution

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total budget for the enhanced urban network air pollution monitoring programme for the current year and for the years 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr. Yeo: The total budget for the enhanced urban network air pollution monitoring programme for the current year—1993-94—is £2·722 million. The spend in 1994-95 will be determined when tenders from contractors have been assessed.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by which date he intends to complete the expansion of the enhanced urban network air pollution monitoring programme to 24 towns and cities, as discussed in his recent consultation paper on air quality monitoring networks.

Mr. Yeo: The date for completion of the expansion of the enhanced urban network air pollution monitoring programme will be decided in the light of responses to the consultation paper on air quality monitoring networks.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will issue a discussion paper on the best ways of bringing pollution levels down to achieve new air quality targets or guidelines.

Mr. Yeo: Shortly.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the second report of the quality of urban air review group.

Mr. Yeo: The second report of the quality of urban air review group will be published in January 1994.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total budget for his air quality research programme for the current year and for the years 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr. Yeo: The budget for air quality research for the current year—1993-94—is £9·657 million. The allocation for 1994-95 will be settled in due course.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce new air quality standards for ground level ozone, benzene and carbon monoxide.

Mr. Yeo: Reports by the expert panel on air quality standards recommending standards for ozone and benzene will be published shortly. The panel is still considering recommendations on carbon monoxide.

Radon Gas

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number of deaths from radon each year in the United Kingdom; what proportion of the United Kingdom housing stock has been surveyed for radon; what proportion of the housing stock has had remedial action taken; and whether data held by his Department on households where radon levels have been found to exceed the action level will be made available to environmental health departments so that remedial action can be encouraged.

Mr. Yeo: The Department of the Environment has been advised by the National Radiological Protection Board—NRPB—that an estimated 2,000 cases of lung cancer per annum may be attributable to the presence of radon in houses. It is the Government's policy to encourage measurements in radon-affected areas which are designated by the NRPB. We estimate that in those areas some 150,000 dwellings have been measured so far, which represents approximately 11 per cent. of the local housing stock. Regular reports of survey findings are provided to environmental health officers for the local authorities concerned. Reliable estimates of the number of households where remedial action has been taken are not available.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate has been made by his Department of the likely increase in annual carbon dioxide emissions from the additional heating and lighting of shops, and additional traffic generated from increased levels of Sunday trading.

Mr. Yeo: My Department has not undertaken a formal review on the impact on the environment resulting from the proposed change in Sunday trading laws, but estimates suggest that any increase in annual CO_2 emissions is likely to be negligible. The expectation is that there will not be a significant effect on overall traffic levels, taking the week as a whole.

Biodiversity

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the United Kingdom biodiversity action plan will accord with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources guidelines for the preparation of biodiversity plans.

Mr. Yeo: We aim to publish the United Kingdom biodiversity action plan after the House returns in the new year. The plan will explain our strategy for conserving wildlife and habitats. Account has been taken of the IUCN guidelines for the preparation of biodiversity plans.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make the conservation of biodiversity an integral part of all Government policy and action.

Mr. Yeo: We aim to publish the United Kingdom biodiversity action plan after the House returns in the new year. The plan will explain our strategy for conserving wildlife and habitats including the role of Government policy.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the part to be played by the biodiversity action plan in helping to protect sites of special scientific interest and other important wildlife sites from neglect and destruction.

Mr. Yeo: We aim to publish the United Kingdom biodiversity action plan after the House returns in the new year. The plan will explain our strategy for conserving wildlife and habitats including protected areas.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those bodies that he has consulted in the last two months with regard to the preparation of the United Kingdom biodiversity action plan.

Mr. Yeo: We have consulted widely during the preparation of the plan. We received more than 1,000 pages of text from some 300 organisations on framework and content, and many of the views and ideas expressed have been incorporated as appropriate in parts of the plan. A two-day seminar organised by the Department of the Environment and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, held at the Royal Geographical Society in May, also assisted this process. A number of individuals and organisations outside Government have contributed to and commented on parts of the plan document. During the past two months, effort has concentrated on final drafting, design and printing rather than consultation.

Passenger Transport

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what consideration he has given to funding local passenger transport executives by precept;

(2) what representations he has received from local passenger transport executives on being funded by a precept.

Mr. Baldry: Passenger transport executives—PTEs—and passenger transport authorities—PTAs—are funded by levies issued by PTAs to constituent local authorities. One PTE and a number of PTAs have made representations that they should, instead, be funded by a precept. But it is the Government's view that the present arrangements are appropriate.

Press Officers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many press officers his Department has employed in each year since 1983.

Mr. Gummer: There are currently 16 press officers employed by the Department of the Environment's information directorate.

Figures for prior years on the composition of the information directorate as a whole are published each year within the management information system for Ministers —MINIS—dating back to 1979 and are available in the Library.

Tenants Incentive Scheme

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment has been made of the effectiveness of the tenants' incentive scheme in helping those who would otherwise not have been able to afford it to buy their own home.

Sir George Young: My Department has commissioned independent research into the effectiveness of the tenants incentive scheme by the Harris Research Centre. I expect to receive the report early in the new year.

Aggregates

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many tonnes of aggregate dredged from British coastal waters was exported in each of the last five years;

(2) how many licences have been issued for aggregate dredging in British coastal waters in each of the last five years;

(3) how many tonnes of aggregate were dredged from British coastal waters in each of the last five years.

Mr. Baldry: The Crown Estate licences the extraction of sand and gravel from British coastal waters and collects statistics relating to those licences. The Crown Estate has provided my Department with the following information.

Year[1]	*Total amount dredged (tonnes)*[2]	*Amount exported (tonnes)*	*Number of licences issued*
1988	25,807,914	2,379,391	8
1989	28,038,429	2,528,839	6
1990	25,281,728	3,817,947	Nil
1991	20,343,856	4,613,982	8
1992	20,559,002	6,317,232	Nil

[1] Figures for 1993 not available yet.

[2] Includes beach nourishment and contract fill.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what environmental safeguards exist for the dredging of aggregate in British coastal waters.

Mr. Baldry: The decision to grant a licence for the extraction of marine sand and gravel rests with the Crown Estate after consultation with those whose interests may be affected by the proposed dredging. My Department is responsible for co-ordinating these consultations and formulating the Government view. Each proposal is considered on its merits and careful consideration is given to all potential environmental impacts before deciding whether or not to grant a favourable Government view. On the basis of a favourable Government view, the Crown Estate will decide whether to issue a licence to dredge and will lay down appropriate conditions to protect marine and coastal interests.

Water-efficient Homes

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which statutory provisions ensure the building of water-efficient homes in *(a)* the public and *(b)* the private sector.

Mr. Yeo: Water fittings installed in a property must comply with the water byelaws. The byelaws set out requirements for the prevention of waste and contamination of water and regulate plumbing materials and installations. Water companies are responsible for their enforcement.

Mentally Ill Homeless People

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the amount of capital funds available from his Department through the Housing Corporation for the provision of housing and care support for homeless mentally ill persons in London; and what steps he is taking or ensure that these funds are used to provide appropriate accommodation for these people.

Sir George Young: The Housing Corporation is making available up to £11·5 million of capital funding this year for the provision of housing accommodation in support of the Department of Health initiatives for homeless mentally ill people in London. These funds will be used by the Housing Corporation to support those housing association schemes which, in liaison with the authorities concerned, they judge will be most effective in providing for this client group.

Travellers

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding problems created by gipsies/travellers during the last 12 months from *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* other sources other than those received as part of his consultative exercise.

Mr. Baldry: My Department has received some 670 letters from local authorities, hon. Members and members of the public during the past 12 months, excluding formal responses to the consultation paper issued by the Department in August last year.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the cost to local authorities of dealing with problems of gipsies/travellers in the last 12 months for which figures are available;

(2) what information he has of the number of attempts in the last 12 months to move gipsies/travellers; and whether any breakdown of the land ownership can be given in such cases.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many gipsies/travellers there are currently in England; how many are on official sites; how many on unofficial sites on *(a)* private land and *(b)* public land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The latest biannual count of gipsy caravans, collected from information provided by district and borough councils, found 12,810 gipsy caravans in England on 21 July 1993. A total of 8,408 caravans were on authorised sites, of which 2,976 were on private land and 5,432 on council land; 4,402 caravans were in unauthorised encampments, but the local authority returns do not distinguish whether the land was in public or private ownership.

Living over the Shops Initiatives

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each local authority *(a)* the address, *(b)* the date it was approved by his officials, *(c)* the overall scheme cost, *(d)* the level of subsidy, *(e)* the date of completion, *(f)* the date of withdrawal and *(g)* the letting date for each completed property for which a supplementary credit approval has been agreed by his Department under the living over the shops initiatives since the inception of the scheme.

Sir George Young: Not all the information requested is held by the Department. However, I have arranged for the information which is readily available to be placed in the Library.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what form of social cost-benefit analysis he has undertaken in order to justify the radioactive discharges and creation of nuclear waste resulting from the operation of THORP; if he will release this; and what other methods he has used to make the justification.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 15 December, *Official Report*, column 1094. Copies of the decision document which sets out in detail how the decisions were reached are in the House Library.

Parish Reviews

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what effect the Local Government Act 1992 has had on the validity of circular 121/77.

Mr. Baldry: Under the provisions of section 13 of the Local Government Act 1992, the Local Government Commission is given powers, at the direction of the Secretary of State for the Environment, to undertake parish reviews. These powers replace those the Local Government Act 1972 conferred on district councils and the Local Government Boundary Commission, on which Department of the Environment circular 121/77 gives guidance. Circular 121/77 continues to reflect established policy.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will instruct the commission for local government reorganisation to cease referring to circular 121·77 in investigations and reports.

Mr. Baldry: No. Department of the Environment circular 121/77 on parish reviews continues to reflect current policy.

Council Tax

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the recommended maximum waiting times for hearing an appeal at a council tax tribunal.

Mr. Baldry: Valuation tribunals are independent judicial bodies, and it would not be appropriate for my right hon. Friend to make recommendations of this kind. However, the tribunals are very conscious of the need to process appeals as expeditiously as is consistent with a full and fair consideration of the merits of each case.

Housing Action Trusts

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the total numbers of chairpersons and non-executive board members of *(a)* housing action trusts and *(b)* urban development corporations.

Sir George Young: Currently, the established housing action trusts have in total 55 board members, including chairmen; the urban development corporations have 135 board members, including chairmen.

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of correspondence received by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each of his Department's agencies receives (i) an acknowledgement within five days and (ii) a substantive reply within 15 days.

Mr. Gummer: My Department aims to reply to letters within 15 days, and to send an acknowledgement if a full reply cannot be given within this time. Some 1·5 million letters are received annually at the Department's headquarters. Work is now under way to ensure the systematic monitoring of performance in replying.

Urban Regeneration Agency

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the cost to public funds of the change of name of the Urban Regeneration Agency to English Partnerships; and if he will make a statement on the reason for the change.

Mr. Baldry: The name English Partnerships reflects the fact that the agency will operate in the whole of England and in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sectors. The adoption of this operating name did not entail any increase in its preparatory costs.

Public Meetings

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what requirements are imposed on housing action trusts, housing associations and urban development corporations, to hold meetings in public of the main governing body, any committees, and any sub-committees; and what rights of access the public have to agendas, minutes, and reports of such bodies, committees and sub-committees.

Mr. Gummer: No requirements are imposed on housing action trusts or urban development corporations. However, as a matter of policy and in the light of citizens charter commitments, most housing action trust board, committee and sub-committee meetings are open to the public. Agendas, reports and minutes are available to the public on request. Most urban development corporations admit the public to discussions on land use planning matters unless they are commercially confidential issues. Similarly, the proceedings of some meetings of housing action trusts may not be open to the public, for example where personnel matters, audit and commercially confidential matters are discussed.

The Housing Corporation has the statutory responsibility to fund and supervise registered housing associations. As part of its supervisory role, the corporation requires associations to provide a wide range of information on a regular basis covering the performance and management of associations. These returns are available to members of the public and may be viewed at the corporation's headquarters.

Blue-collar Services

Mr. Faber: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he intends to modify the arrangements for retendering of blue-collar services following his decision to accelerate the programme for reviewing the structure of English counties and districts.

Mr. Baldry: My Department's announcement to the House on 29 March 1993, *Official Report*, column 56, that shire counties and districts being reorganised following review by the Local Government Commission would not be required to continue compulsory competitive tendering —CCT—for manual services during the reorganisation period, was widely welcomed by local authorities. The acceleration of the commission's review programme requires some modification to these arrangements.

Our objective is that authorities should, wherever possible, continue to subject services to the pressures of competition which can bring so many benefits. However, we would not wish to see new authorities tied to inappropriate arrangement made by their predecessors.

I therefore intend that, for all high-value, long-term contracts, the exemption already announced should remain unchanged. This will commence when Parliament approves changes in an area and end 18 months after the new authority comes into being.

For short-term, low-value contracts, I have concluded that CCT should continue to apply throughout the reorganisation period. Tendering for this work is a matter of routine practice, and new authorities would not be hampered by continuing with arrangements made by their predecessors for a short period. I therefore intend that the exemption will not apply where the period over which work is to be carried out is less than 12 months or the value of that work is less than £200,000 per annum.

My officials have today written to the secretaries of the Association of County Councils and Association of District Councils giving further details of these modifications and those my right hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction and I announced on 15 December for white-collar and housing management services, *Official Report*, columns *733-35*. I will place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Housing Resources

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to make an announcement about the distribution of housing resources for 1994-95.

Sir George Young: I am today announcing a number of decisions about the provision of resources for housing in 1994-95.

Local housing authorities will today receive their housing investment programme—HIP—allocations for 1994-95. They total some £1·5 billion. Within that, £1,038 million are general purpose allocations, or housing "annual capital guidelines". As last year, these have been calculated 40 per cent. on the basis of a statistical assessment of local housing needs, and 60 per cent. on a discretionary basis related to published criteria. The primary criterion has been the efficiency and effectiveness of local authorities in making use of capital resources to meet housing needs.

This year, for the first time, in addition to their bids for resources, local authorities have also been required to submit a separate housing strategy statement. Our aim is that these strategy statements should become important documents in their own right, setting out a planned framework for housing programmes looking at least three years ahead. They should present an all-embracing picture of the housing needs and resources of each area, covering not only the plans of the local authority, but also the contribution to be made by the private sector.

In general, the picture emerging from the bids and strategy statements this year is one of continuing improvements in performance by local authorities, both in the management of their own stock and in their enabling role. Housing strategies are now better researched and the analysis of local problems and opportunities is conducted on a sounder basis. Local authorities are acting in a more corporate manner, drawing on all the available sources of funding and using their enabling powers to meet needs in fields such as community care. Further efforts have also been made to involve private housing interests, tenants and residents in the development of housing strategies. Authorities are also making increased use of the private sector to assist them in meeting the needs of those accepted as homeless. My announcement of both the housing investment programme and approved development programme resources today also demonstrates how the housing programmes of local authorities and housing associations are being brought closer together.

Under the competitive HIP process, we have again been able to direct resources to a greater degree to local authorities who are best able to make use of them. I am glad to be able to publish today the names of the authorities that were judged the best performers in each region under the HIP process. All other authorities will have the assessment of their performance conveyed to them by the Department's regional offices. I am encouraged by the progress which many authorities have made this year, and hope that all authorities will continue to work for further improvements during 1994-95.

A further £288 million has been allocated for private sector renewal and housing defects in the form of "specified capital grant", to assist councils with their expenditure in these areas. As with the annual capital guideline allocations, 40 per cent. of these resources has been distributed on a statistical assessment of local needs, and 60 per cent. on a discretionary basis.

I am depositing tables in the Library of the House showing each authority's annual capital guideline and specified capital allocations. I am also depositing a list of the names of the authorities in each region who have been assessed as the best performers.

From 1 April 1994, estate action will be part of the single regeneration budget. Within the budget, £306 million will be available in 1994-95 for estate action schemes already under way. A further £67 million will be available for new schemes which will be approved under current estate action guidelines. Local authorities are today being notified of the outcome of their bids for resources for new schemes next year, as well as of the resources being provided for continuing schemes. I am placing a list of the new schemes in the Library together with tables showing the latest position on the distribution of resources between authorities for continuation schemes.

Turning to the housing revenue account subsidy determination for 1994-95, I can today announce the main results of our consultation exercise.

I intend to confirm the proprosals to increase management and maintenance allowances by 4 per cent. overall and to continue to distribute the increase through a system of targets reflecting authorities' relative need to spend.

For rent guidelines, I am confirming the proposal for an average increase of 7·5 per cent. This will result in an average increase in guideline rents of £2·20 per week over those which apply this year, with a range of between £1·50 and £2·90 for individual councils, bringing the national average guideline rent to £31·60. Responsibility for setting actual rents remains with individual local authorities. Housing benefit will normally meet the whole of any rent increase for tenants receiving it.

The Housing Corporation's approved development programme for 1994-95 represents its fourth largest budget since housing association grant—HAG—was introduced in 1974. Overall, gross capital expenditure will amount to over £1·5 billion in 1994-95. Some £600 million is available for new schemes to start next year, of which £400 million will be for new homes for sale or rent.

The Housing Corporation is confident that this programme will enable housing associations to provide some 58,000 new homes in 1994-95, bringing the total over the three years from 1992-93 to 1994-95 to 178,000. This more than fully meets our manifesto commitment to provide 153,000 homes over this period, and compares extremely well with the 70,300 new homes provided over the preceding three years, 1989-90 to 1991-92.

The Housing Corporation estimates that, because of reductions in procurement and borrowing costs and increases in efficiency, coupled with the growing proportion of the programme targeted at tenants incentive scheme grants and other cost-effective home ownership initiatives, it should still achieve the estimate it made a year ago of at least 154,000 completions over the three years 1993-94 to 1995-96.

The Housing Corporation has discussed priorities with local authorities before reaching decisions on new allocations to housing associations active in each area. These have been targeted on the basis of a statistical assessment of needs, an assessment of the enabling performance of the authority itself, and the value for money of bids. In this context, anticipated local authority contributions of discounted land or local authority HAG have increased by 15 per cent. over 1993-94. This, together with increased competition for resources and the reduction in grant rates, has led to an average HAG cost per unit which is 13 per cent. lower within the rented programme than the equivalent figure for 1993-94.

A key aim of the 1994-95 approved development programme is to make the most productive use of the existing housing stock: funding for the tenants incentive scheme has been increased and do-it-yourself shared ownership will continue to be targeted principally at local authority and housing association tenants, thus freeing up more existing tenancies for new lettings; the mini-HAG programme for short-life housing has been increased to its highest ever level; within the mixed and publicly funded rented programme, 19 per cent. of 1994-95 allocations are for rehabilitation which represents an increase on the last few years; and the major repairs and miscellaneous works programme has been allocated £75 million, which represents the second highest figure ever.

Planning Application Fees

Mr. Merchant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the level of planning application fees to increase; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Fees for planning applications will increase by 15 per cent. from 13 January 1994 and a further 15 per cent. from 3 January 1995. These increases represent another important step towards applicants meeting the full costs incurred by local planning authorities in determining planning applications. Fees remain a very small proportion of overall development costs, and we believe it is right that applicants, rather than the community, should pay for this service. Amending regulations, approved by both Houses, have now been made.

For the future, it is our intention to bring forward legislation, when parliamentary time is available, to allow local planning authorities to set their own fees. A consultation paper will be issued in due course. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland proposes similar arrangement for planning application fees north of the border.

Meanwhile, I have decided that the results of research carried out for my Department by Price Waterhouse on local planning authorities' costs in determining planning applications should be published. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House. The researchers found that some authorities do not have the procedures in place to establish the costs of processing applications. I expect that by the end of the financial year 1995-96, all authorities should be able to identify these costs as a prerequisite to setting their own fees.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest valuation of land held by each of the urban development corporations.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 14 December 1993]:* The urban development corporations are required to include in their annual accounts and publish in their annual report, the value of their development assets, which comprise both land and buildings at the lower of cost or net realisable value. At 31 March 1993, these were as follows:

	£ million
London Docklands	39·109
Central Manchester	2·886
Trafford Park	19·250
Leeds	7·507
Sheffield	13·756
Merseyside	27·855
Bristol	13·787
Black Country	47·265
Birmingham Heartlands	0·281
Teesside	31·387
Tyne and Wear	33·866

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing in 1992-93 prices, the gross public spending for each year since 1990-91 and the projected expenditure for each year to 1995-96 for each executive non-departmental public body —NDPB—sponsored by his Department, as listed in "Public Bodies 1992".

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 15 December 1993]:* The table shows, for all 32 executive NDPBs currently sponsored by my Department, gross expenditure outturn for past years, estimates for 1993-94 and NDPBs' provisional plans for future years, in 1992-93 prices. NDPBs' most recent plans available to the Department are those submitted in summer 1993.

Gross expenditure by non-departmental public bodies

£ million, 1992-93 prices

Non-departmental public bodies	*1990-91 Outturn*	*1991-92 Outturn*	*1992-93 Outturn*	*1993-94 Estimates*	*1994-95 Plans*	*1995-96 Plans*
Audit Commission	51·33	63·75	74·30	76·12	N/a	N/a
British Board of Agrement	4·19	3·93	3·60	3·58	4·38	4·49
Commission for the new towns (including former Development Corporations)	239·50	197·77	166·90	83·39	82·88	73·60
Countryside Commission	27·16	30·74	42·90	42·81	43·11	39·60
English Nature	0·20	31·67	39·60	37·38	N/a	N/a
Housing Action Trusts						
Castle Vale	—	—	—	1·94	12·11	16·16
Liverpool	—	—	0·20	18·40	18·16	22·44
North Hull	—	10·25	17·40	28·28	25·79	17·95
Tower Hamlets	—	—	—	8·23	9·22	10·77
Waltham Forest	—	0·31	14·60	26·92	35·76	29·98
Housing Corporation	1,462·67	1,894·05	2,529·00	1,948·62	1,620·29	1,533·10
Joint Nature Conservation Committee	0·88	4·14	5·20	4·75	N/a	N/a
Letchworth Garden City Corporation	2·43	1·97	6·20	6·49	0·00	0·00
Local Government Commission	—	—	2·10	5·04	7·73	1·35
London Pensions Fund Authority	12·72	11·31	9·53	9·42	9·00	8·60
London Residuary Body	239·77	124·20	76·50	3·39	0·00	0·00
National Rivers Authority	407·01	437·60	433·20	430·01	425·74	411·55
Rural Development Commission	38·49	32·76	35·33	37·09	40·25	N/a
United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board	—	—	0·40	1·16	0·93	0·90
UDCs						
Birmingham Heartlands	—	—	5·40	9·59	9·31	9·34
Black Country	37·53	50·72	63·00	58·21	49·35	33·21

Non-departmental public bodies	*1990-91 Outturn*	*1991-92 Outturn*	*1992-93 Outturn*	*1993-94 Estimates*	*1994-95 Plans*	*1995-96 Plans*
Central Manchester	16·12	16·56	12·50	16·08	11·55	9·69
Leeds	15·79	16·56	9·00	8·33	5·03	0·00
London Docklands	368·26	279·45	188·60	142·18	84·27	71·36
Merseyside	30·91	35·71	41·00	32·06	29·80	28·18
Plymouth	—	—	—	10·17	6·05	7·90
Sheffield	21·08	15·42	14·10	18·50	19·93	11·49
Teesside	56·52	60·24	69·10	49·30	45·82	33·84
Trafford Park	29·58	31·88	33·90	35·93	28·40	29·26
Tyne and Wear	51·55	50·92	50·80	54·62	48·89	40·84
Urban Regeneration Agency—English Partnerships	—	—	—	33·12	232·80	269·28
TOTALS	3,129·48	3,419·71	3,969·96	3,264·74	2,927·87	2,718·20

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards to each of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 15 December 1993]:* Appointments to the Rural Development Commission are made by Her Majesty the Queen.

I am responsible for all appointments to the Department's other executive non-departmental public bodies except the following where responsibility is shared:

Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Seven of the 11 voting members are provided by English Nature, the Scottish and Welsh county councils and the Countryside Commission.

Letchworth Garden City Corporation

One each of the six members is appointed by Hertfordshire county council and North Hertfordshire district council respectively.

National Rivers Authority

Two of the 14 members are appointed by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and one by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

United Kingdom Eco Labelling Board

All members appointed jointly with my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which of the appointments made to public bodies by his Department since April 1992 have been advertised.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 10 December 1993]:* A vacancy for the post of local commissioner—local government ombudsman—was advertised early in 1993.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's policy regarding the use of executive search consultants in making appointments to public bodies; and if he will *(a)* list the appointments where such consultants have been used and *(b)* list the cost in each case since April 1992.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* Executive search consultants may be used where this is considered necessary to identify suitable candidates for appointment.

Consultants were employed by my Department to assist with the selection of a local commissioner—local government ombudsman—earlier this year.

The total fee paid to the consultants was £21,810·93, including VAT. Public advertisements cost a further £17,704.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if will publish a table showing for each of the non-departmental public bodies—NDPBs—sponsored by his Department, whether the public have a statutory right to *(a)* attend all board meetings and *(b)* inspect the minutes of the meetings.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* There is no statutory right for the public to attend board meetings or inspect the minutes for any of the executive NDPBs sponsored by the Department.

Water Charges

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the likely impact on water charges for each of the years 1994-95 to 1997-98 of the outcome of discussions on the implementation of the urban waste water treatment and bathing waters directives.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 16 December 1993]:* We welcome the decision of the European Council that a large proportion of Community legislation on water should be recast to make it consistent with the principle of subsidiarity. The Commission must now bring forward proposals for new and revised directives for consideration by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. They would not become law until agreed by the Council of Ministers. It is too early to assess the impact of any changes on water charges, but arrangements which allow more flexibility to member states should reduce costs.

Environment Council

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Environment Council on 15 December.

Mr. Yeo: The Environment Council resumed its discussions on 15 December. I represented the United Kingdom. The Council agreed a common position on the packaging directive by qualified majority vote. The directive will set targets for member states for the recovery and recycling of packaging waste and will provide a framework which allows free circulation of packaging which meets essential requirements. The Council also adopted the decision agreed last March enabling the Community to ratify the United Nations framework convention on climate change. The United Kingdom strongly supports Community ratification, but abstained because of doubts about the choice of legal base.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 234**

SESSION 1993–94

6th December, 1993—17th December, 1993

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Speaker and deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions.*

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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